

Titan Of The Plaintiffs Bar: Boies Schiller's Matthew Schwartz

By Sarah Jarvis

Law360 (May 29, 2026, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Matthew L. Schwartz oscillated among many career aspirations as a kid, from astronaut to mayor of New York. When it was time to head off to college, the man who would go on to handle the prosecution of employees tied to Bernie Madoff and become chair of Boies Schiller Flexner LLP set his sights on science, earning an undergraduate degree in physics.

"What I never really wanted to be until I actually had to make a decision was a lawyer," said Schwartz, who is among the Law360 2026 Titans of the Plaintiffs Bar.

Schwartz also earned a bachelor's in philosophy, and somewhere along the way, he began to consider law school. While interning for a judge in the Southern District of New York during his first summer at Columbia Law School, Schwartz told Law360 that he developed a clear plan to become a federal prosecutor, which came to fruition a few years later.

Schwartz's law career took off quickly — he held two federal clerkships after law school and was appointed special master of a multidistrict securities fraud litigation over technology bubble-era initial public offerings. He joined Boies Schiller after working as a prosecutor, but it's his time as a science undergraduate that he credits with forming the way he approaches law.

"Legal writing is essentially a [mathematical] proof, and I think that that sort of analytical rigor in my thinking translates directly into the way that I think as a lawyer," he said, adding that scientific precision is particularly helpful for the complex financial matters he handles today.

"I think it's a really excellent background for a lawyer to have," Schwartz said.

Brian Feldman, a partner at Aurelian Law PLLC who was a junior assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of New York with Schwartz, said Schwartz's ability to come up with efficient plans and solutions to overwhelming and difficult matters makes him a powerful lawyer.

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Matthew Schwartz
Boies Schiller

How does your science background impact your law practice?

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"He has this ability to take the complex and distill it down to something that's simple and obvious-seeming after he explains it to you," Feldman said. "It's really incredible."

Schwartz and Feldman joined the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York around the same time in the mid-2000s. Feldman said the two worked long hours together "pretty much seven days a week," and he would often ask Schwartz for advice.

Feldman highlighted Schwartz's service as a special master prior to joining the U.S. attorney's office, saying he was shocked and impressed that such a relatively young attorney received that appointment.

Feldman said he still calls Schwartz for various reasons, such as when he can't figure something out at work. The two are working as co-counsel on an antitrust pharmaceutical case in which they are opposing a petition for certiorari before the U.S. Supreme Court, after the Second Circuit revived the suit in August.

"I've often told people, if I had to strike one lawyer from being on the opposite side of any case, my first strike would be Matthew Schwartz," Feldman said.

Schwartz started at the U.S. attorney's office doing primarily civil work for the government before he found himself "in the middle of the global financial crisis," representing the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the presidential task force on the auto industry in the bankruptcy of General Motors and acting as first chair in some of those hearings.

"It's a remarkable thing to see the president of the United States talking on television about a case that you're handling," he said.

His financial crisis-related work led him to become a full-time prosecutor, and Schwartz oversaw the team that investigated and prosecuted all the Madoff-related cases. The work included a six-month jury trial of five longtime co-conspirators of Madoff — all of whom Schwartz's team secured convictions against — and settlements that recovered billions for victims, including with financial institutions used in Madoff's crime.

"That was a real responsibility and a real privilege to lead those matters," Schwartz said.

"I think it's directly informed my approach to the work that I do now, especially the plaintiffs' side work on behalf of people who have been, in one form or another, victimized — usually by financial misconduct or crimes," he said.

Schwartz's time at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York was also formative for the relationships he built there, including with his first-ever trial partner, Peter Skinner, and his co-prosecutor in the Madoff-related trial, John Zach — both of whom are now partners at Boies Schiller.

Schwartz said he always knew he would want to represent private clients at some point, and Boies Schiller presented him with "an irresistible opportunity" to join the firm in 2015 and develop its global investigations practice with a number of his colleagues and friends.

"We're all still working together, doing what we set out to do more than a decade ago," he said.

He said some of the matters he's most proud to have worked on, especially more recently, are "the ones

that you'll never have heard of, because it never became a case," referring to government investigations into clients that yield no litigation or prosecution.

Some of the matters he has handled recently included being lead counsel for the city of Almaty, Kazakhstan, and BTA Bank JSC, securing a jury verdict in October worth more than \$100 million stemming from claims that real estate financier and former Donald Trump ally Felix Sater skimmed money while helping others launder tens of millions of dollars. Schwartz led teams on behalf of the plaintiffs in three trials, where they have been awarded more than \$200 million by juries and notched additional judgments in excess of \$7.5 billion, according to Boies Schiller.

Schwartz also secured a precedent-setting appellate victory in January 2025 on the ability to copyright movable sculptures by representing sculptor and toy manufacturer Tangle Inc. in appealing the dismissal of copyright infringement claims against clothing retailer Aritzia. The retailer allegedly copied Tangle's "kinetic" sculptures — composed of interlocking parts — and displayed them in storefronts, and the Ninth Circuit found the movable sculptures were protected regardless of their configuration.

Schwartz said his greatest strength is his ability to quickly understand a lot of information and plan next steps, but the flip side of that expertise is that it "can sometimes make a person impatient."

Schwartz became chair of Boies Schiller last year, taking over the reins from co-founder David Boies, and he was a managing partner for several years prior to that. Schwartz said that when he started getting involved in firm management, his instinct was to do everything himself, or at least to review everything in detail — from rewriting briefs to checking citations and spreadsheet numbers.

"That is both not sustainable in the kind of practice that we have, and it's also a recipe for making the people that you work with miserable," he said.

But taking a note from his time in government — where he handled a tremendous amount of responsibility as a young person — Schwartz said the practice of hiring is crucial to find attorneys who are reliable for both their legal skills and their sense of judgment.

"Making sure that you have the right people makes it infinitely easier to then trust and delegate to those people," he said.

--Additional reporting by Bryan Koenig, Cara Salvatore and Xiumei Dong. Editing by Melissa Treolo.