

MVP: Latham's George Davis

By **Alex Wittenberg**

Law360 (October 29, 2024, 1:13 PM EDT) -- George Davis, global chair of Latham & Watkins LLP's restructuring and special situations practice, negotiated successful prepackaged Chapter 11 plans for Joann Inc. and Audacy and helped Mallinckrodt navigate two bankruptcy cases tied to opioid litigation, earning him a spot as one of the 2024 Law360 Bankruptcy MVPs.

His biggest accomplishment:

Davis said his biggest achievement of the year was delivering consensual capital solutions for companies to put their businesses in a stronger position to succeed.

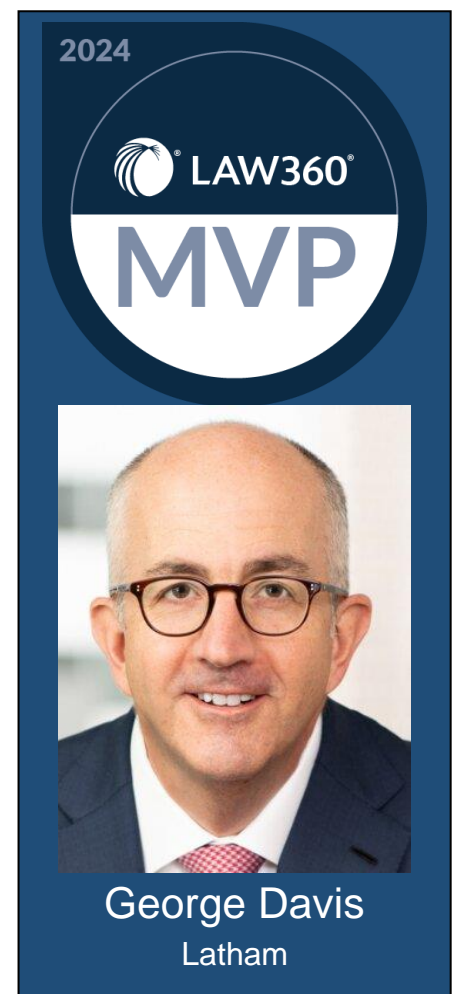
He crafted terms of the prepackaged Chapter 11 plan that enabled Joann Inc., the parent company of Joann Fabric and Crafts, to trim its funded debt in half and leave bankruptcy with \$153 million in exit financing a little over a month after filing the case. Davis negotiated with three groups of secured lenders, among others, to reach agreement on the deal.

Davis also helped Audacy cut its debt load by about \$1.6 billion through a prenegotiated Chapter 11 plan that calls for the company to equitize more than 80% of debt.

"I always feel proud about being able to fix a company's broken capital structure," he said. "It's rewarding to improve a company's financial prospects and competitive dynamics."

But his chief accomplishment was leading Mallinckrodt through its second Chapter 11 case. Davis navigated new litigation and complex discussions with a range of stakeholders to finalize a restructuring that reduced the pharmaceutical company's opioid obligations by \$1 billion and funded debt by \$1.9 billion.

"We were able to get capital structure claimants as well as the tort claimants to a consensual resolution, which I thought was pretty remarkable given the state of facts at the time," he said.



His biggest challenge:

Davis' work on Mallinckrodt's second bankruptcy case also represented the biggest challenge of his year.

His client had recently agreed to a stream of payments for tort claimants in connection with Mallinckrodt's first Chapter 11. As the company approached the due date for a post-bankruptcy payment, however, it realized it needed to renegotiate the disbursements.

Mallinckrodt ultimately achieved a consensual resolution with claimants through a second Chapter 11 case, allowing the company to advance its business with a focus on new products.

"Being able to deliver a consensual resolution with those claimants as well as with the funded debt creditors was a very challenging situation just given how close we were having those discussions after the emergence from the prior case," Davis said.

Why he's a bankruptcy and restructuring attorney:

Davis found bankruptcy and restructuring to be the most interesting field of law as he went through law school and started practicing as a young attorney.

"Close to 35 years later, it is still incredibly interesting and rewarding," he said.

Davis said his focus on restructuring allows him to be both a specialist and a generalist: He gets to delve deep into the minutiae of bankruptcy law but also contend with the broad scope of issues involved in companies' reorganization efforts. The work can also vary markedly from day to day.

"Some days what you're working on is largely transactional in nature, and other days it's more litigation-oriented," Davis said.

What motivates him:

Davis focuses on company-side representation because he considers it enriching to help companies restore their financial position and preserve jobs for people.

Much of his work involves taking a company that is struggling with a burdensome balance sheet and figuring out ways to return it to a competitive spot within its industry by reducing leverage and improving liquidity. That effort creates a brighter future for his clients, Davis said.

"That remains very rewarding to me to this day," he said.

His advice for junior attorneys:

Davis said he would encourage young lawyers to show up at the office and take advantage of in-person opportunities to learn "by osmosis." Early-career attorneys should find good mentors, strike up hallway conversations and learn by listening in on calls conducted by their more experienced colleagues.

But first, they should be sure they love the area of law they decide to focus on, Davis said.

"Make sure it's something that inspires you and motivates you," he said. "That's the key to ultimately being successful in whatever area of law you pursue."

--As told to Alex Wittenberg. Editing by Dave Trumbore.

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 2024 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.

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