



## Partner promotions: Class of 2014

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For the first time since 2007, GCR asks 10 of the more than 40 antitrust and competition lawyers promoted to partner last year to reflect on their past, their new roles and how they rose through their firms' ranks

Back in 2007, *GCR* took a headcount of new antitrust partners promoted around the world. The numbers back then, in those pre-recession days, were heady indeed: more than 40 firms elected 64 partners in multiple jurisdictions. That total bested all of the previous years of which *GCR* kept track. The antitrust world was humming along at a rapid clip, and firms promoted associates and counsel at a pace in line with the work coming through the door.

In the following years, as economic turmoil gripped every major antitrust market. Deal work dried up. Law firms collapsed and major antitrust groups were scattered to the wind. Even in a legal practice as resilient as antitrust, business suffered. And, frankly, *GCR* stopped keeping track of the number of lawyers promoted year-on-year.

Now, much of the world appears to have pulled itself out of the economic muck. Deal markets have thawed, and companies are satiating their pent-up appetite for buying both their rivals and their business partners. It appears as if the antitrust work associated with those deals, plus a general uptick in billing hours, has allowed antitrust groups to carry on growing as well.

The numbers over the past year are strong – not quite like 2007, but strong nonetheless. In all, 45 lawyers joined the partnership at 24 firms over the past year or so, in offices as geographically diverse as Seattle, Istanbul, Brussels and Beijing. And that doesn't include the dozens of promotions to counsel over the past year. It seems as if that upward move was the most common among antitrust groups – a sign that partner promotions in the coming years could be even more robust.

The class of 2007, as we called them then, went on to impressive careers in their respective practices. Indeed, several featured lawyers are now considered among the best of the bar – including Leah Brannon at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, Eric Grannon at White & Case and Jason Gudofsky at Blake Cassels & Graydon.

We suspect members of the 2014 class will go on to similar levels of success. Many of the promoted lawyers already have significant profiles in the antitrust world, and the cases under their belts to justify them. Below, we've asked 10 of this year's new partners about their roles, their cases and their preferred places to grab a bite to eat.



## Sara Razi

**Firm**  
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett –  
Washington, DC

**Age**  
41

### Career history to date

I practised antitrust at another law firm for four years following law school, working on some newsworthy merger cases, private antitrust litigation and cartel investigations. In 2004, I joined the FTC as an attorney adviser to incoming chairman Deborah Majoras, helping to implement her enforcement and policy agenda and advising on cases before the commission. When Debbie returned to the private sector in 2008, I moved to the mergers IV division, where I led merger investigations as a staff attorney, later serving as deputy assistant director from 2010-2013. I joined Simpson Thacher as counsel in November of 2013 and was named partner effective 1 January 2015. In the past year, I have represented DIRECTV in its sale to AT&T, Lorillard in its sale to Reynolds American and Dollar General in its takeover bid for Family Dollar, among others. I also regularly advise health-care clients such as HCA and CSL on antitrust matters.

### How long did you work as an associate and/or counsel?

I practiced antitrust for 14 years, including nearly a decade at the FTC and several years of law firm practice.

### What cases have you most enjoyed working on and why?

I enjoy variety, both in the type of case and the industry. My practice tends to focus on merger reviews with tough competition issues. The challenges invariably are to learn the client's business as if it were your own, anticipate the likely issues of FTC or DOJ concern, advise the client on expectations and timing, and generate the best defense of the merger based on the facts. There are the lengthy, full-phase merger investigations, which require creativity, persistence and resourcefulness across a large team of lawyers and economists to get a great result. Other cases are an all-out, 30-day blitz to avoid a second request, the challenge being to get the agency

comfortable in the limited amount of time allowed. I often develop a close and rewarding working relationship with clients throughout the merger review process.

### Who are your mentors and what did you learn from them?

In antitrust, Debbie Majoras was an important female role model for me. She is a consummate antitrust lawyer, a great leader and exhibits grace under pressure. I learned by her example, and benefited from the useful feedback and guidance she gave me during my years as her attorney adviser at the FTC.

At Simpson Thacher, both Matt Reilly and Kevin Arquit have been key mentors. They provided invaluable guidance during my transition from government and act as a sounding board on various issues, large and small. Matt has inspired me to be a more confident and passionate advocate, and shows the value of a little humour or self-deprecation amid all the seriousness of our work.

### What has surprised you since you became a partner?

No real surprises, but I appreciate the greater transparency of certain aspects of the business afforded to partners. And it feels great to become a member of the partnership and the truly shared enterprise that we all take great pride in.

### What advice would you have for an ambitious associate starting out in antitrust law?

Become an expert in the facts, think of ways to add value and be creative. Don't be reluctant to take risks or accept new challenges. Volunteer your point of view. People will respect that, even if you are the least experienced person in the room.

### How do you think the job of the competition lawyer will change in the next decade?

Certainly there will be developments in antitrust thinking and policy, and the industries in which our clients operate will advance technologically and otherwise, but the core job of an antitrust lawyer will likely remain the same. Our success will continue to depend on making intuitive, fact-based arguments and maintaining credibility with the agencies and courts while advocating as strongly and effectively as possible in favour of our clients' transactions or other business conduct.

### How have you prepared for your role as a manager in the firm?

I was fortunate to have management experience from government, including as an attorney adviser and deputy assistant director at the FTC. This eased the transition into law firm practice at a senior level.

### Favourite restaurant?

Comet Ping Pong in Chevy Chase.