

# Real Estate-Focused Firm Homed In on Work

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

By **ALFRED LEE**

Monday, October 7, 2013

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, currently charges no more than \$275 an hour, though the rate could go up to \$375 in the future.

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.

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