



# 10 Rising Stars of Private Equity and M&A Law

By Mark Malyszko

**I**nstitutional Investor News has identified 10 individuals we expect to shape the private equity and M&A legal field in the years to come, profiling each in our inaugural edition of *10 Rising Stars of Private Equity and M&A Law*. The cream of the crop, these individuals are ready to lead the way forward in a demanding and increasingly complex segment of the financial services industry.

Nominees were submitted by investment banking, finance and legal professionals throughout the business world and were vetted and selected by our business publishing staff. Culled from top law firms around the globe, the selected individuals have demonstrated through their diligence, expertise and dedication that they are the legal dealmakers of the future.

The winning nominees come from a variety of legal backgrounds and represent clients in a host of industries, including biotechnology, energy, financial services, gaming, healthcare and information technology. Drawing upon their legal experience in the U.S. and Europe, they have led international and cross-border transactions in both emerging and established markets around the globe.

Looking forward, our winning nominees overwhelmingly said private equity will evolve over the next decade to

become less reliant on leveraged buyouts and that—in the wake of a policy change by the Federal Reserve Board—will have opportunities to grow in the banking sector. Overall, they believe that the industry is strong and will continue to be a force in financial and corporate transactions.

Other noteworthy points about our Rising Stars:

- All are partners at their respective law firms;
- Beyond basic law degrees, 30% have an LL.M., including one who has an LL.B. from South Africa;
- 10% are private equity fund formation specialists, in addition to being private equity M&A lawyers;
- 40% work in New York City and 10% in Washington, D.C.;
- Their average age is 39 (the youngest being 35 and the eldest being 44).

Selecting the 10 Rising Stars was a difficult task, as many outstanding individuals were nominated. We would like to thank the nominees and those who nominated them for making this list possible, and we look forward to charting the professional progress of our Rising Stars in the years to come.

So, without further ado, here are our Rising Stars, listed alphabetically by surname.

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## Global Private Equity and M&A Legal Guide



### CRAIG SKLAR

Partner

**Seward & Kissel, New York**

**Age: 37**

**Education: Fordham University School of Law (J.D.); New York University**

**(B.S. in Finance and Marketing)**

**Mentors: Russell Prince, General Counsel, ZAIS Group; Lawrence Rutkowski, Partner, Seward & Kissel; Margaret Smith, Vice President and General Counsel, Agrifos Fertilizer**

"My biggest professional accomplishment was overcoming the various naysayers who said that I could not make the transition from litigator to corporate attorney," said Sklar, who joined Seward & Kissel in 1998 and became a partner in 2006. Along with James Abbott, he heads up the firm's business transactions group.

One of Sklar's most noteworthy transactions was taking Euroseas Ltd., a small private shipping company, public through a merger of one of its subsidiaries with a public shell company. "At the time, Euroseas was not large enough to go public through a traditional IPO," he said. "This transaction included a contemporaneous private equity investment by certain institutional and accredited investors and Securities and Exchange Commission registration of the Euroseas shares issued in the merger and the private placement transaction." It was the first shipping company to go public in the U.S. through a unique reverse merger structure in which Euroseas needed to be the surviving company and the SEC registrant due to tax issues specific to shipping, he explained.

Prior to joining Seward & Kissel, Sklar worked at Burns Handler & Burns, which is now Handler & Goodman, starting out as an intern while still in law school. Upon graduation, he worked on various commercial, corporate, employment and trademark litigation matters until leaving the firm in 1998.

Looking forward, Sklar expects that he and Jim Abbott will continue to be co-lead partners in Seward & Kissel's business transactions group. "Jim and I believe that we are building something special at Seward & Kissel," he said. "We are devoting ourselves to middle-market M&A and private equity transactions, an area we believe is currently underserved in New York."

Sklar said it is difficult to predict how M&A and private equity law will evolve, but he expects new types of transactions and new structures will keep emerging as world economies continue to change and as companies and investors look for opportunities in new industries and new markets. "Hedge funds as participants in the M&A and private equity arenas will surely shape the future of those markets," he added.