

Supplement to the Los Angeles and San Francisco

**Daily Journal**

OCTOBER 14, 2015

# Top Boutiques

## GIANT SLAYERS:

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



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## Editors' Note

The most exciting development in the legal industry in recent years has been the rise of smaller, often hyper-focused law firms. First technology and then the recession allowed these firms to compete in a market traditionally the province of large firms with significant resources. Lawyers at these small firms are especially competent and passionate about new possibilities. They are tackling complicated and often huge matters unavailable to them just a decade ago.

A much debated topic during the recession was whether the work being moved to smaller firms by clients looking to save money would flow back to larger firms once the economy returned. But small, hyper-focused firms demonstrated they could provide the same level of service as bigger firms more efficiently and less costly. The economy is coming back and much of that work has remained with them.

The Daily Journal created this supplement as part of a larger effort to report on these firms. For this issue we looked at law firms that are hyper-focused, not offering full service but providing superior service in a niche. What we found are firms working on the most cutting edge matters. Their situations aren't easy. Fewer resources and less infrastructure often require they perform many tasks to deliver the service their clients require. But they are innovative and entrepreneurial – and they are succeeding. Their lawyers often compare their situations to the parable of David and Goliath and the analogy is apropos. Reading through this issue you'll see many instances in which these firms went against terrific odds and killed giants. So here's to the Davids of the legal industry, and their slingshots!

—The Editors

## Daily Journal

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## Top Boutiques of 2015

### LITIGATION

## Early Sullivan Wright Gizer & McRae LLP



Alexander Drecun / Special to the Daily Journal

From left, Devin McRae, William Wright, Scott Gizer, Bryan Sullivan, Eric Early

**M**anaging partner Eric Early said he believes the best trial lawyers know how to tell a story, how to marshal facts and the law to get to the heart of an issue. And that's just what the attorneys at Early Sullivan Wright Gizer & McRae LLP strive to do.

Specializing in business litigation, the firm's 16 attorneys handle a wide spectrum of cases that include real estate, entertainment, intellectual property, title insurance and partnership, corporate and securities litigation.

The secret to the success is simple, Early said. Building strong teams of people dedicated to the work who strive to do the best job possible for each case and every client.

### LOS ANGELES

"There's really no substitute for good old-fashioned hard work and we work hard. There are no shortcuts in this business," he said.

The firm, which practices primarily in California, Nevada and Wisconsin, has a client list that includes several high profile companies such as Sun West Mortgage Co. Inc., Warner/Chappell Music Inc., Meridian Health Services Holdings Inc. Fidelity National Financial Inc. and First American Title Insurance Co.

Early started the firm in 2010 with what he calls five "up and coming stars." Within two years, Early won a complete defense verdict while acting as lead trial

counsel defending Fidelity National Financial against a Hawaii-based bank. That verdict, in which the bank sought \$55 million, was selected by *The Daily Journal* as one of the "Top Defense Verdicts of the Year," in 2012.

Last year, Early Sullivan successfully represented United General Title Insurance Co. ("United General") in opposing RNT Holding's appeal of Early Sullivan's underlying summary judgment victory for United General. The Court of Appeal's decision provides clarity regarding the interpretation of key title insurance exclusions and establishes that an insured lender's release of its insured interest in a subject property

terminates the insurer's potential liability.

More recently, Early Sullivan won a complete defense verdict in a case brought against its client Meridian Healthcare, a leading nursing home operator in California, in which \$9 million plus punitive damages had been sought.

In another case, the firm represents CPIF California LLC, a lender that made a \$10 million loan thinking it was getting a first position lien, but was in fact being used by the owner of the property as part of a massive fraud involving multiple lenders. In the aftermath, each of the lenders involved, with loans totaling more than \$30 million, claims to have been defrauded and are attempting to secure the property for themselves.

"We love complex issues and what we do," said Early. "We love these issues, unravelling them, figuring them out, getting to the truth of the dispute and solving the situation."

Early said he started the firm because he, and the other partners, wanted to move in their own direction. Now, with nearly a dozen more attorneys and the results pouring in, he has bigger plans.

"We've always had a vision of growing organically. We are conservative financially, but as the business continues to grow and the client base has grown substantially, we grow with it," he said. "We are building a platform to be what we believe and hope to be -- one of the great Los Angeles and California law firms."

—Ryan Van Velzer