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Top Boutiques

GIANT SLAYERS:

the small, hyper-focused
law firms that take on
big matters and win



Top Boutiques of 2015

GIANT SLAYERS: THE SMALL, HYPER-FOCUSED LAW FIRMS THAT TAKE ON BIG MATTERS AND WIN
LITIGATION

Lewis & Llewellyn LLP



Paul Llewellyn, left, and Marc Lewis

Sam Attal / Special to the Daily Journal

After Marc R. Lewis and Paul T. Llewellyn departed from the occupational safety of Latham & Watkins LLP and launched their own law firm, they had to manage a slight hiccup on the first day of business in early 2012.

“It was a Monday morning in February 2012 and we didn’t have a single client,” Lewis said. “By that evening we landed a real estate suit. Now we have more than 100 clients and are managing two dozen active matters.”

Based in San Francisco, Lewis & Llewellyn LLP has seven attorneys today. They focus on civil litigation and their suits range from insurance claims to handling the consequences of sexual abuse. That freedom to pursue a range of litigation cases was at

SAN FRANCISCO

the heart of their decision to launch a firm

“We routinely work on numerous matters,” Lewis said. “It’s an intense workload but we love what we do.”

The majority of their workload focuses on business litigation, but they both said that one of the more moving cases they’ve handled revolved around childhood sexual abuse claims in the Moraga School District in Contra Costa County. Under their legal effort, the district’s insurance company agreed to settle with former student Kristen Cunnane for \$2.85 million in 2014 after several years of no legal activity.

“She’d been abused from 1996-

2000 and there were statute of limitations arguments,” Llewellyn said. “She had a very difficult case. Now we have a reputation of being the tip of the spear on bringing change on these issues. It’s very rewarding.”

A retired partner with Latham helped boost the firm by recommending Plantronics Inc. keep counsel with Lewis & Llewellyn on an insurance dispute that stretches back to 2007. Both attorneys were Latham associates at the start of the case. The Santa Cruz-based company was facing allegations from several insurance companies that its blue tooth headsets caused hearing loss.

“I had a previous relationship with the partner and he said ‘you should stick with them,’” Plantronics general

counsel Richard Pickard said. “Their service has been great.”

Lewis & Llewellyn has pulled their team of attorneys from the ranks of both Latham and Winston & Strawn LLP. The draw to working for a small firm is the potential to tackle a gambit of legal issues, they both said. And it’s part of their recruiting message.

“We both had wonderful experiences at Latham,” Lewis said. “But we wanted to have more control over how cases are litigated and we wanted to go to trial more. We wanted to transform.”

The firm has represented several Fortune 100 companies, including Tesla Motors Inc., The Clorox Co., Yelp Inc. and Oracle America Inc.

— Banks Albach