

Real Estate-Focused Firm Homed In on Work

LAUNCH: Big Law skips trophy space to open virtual Westwood office.

ELI Taban's new law firm is called **Big Law Partners**, but if you show up at its Westwood offices, you won't find any attorneys. That's because the firm's business address on Wilshire Boulevard is a virtual office, where a company is paid to provide mail and phone services, and where physical office space is available for rent on a temporary basis. The attorneys work from their homes.

The model is common in other industries but still emerging and relatively uncommon in the legal industry, which has long valued trophy office space.

Taban said getting rid of the office space enables him to cut costs and offer lower rates. For five years, he was in-house counsel at downtown L.A. real estate investor **Jade Enterprises**. When looking to hire outside legal help, he found a lack of affordable high-quality legal services. He decided there was a niche he could fill.

"We ran into a problem of feeling like we had to compromise on quality or we had to pay up well beyond what we thought was reasonable for services," he said. "It really boiled down to feeling like there was a gap in the marketplace that I could meet and I felt there was significant demand for."

Big Law, which launched last week, will charge no more than \$375 an hour, and in some cases less than \$300. The firm will specialize in real estate transactional work and target noninstitutional clients such as middle-market real estate investment companies and tenants renegotiating leases.

He plans to hire attorneys with extensive law experience looking for flexible hours, usually older attorneys or those with young children. So far, he has hired **Dean Craig Walker** and **Herb Meyers**, both attorneys with 30-plus years of experience at firms including **O'Melveny & Myers** and **Glaser Weil Fink Jacobs Howard Avchen & Shapiro**, respectively. Taban estimates the firm will grow to about 10 attorneys in its first year.

New Outpost

Tredway Lumsdaine & Doyle's new Long Beach office reflects a southern shift from the firm's geographic focus in Downey, where it was founded.

The office at the Kilroy Business Center replaces a smaller Long Beach office and the firm has moved some of its attorneys there from Downey. The firm now has 16 attorneys in four offices.

Matt Kinley, partner in the Long Beach office, said the firm wanted to concentrate its work on the 405 corridor from the South Bay to Irvine. It offers a variety of legal services to small and midsize businesses, including corporate work, litigation, employment and health care law.

"We sat back and thought about it and that area is a manageable location," he said. "There are a lot of businesses there with regard to our practice areas."

The 9,000-square-foot office space opened last month and also has many nontraditional features for a law firm, starting with 12 equally sized glass offices. Associates are put in identical spaces as firm partners. That allows the firm to fit more attorneys into a smaller space.

The office also has a "Skype wall" – a 60-inch mounted screen connected through Skype to a screen in the firm's Irvine office. The screens are left on all day, and attorneys and staff passing by can say hello to each other or hold meetings.

"We've always been into making sure people had the one-office feel even though we're separated. It's a very difficult prospect to keep that feel," Kinley said.



Taban



Kinley



Allen

New Consultant

New York's **DOAR Litigation Consulting**, which has provided consulting services in large legal cases on the East Coast, has opened a downtown L.A. office in reaction to what it sees as an uptick in major filings on the West Coast.

The firm offers jury consulting, graphics

design and trial presentation consulting services to attorneys, with rates varying from \$175 to \$600 an hour. President **Scott Allen**, who has moved to Los Angeles, said the firm was particularly attracted to the area by large securities

matters and a growing number of intellectual property cases involving technology and content companies.

"We see a great concentration of litigation in the type we have historically done happening in the Central District of California, and we wanted to be involved," he said.

In addition to help with jury selection and

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ALFRED LEE



graphics, the firm does focus group testing of possible arguments and storylines to be used by attorneys, and also runs mock trials. Recently, Allen said that the firm has drawn more work applying its techniques to bench trials and arbitration proceedings by testing out cases on retired judges and arbitrators.

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