

ELITE TRIAL LAWYERS

The National Law Journal recently honored law firms and lawyers handling cutting-edge work on behalf of plaintiffs in practice areas ranging from mass torts to securities litigation. Here's a look into the works of our winners.

ELITE WOMEN - RACHEL BLACK

SUSMAN GODFREY

■ **WHAT HAS CHANGED IN YOUR PRACTICE AREA AND HOW ARE YOU ADJUSTING?**

One of the best things about my practice is that although I focus on just one thing—high-stakes commercial litigation—the subject area is constantly changing. I have tried cases ranging from satellite patent infringement to price-fixing. If you're focused on being a great trial lawyer, you can learn almost any case—and having to do so keeps me on my toes and makes my work interesting and challenging.

■ **SHARE AN INTERESTING FACT ABOUT YOUR FIRM.** Because we run many cases on a contingency-fee model, we have developed a lean, efficient approach to litigation. For example,

I was hired just months before trial by a client that was dissatisfied with their counsel. Working with one junior associate, we quickly turned the case around and negotiated an outstanding settlement. The other side assumed we had a “team of associates,” but it was just the two of us, focusing on what was most important.

■ **WHAT NEW SKILLS MUST LAWYERS HAVE IN ORDER TO SUCCEED?**

Good communications skills and an ability to focus on what matters will always be essential skills. I try complex commercial cases that often involve complicated facts or



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technical information that needs to be clearly communicated to the jury in a limited time period. Focusing on what is essential and helping the jury understand is key. You can't convince a jury if they don't understand your case.

Submitted by Rachel Black, Partner