

## THE LIST

# They're No. 1 — and here's what they have to say

Hundreds of companies strive to be No. 1 on our Lists every year. After putting together more than 80 Lists in 2016, we sat down with five leaders of companies who finished in the top spot. They have different backgrounds – law, finance, distribution, hospitality and technology. All the same, they shared their thoughts on 2017, how they find and develop talent, and their biggest worries, among other things. Want to know how industry leaders handle their business? Here's some insight straight from the top of our Lists.



## NICK MESITI

**Title:** Managing partner  
**Company:** Heslin Rothenberg Farley & Mesiti P.C.  
**Employees:** 70, including 32 attorneys  
**Offices:** Albany and Rochester  
**Years with the company:** 26  
**No. 1 on:** Intellectual Property Law Firms List

DONNA ABBOTT-VLAHOS



### Which CEOs do you admire?

Nationally I really admire Elon Musk [of Tesla and SpaceX]. He is so innovative and such a risk-taker. Locally, John Rode from Temper Corp. in Fonda. They've come up with some technology to adjust bearings on truck axles so that the wheels don't fall off trucks when not maintained properly. John has really, really learned how to use intellectual property to benefit his company.

### What is currently disrupting your business or industry?

There's always the uncertainty about the economy and what the future is going to bring. That seems somehow to disrupt business and keeps clients from doing things they want to do or should be doing because they're not confident in the economy. Another is health insurance costs. There have also been some recent court decisions, particularly from the Supreme Court, which have restricted and made it more difficult to obtain patent protection on computer-implemented inventions.

**What's your biggest worry right now?** Definitely health insurance, the increases in premium costs. We don't know what's going to happen with the new [President-elect Donald Trump] administration.

**How do you hire the right people?** We look for attorneys with technical backgrounds to practice in our area. That combination is generally hard to find. And then we look for people who want to be in the Capital District, which also makes it more difficult.

**How do you attract employees from outside the region?** We look for people who have ties to the area. We get people who either grew up in this area or who didn't grow up in this area but went to school or law school in the area, moved away and want to come back. Or people who moved to be closer to their spouses or family. Our business is generally dominated by big law firms in major cities like New York, Washington, Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles. It's easier for those firms to attract people, particularly younger grads from law school.

**How do you retain employees?** We keep them because we try to get them to have a good work-life balance. We are flexible in our hours. We offer really good benefits, including health insurance coverage, which is why that's a concern of ours. We promote this area as being an absolutely great place to live and raise a family.

**Being No. 1 in your industry in the area, what's your company's role in the local economy?** We consider ourselves to be the go-to IP firm in the area. Whenever there's IP issues in the area that companies have to deal with, we believe our role is to help them with those issues and help them navigate them.

**What are your expectations for the local and national economy in 2017?** We think the economy will grow. How much we're not sure, particularly with the new administration coming on, but we think it will grow.

—Michael DeMasi