

MVP: Covington & Burling's Scott Freling

By Rae Ann Varona

Law360 (September 26, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT) -- Scott Freling of Covington & Burling LLP is an M&A maven, having guided big deals, including Veritas Capital's \$1.65 billion sale of a company he helped the firm acquire, earning him a spot as one of Law360's 2022 Government Contracts MVPs.

HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE PAST YEAR:

Freling has racked up a number of accomplishments in the past year, working on a wide range of client merger and acquisition deals, and guiding many leading private equity firms like Veritas Capital, Lindsay Goldberg and Warburg Pincus, among others, in government contract deals.

Freling was also named a vice chair of Covington's government contracts practice earlier this year.

"It's been incredibly rewarding to be in that role and to lead such a talented group of lawyers," Freling said, adding that the firm was looking to have one of the "largest and most vibrant" practices in the United States.

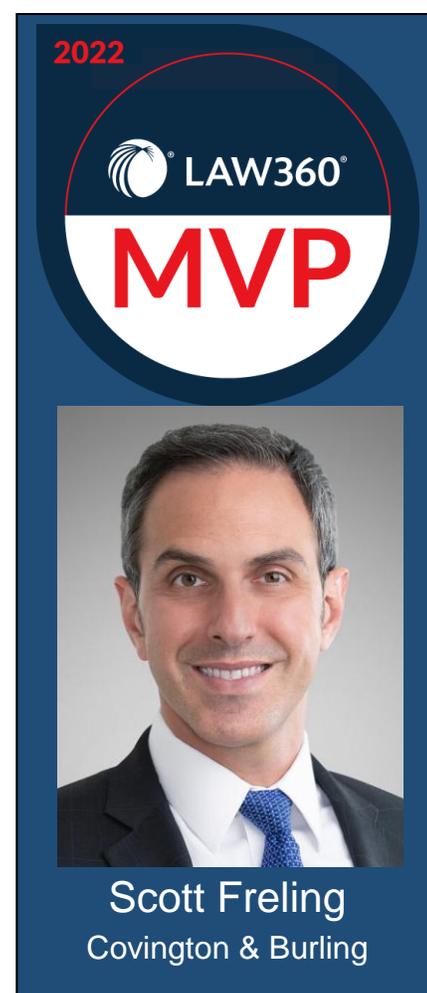
"While it's been a challenge to balance this new responsibility with a busy client workload, I've enjoyed the opportunity in the process of giving back to the firm and my clients," he said.

HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN THE PAST YEAR:

Despite a year filled with challenging deals, Freling said that like many people, one of the biggest challenges he faced this year was emerging from the pandemic and full-time remote work.

Reconnecting with his colleagues and clients has been great, he said. But he noted that during the past two-plus years of working from home, he and his family have become "hooked on nightly dinners and other family activities."

"My challenge has really been to continue to be very present at home with my wife and three kids while at the same time keeping up with the demands of busy client work and rebuilding relationships with colleagues and clients," Freling said.



NOTABLE DEALS HE'S WORKED ON:

When asked about deals he was proud to have worked on, Freling said one that came to mind from this year was guiding private equity firm Veritas Capital's \$1.65 billion sale of its portfolio company Alion Science and Technology to Huntington Ingalls, the United States' largest military shipbuilder.

Freling had guided Veritas Capital and its portfolio companies in a number of investment opportunities, including nine mergers and acquisition transactions collectively worth over \$4.5 billion dollars.

For example, he helped Veritas Capital's Peraton Inc. acquire ViON Corp.'s as-a-service business and helped Guidehouse acquire Dovel Technologies.

Freling said that the reason he was so proud of the \$1.65 billion sale of Alion was that he had helped Veritas Capital acquire Alion six years earlier and worked very closely with the two on a range of legal matters over the years, and watched them transform into a stronger company.

"I was really delighted to see that transformation," Freling said.

He said he was also proud to have represented publicly traded government services contractor Vectrus Inc. — a leading provider of critical mission support — in its merger with private-equity-owned company The Vertex Co., together becoming a new company called V2X.

"It was incredibly satisfying to work alongside the Vectrus team to create a deal, which was really transformational for its business," Freling said. "It's going to create a much more powerful company going forward."

WHY HE'S A GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS ATTORNEY:

Freling said he's always been fascinated by how the government works.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, Freling said that fascination prompted him to move to Washington, D.C., right after law school, where he ended up serving as a law clerk at the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in his first year following graduation.

Freling said it was at the Federal Claims Court that he first discovered what a government contract was and the wide range of products and services the government purchases.

The government, he explained, is incredibly reliant on contractors, and as a government contracts lawyer, Freling said he gets to "dig into the particulars" of each procurement his clients are involved in. That opportunity, he said, is a large reason why he's drawn to the practice.

"It's really amazing," he said. "One day, it's a big defense weapon system, and another day, it's services that support a civilian program."

"It's very diverse in the different things that the government acquires," Freling added.

WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:

Freling said he finds motivation in both his colleagues at Covington and his clients.

"I really do find that I'm fortunate to be able to work with such an incredible group of colleagues and friends at Covington that are committed to excellence in what they do and to deliver it for clients," he

said. "I've always found motivation in that."

When it comes to working for his clients, Freling said there was "no shortage" of challenging issues to confront, pointing to complicated carve-out transactions and "tricky compliance matters" as examples.

"I really enjoy getting my arms around each issue and working to identify solutions," he said.

HIS ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:

Freling's advice to junior attorneys is simple — find passion in what you do.

"It's a demanding career, being in a kind of service business, and you want to be excited about the work you do," he said. "In my experience, it's a lot easier to do that when you really get excited about the stuff you're working on."

He said that in his career, he started off as a broad-based government contracts lawyer, but began to gravitate toward and concentrate on what he found most interesting.

He encouraged junior lawyers to do the same and expand in the range of work that they do and try to find the particular aspects of the job they find most interesting and make a practice out of it.

— *As told to Rae Ann Varona.*

Law360's MVPs of the Year 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 2022 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.