

MIDSIZE **HOT LIST** | A SPECIAL REPORT

We asked our readers to nominate law firms with between 51 and 150 attorneys that have used their creativity and skill to stay competitive in courtrooms and at deal tables across the U.S. The 20 firms we highlight this week have held their own, often against much larger firms, charting winning courses in high-stakes matters that led to key victories in 2015. Above all, these firms embody lawyering at its essence—working hard to understand and serve their clients' needs.



DANIEL COHN

Farella Braun + Martel

San Francisco's Farella Braun + Martel is no stranger to big business, despite being a mid-sized firm. In 2015, the firm represented Treasury Wine Estates Ltd. in the acquisition of substantially all of the winery assets of Diageo PLC for approximately \$600 million, including its U.S. wine subsidiary Diageo Chateau & Estates, which, the firm says, was the largest U.S. wine deal of 2015. The transaction included the acquisition of such highly regarded brands as Sterling Vineyards, Beaulieu Vineyards, Provenance and Acacia.

"Treasury Wine Estates is the largest publicly traded, 'pure play' wine company in the world. As a result of this transaction, they approximately doubled the size of their U.S. operations and became a more prominent and influential player in the U.S. market," said Daniel Cohn, the Farella partner who led the team that completed the deal.

"The firm is well suited to the transaction as we've had a St. Helena office in the

heart of California's wine country since 1995," Cohn added. "This was a major effort where we also used our firm's expertise in land use, real estate, employment, tax and environmental law."

Once the deal took shape, "we worked night and day for a full week in September to assemble documentation so it could be signed in October," Cohn said. "The time between launching and execution was just over 30 days. We needed to get it executed and announced quickly because of business motivations on both sides."

During crunch time, Cohn said "there were a number of complex employment benefit and tax issues. We had a dozen people working on the deal. It was the largest transaction that I've ever managed in terms of the numbers of lawyers involved."

The deal passed its Hart-Scott-Rodino antitrust review from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and closed on Dec. 31.

—RICH ACELLO

FIRM FACTS:

- **Year Founded:** 1962
- **Headquarters:** San Francisco
- **Total attorneys:** 127
- **Partners:** 77 ■ **Associates:** 43