

MVP: Kilpatrick Townsend's S. Joel Cartee

Law360 (December 13, 2018, 11:19 AM EST) -- S. Joel Cartee of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP has spent the year managing major transactions for AT&T Inc., including a deal giving the telecom giant a bump in the 5G wireless market, landing him a spot among Law360's 2018 Telecommunications MVPs.

HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Cartee told Law360 that one of his biggest accomplishments this year has been AT&T's \$207 million acquisition of FiberTower Corp., which the firm said will set up AT&T to be the first U.S. company to bring 5G wireless technology to the market.

Cartee served as lead counsel for AT&T, leading the transactions team managing the acquisition, which closed in February, a month after it was approved by the Federal Communications Commission.

As a result of the deal, AT&T acquired the spectrum portfolio needed to support a higher level of device connectivity. Fifth generation wireless, or 5G, provides more bandwidth to stream videos faster and can power things like smart cars.

"Everyone is competing," Cartee said of the race to 5G. "It's the new frontier to get that accomplished."

HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE:

Cartee also led the transactions team overseeing AT&T's acquisition of advertising technology company AppNexus in a deal that closed in August. He said that deal proved particularly challenging when details leaked to the press, putting "a lot of pressure" on the team to accelerate the timeline.

"It's doing three to four weeks of work in one week and trying to get it right," Cartee said of the core negotiations. "We were locked up in New York in a conference room for a week."

Cartee also said that the digital advertising space was a new area for AT&T, posing additional challenges for the team as they navigated a new space for their client.

MVP



S. Joel Cartee
Kilpatrick Townsend

"You have unique issues where you're trying to get into a new area, and for us on the transactions side, we're learning about the area as we go," he said.

WHY HE'S A TELECOM ATTORNEY:

Cartee said he "got hooked on" telecom after he worked on a project about 15 years ago for Cingular Wireless, which was acquired by AT&T in 2004.

"I would say that telecom picked me more than I picked telecom," Cartee said.

He said he enjoys learning about new technologies in the telecom space and that he likes working in deals, as opposed to litigation, because he enjoys helping clients achieve a goal.

"People that do deals, we find them fun. There's an energy that builds around a deal," he said, adding that while litigation is often binary — concluding with a winner and a loser — deals can result in the achievement of a common goal between two companies.

"You're helping your client achieve a goal that's important to them, and I enjoy being a part of that," he said.

WHAT HE'S MOST PROUD OF:

Cartee said he has been proud of his work in the telecom industry because of the ways that the industry is constantly changing. And as the industry itself changes, so do the client's needs.

"To be part of an industry, and to help my client keep up with an industry that's changed from using a cellphone just to make calls to using a cellphone as a personal computer, is pretty cool," Cartee said.

He specifically flagged mobile wireless as an area of telecom that has grown quickly.

"The question is how do you do more with that cellphone?" Cartee said. "That involves deploying the right assets."

HIS OTHER NOTABLE DEALS:

Cartee represented AT&T in the company's August acquisition of tech startup AlienVault, which develops data privacy and security software, allowing AT&T to offer improved protection to its business customers.

As lead counsel on the deal, Cartee said he had the opportunity to learn more about cybersecurity, an area that was relatively new for him at the time.

"I had not done a lot in cybersecurity, but if you follow the news over the last year, that's very important these days. Everyone's concerned about data breaches," he said.

Cartee has also helped AT&T build from scratch a nationwide public safety network, known as the First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet, after the company won a \$7 billion contract from the federal government to build it in March 2017. The network would provide a broadband network dedicated to first responders to ensure law enforcement can communicate in a crisis situation.

"There's a lot that goes into that," Cartee said. "We have to help them structure a lot of contracts around getting the equipment they needed [and] deploying the equipment ... and [then] layer this all together to build a network."

The need for such a network was highlighted during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, when first responders were unable to communicate with each other because the lines were jammed with people calling loved ones.

— *As told to Suzanne Monyak*

Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2018 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 1,000 submissions.

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