MEET THE DEALMAKERS

Bobby Shaw

Bobby Shaw leads Debt-Finance Transactions for clients of Kilpatrick. He began his career at a white-shoe firm on Wall Street, then joined Kilpatrick in 2011. His practice focuses on commercial finance deals, including syndicated lending transactions, leveraged acquisitions, specialty financings, and other debt investments.

Bobby regularly advises commercial banks and other financial institutions, debt funds and finance companies and borrowers, with a focus on sponsor-backed portfolio companies, public and private corporations. He also specializes in representing tribal nations and their governmental components.

Over the last few years, the commercial finance team has seen significant growth (nearly doubling in size) and financial successes. Bobby has been a key player in turning the team's strategic vision into reality.

Last year was a challenging year for dealmaking, yet your team had a standout year. What are the key ingredients to your team's success in a difficult economy?
In my opinion, our strength is our diversity of practice. The team is so ecumenical in what we can do. While each member of the team can act as a generalist, each of us also has unique specialties. Together we're a very strong team focused on serving niches in the marketplace that our competitors cannot.

For instance, our team can and routinely does handle, complex debt matters for sponsor-backed portfolio companies, tribal nations and their economic development units, and heavily regulated industries such as registered investment advisors, pharmaceuticals and insurance, cannabis, and a robust emphasis on cross-border transactions. Each of our specialties leverages the collaboration and expertise of our colleagues in other practice groups at the firm. Our approach is that we start first with the business and

the unique complexities of that business and then craft a bespoke transaction that meets the needs of our clients. Obviously, our clients like this approach, and Kilpatrick can distinguish itself as one-stop shopping for all their legal needs.

What made you gravitate toward commercial finance?
I was drawn to it because it's a challenging and high-stakes practice. We're often dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars in a single transaction. Sometimes, the fate of the whole company rests on that one deal. I never lose sight of how critical these transactions are for our clients.

Why did you decide to join Kilpatrick?
Well, I'm a southern boy and always wanted to return home from working on Wall Street. Atlanta was the perfect place and Kilpatrick had an outstanding reputation both for the great work it does and for the people. I've been here since 2011, and I can tell you that the firm's reputation is well-deserved! I've most definitely made the right choice.

How did you get started with Tribal lending?
Our tribal transactional practice is a perfect example of the success of our firm's collaborative efforts and one of the things I am most proud of. Going way back to the *Cobell* Case, Kilpatrick has always had an absolute best-in-class reputation for serving the unique legal needs of Indian tribes. Before my time at Kilpatrick, the tribal practice, however, was mostly focused on litigation. Nearly a decade ago, I was approached by my partner, **Rob Roy Smith**, and the co-team leader of our Native American practice, who asked if we could handle a loan to a tribe to fund their casino operations. I was certain we could take care of the loan, but I also knew that there would be abundant special issues including sovereign immunity, licensure and federal regulations, and dealing with bureaus in the federal government that I had only heard of previously.

Using our inter-disciplinary approach, we successfully completed the transaction and had very happy clients as a result. That's what we strive for here at Kilpatrick. I am first and foremost a finance lawyer in corporate America but, when we team up with our other practice groups, we become so much more than the sum of our parts. Nearly 10 years after that initial deal, I'm proud to say that there is next to nothing that our team cannot handle for a tribe or its economic operations.

And while that story encapsulates how we aim to conduct ourselves at Kilpatrick, it is not unique. Our team has had incredible success in handling financial transactions in industries with all sorts of experience barriers to entry. I'm proud to say that each one of my partners on the finance team starts with the business-first approach and then builds the transaction around it. That requires each team member to have an innate curiosity about our clients and their counterparties in order to get things right as opposed to sticking to the forms no matter what.

Are there any other groups at Kilpatrick that you routinely collaborate with?
The great thing about Kilpatrick is how much the firm incentivizes collaboration. That's not just a platitude, the firm looks closely at the metrics and rewards those who can expand the scope of services provided to a client.

In my time with the firm, I've had the good fortune of working with colleagues in every practice group of our firm and in nearly every office. I happen to collaborate more often with our colleagues on the Corporate and M&A team (MASC) or others who have a direct line to the c-suite and other key decision makers but, just given our team's core focus on facilitating the transfer of money and the associated risks, we always find ourselves in high demand to help others in the firm.

Have you had an opportunity to use your lending skills on pro bono projects?
Yes. One pro bono matter that sticks out. In the winter of 2016–2017, "Hosea Feed the Hungry and Homeless" was on the verge of stopping its Atlanta operations because it was close to losing its lease. Hosea had been a staple of the community since 1971, helping over half a million people with food and other necessities, and its demise would have caused a lot of hardship. A coalition of pro bono professionals came together to help Hosea find and buy a building to become its permanent home, and I'm proud to have been a part of it.

Can you share one surprising fact about yourself?
My wife and I are passionate about rescuing and adopting dogs, Poodle mixes in particular. We started fostering during the pandemic and, while it's always hard to adopt out and say goodbye to one of our foster babies, we get immense satisfaction knowing the dog will go to a loving "furever" home. We work with Releash Atlanta, an amazing, 100% volunteer-run organization that saves dogs from high-kill shelters throughout the state of Georgia. We also have five good doggies ourselves—all but one came through Releash.

To learn more about Bobby and the firm's nationally recognized Commercial Finance Team, visit *ktslaw.com*