

## Leading Law Firm Rainmakers — 2009

Fourteen attorneys—selected for their acumen in developing books of business, as well as their expertise as lawyers—share their experiences and personal pathways to success.

By Patrick Folliard

**T**he idea of the rainmaker as a schmoozing, country-club denizen is increasingly dismissed as a long-gone phenomenon by most working attorneys. Socializing remains an ingredient in building a healthy book of business; nevertheless, today's minority rainmakers credit a nose-to-the grindstone work ethic as the key to achieving demonstrated success in business development. They advise investment in relationship-building, client service, and perfecting substantive legal skills as the means to ensuring very good returns.

For *Diversity & the Bar's* third rainmaker feature, fourteen attorneys share tips on not only how to bring in new clients, but also how to keep them. Because today's economic climate presents challenges that most of these leaders have heretofore not encountered, many are learning for the first time to be "more creative about fee proposals." In order to secure business, rainmakers must deliver on promises to be efficient and cost effective; otherwise, they will surely lose longtime clients to the competition. Those whose practice

areas include regulation, restructuring, and/or bankruptcy noted they are busier than ever, citing the current challenges as a boon for their business area.

These rainmakers were selected from a pool of nominees suggested by leading firms from across the country. Each attorney maintains a regular book of business reaching or exceeding \$2 million a year. In making its selections, MCCA weighed the attorneys' geographic locations and practice areas, as well as their gender and ethnicity, in order to present the most diverse and well-rounded group possible.

Like previous years, many of our rainmakers were the first in their families to attend college or graduate school; one interviewee was the first in his family to graduate from high school. And, as in the case of new Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor, many of those interviewed were initially drawn to the law by TV's *Perry Mason*. It seems that the fictional criminal defense attorney with the stellar record was the inspiration that set many a diverse young rainmaker on his or her ambitious career path.

# Leading Law Firm Rainmakers

## James S. Carr

*Partner*

Kelley Drye & Warren LLP, New York, NY

**Years Practicing:** 22

**Area of Practice:** Bankruptcy and Restructuring

**A**s chair of the bankruptcy and restructuring practice group at Kelley Drye, James Carr generates a lot of bankruptcy business, and a lot of non-bankruptcy business as well. He is also a member of the firm's management committee. "My rainmaking approach involves common sense, understanding my client's business needs, and being responsive," he shares.

While studying law at Notre Dame, Carr never imagined he would one day be a rainmaker at a big New York law firm. He says, "I could see myself becoming a successful lawyer. The thing was, at that time, I didn't know how to define success." Once in the profession, Carr soon understood that generating business was the path to controlling his destiny. As a young associate, he nurtured relationships with credit managers and analysts, and began giving bankruptcy and creditors' rights seminars. Before long, he was bringing in business.

Kelley Drye's Park Avenue office is less than a mile from where Carr lived as a small kid, in the then-very rough Hell's Kitchen section of Manhattan. Born into what he describes as "a dysfunctional family," Carr went to live with more-stable cousins in northern New Jersey when he was nine. From there he mapped out a life plan



based on hard work and fueled by ambition: "It's imperative not to lose my edge."

For the foreseeable future, Carr wants to grow his bankruptcy department into one of the best practices for creditors' rights in the country. "Goals are good," notes Carr. "If you don't set goals, you'll never know what you might attain."

**KELLEY**  

---

**DRYE**