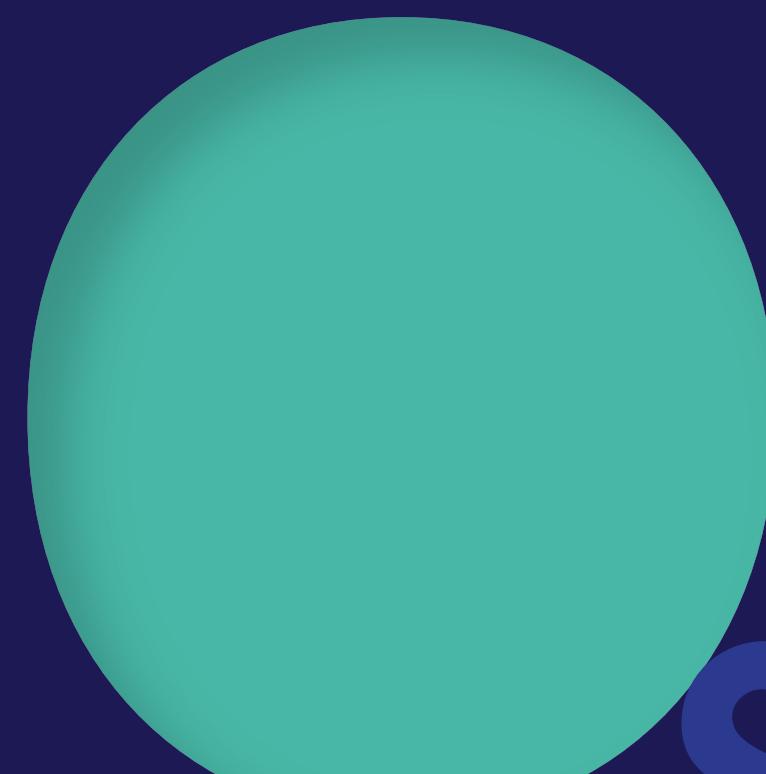


# THRIVING IN THEIR



## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE

**A** SKILLED BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL – BE IT AN ACCOUNTANT, ATTORNEY, BANKER, REAL ESTATE EXPERT, INSURANCE professional or some other form of trusted advisor – can be one of the key ingredients for any company's success. Working with an expert who possesses the right skill set can actually help set growth in motion for businesses in virtually any industry.

Demand for such expertise can be competitive. Fortunately, Los Angeles is home to a growing group of such established experts – and the numbers of young people training to become such professionals are up. Currently, in the Los Angeles region, there is no shortage of excellent advisors, many of whom happen to be in their 40s.

Listed alphabetically in this section, you'll find a selection of Los Angeles' leading professionals in their 40s, along with some insights about their careers, attributes and accomplishments.

*Methodology: The professionals featured in these pages did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials submitted to the Los Angeles Business Journal. Those selected for inclusion were reviewed by the editorial department. The professionals were chosen based on a demonstration of impact made on the profession and on the Los Angeles community.*

## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**ELIZABETH (BETH) ACEVEDO**Shareholder; Director  
Weinstock Manion

**E**lizabeth (Beth) Acevedo applies a broad background in estate planning, probate and trust administration, and income, gift, estate and property tax matters to develop sophisticated, multi-generational estate plans for high net worth and ultra-high net worth individuals and families, and to advise fiduciaries and beneficiaries in complex estate and trust administration matters.

Through the careful crafting and implementation of their estate planning documents, Acevedo identifies and addresses potential conflicts before they occur while maintaining the clients' interpersonal and wealth transfer goals. Acevedo's compassionate and detailed approach to probate and trust administration matters brings beneficiaries and fiduciaries peace of mind during what can be an emotionally stressful time.

**ARAM AFSHAR**Luxury Property Specialist  
Coldwell Banker Realty

**A**ram Afshar is a top-producing luxury property specialist at Coldwell Banker Realty. With over 20 years of experience in real estate, Afshar has closed more than 1,000 residential transactions totaling over \$1.1 billion in sales volume. He leads one of the most successful real estate teams in California and has been recognized repeatedly with Coldwell Banker's International President's Elite.

Afshar's career spans all facets of the industry—from finance and development to luxury sales and international partnerships. He is the exclusive real estate partner of Quintessentially Estates, a global luxury lifestyle network, and serves as its West Coast president. His clientele includes high-net-worth individuals from around the world, benefiting from his deep local expertise and global reach.

**MARISSA ALGUIRE**Deputy Chair,  
Labor and Employment Practice Group  
Akerman LLP

**M**arissa Alguire is a partner at Akerman LLP and serves as deputy chair of the firm's national Labor & Employment Practice Group. She represents employers in all aspects of employment-related business matters and litigation in state and federal courts and in arbitration. She focuses on vigorously defending management in class action, multi-plaintiff and single plaintiff lawsuits involving harassment, discrimination, wrongful termination, retaliation, wage-and-hour violations, and Private Attorneys General Act claims.

Alguire also regularly defends clients before agencies such as the Department of Fair Employment and Housing, the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the US Department of Labor, and the Employment Development Department.

**RAINY HAKE AUSTIN**President  
The Agency

**R**ainy Hake Austin is a visionary leader with over 25 years of experience in luxury real estate, known for her ability to scale and elevate prestigious brokerages while building inclusive, people-centered cultures. Currently serving as president of The Agency, she oversees the company's global expansion and the growth of its key divisions: residential real estate, ancillary services, franchise operations, new development and new lifestyle ventures such as The Agency Art House.

Austin is passionate about marketing and branding, and leads The Agency's unique strategy and positioning in these key areas. Her strategic leadership has played a pivotal role in driving innovation, operational excellence, and a world-class client experience, making The Agency one of the most respected and fastest-growing luxury brokerages worldwide.

**JORDAN BARBAKOW**Vice President, Fund Development  
SDS Capital Group

**A**fter spending twelve years making dough as a professional baker, SDS Capital Group vice president of fund development Jordan Barbakow realized he needed a career that would allow him to better provide for the financial and time needs of his growing family. Barbakow returned to school, earning a Master's Degree in urban planning with an emphasis on housing, which turned out to be a perfect segue when an opportunity arose to join the SDS team, a company focused on providing financial solutions to the growing housing crisis in Los Angeles and across the country.

At SDS, Barbakow focuses on fundraising and investor relations, and he has put together a proven track record of raising capital for real estate funds and developing strong relationships with limited partners.

**ELAN BLOCH**Partner  
Sklar Kirsh LLP

**E**lan Bloch is a partner at Sklar Kirsh and acting chair of the Litigation Department. He is a skilled litigator and trusted advisor whose practice centers on complex commercial litigation and business counseling. He represents clients in matters involving real estate, partnerships, fiduciary duties, contracts, corporate governance, and unfair competition in both state and federal courts. Known for his thoughtful approach and steady advocacy, Bloch brings clarity to complex issues and consistently achieves practical, strategic results.

In addition to his litigation work, Bloch serves as outside general counsel to businesses and individuals, advising on employment, real estate, governance, and trade secret protection, and guiding clients through key transactions. He previously worked as a licensed commercial real estate agent and acquisitions professional.

**PATRICIA BRUM**Partner  
Snell & Wilmer

**O**ver the past year, Patricia Brum has continued to distinguish herself as one of Los Angeles' most dynamic and accomplished business litigators. A partner in the Los Angeles office of Snell & Wilmer, a full-service business law firm with more than 500 attorneys across 17 locations in the United States and Mexico, Brum represents major financial institutions and Fortune 500 companies in high-stakes consumer and commercial disputes, including matters involving cutting-edge data privacy protection laws.

A Brazilian native, Brum brings more than 15 years of international business experience to her legal practice. Before becoming an attorney, she worked as an international trade specialist with organizations such as the United Nations, Ernst & Young, and several multinational corporations.

**PATRICK CARTER**SVP; Relationship Manager,  
Real Estate Banking  
PNC Bank

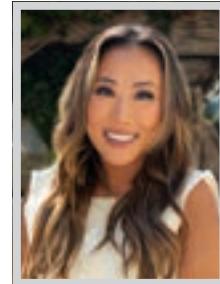
**P**atrick Carter's career is defined by his ability to turn challenge into opportunity and vision into tangible community impact. Beginning his career at Union Bank just before the housing crisis and the Great Recession, he quickly learned the complexities of real estate finance under pressure.

Over the next 17 years, Carter worked with developers of all sizes, ranging from major organizations to single-entity builders, earning a reputation for collaboration and integrity. When PNC expanded into Los Angeles, Patrick was recruited to help expand its real estate banking presence simultaneously managing transactions and while building PNC's reputation as a trusted financial partner. His approach is always people first, focusing on relationships that extended beyond the deal and into long-term community development.

**DEREK CHAIKEN**Attorney  
Merlin Law Group

**A**s a litigation attorney at Merlin Law Group, Derek Chaiken has dedicated his practice to standing up for individuals and businesses against the insurance companies that too often fail them in their greatest moments of need. Representing individuals and businesses across California and beyond, Chaiken has earned a reputation as a relentless advocate and trusted advisor for policyholders navigating complex coverage disputes.

Over the last decade, Chaiken has become a key advocate for hundreds of homeowners and businesses, guiding them through challenging wrongful coverage denials and educating communities about their rights, including those impacted by the Los Angeles county wildfires. His involvement has helped countless families navigate one of the most stressful chapters of their lives and has underscored his role as a champion for wildfire victims.

**JENNIFER CHANG**Education Rights Attorney  
Law Offices of Jennifer Chang

**W**ith over a decade of experience in the complex laws of special education, Jennifer Chang has had great success assisting students with disabilities and their families to understand and exercise their legal rights and receive the services they are entitled to under the law. The core of Chang's practice focuses on advocating for students with disabilities and helping families navigate the complexities of the special education systems within the California public school system. Her passion for helping others and her decades of experience have led her to accomplish exceptional results for families throughout California who feel like they have nowhere else to turn.

Chang's work protects students with disabilities and ensures they receive the curriculum and services required from public schools to provide access to general education.

Congratulations



**PADRAIC FORAN  
CHRISTINA VON DER  
AHE RAYBURN**

**Leaders of Influence: Thriving in Their 40s**  
—*Los Angeles Business Journal*

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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**ANGELINE CHEN***Senior Counsel  
Clark Hill*

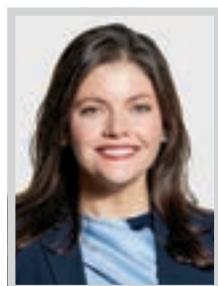
Angeline Chen's impact extends well beyond her practice and into her LA community as she leverages her time and deep immigration knowledge in concerted efforts to help people who can't afford representation.

Chen counsels clients in developing and implementing strategies to address complex immigration matters, including obtaining family-based or employment-based permanent residency, work visas and legal status. As a community leader, she assists families that have been separated during border crossings by providing legal advice, food, supplies and donating items for migrant shelters housing those to seek asylum in the US. In recent years and through her law practice, Chen has successfully represented victims of domestic violence committed by their US citizen spouses and individuals who were undocumented in receiving their permanent residency.

**WILL CHUCHAWAT***Partner  
Baker Hostetler*

In the high-stakes world of mergers and acquisitions, Will Chuchawat stands out not just for the volume of deals he's done — more than 500 over the course of his career — but for the vision and leadership he brings to each transaction. As the firmwide co-leader of M&A at one of the nation's top law firms, Chuchawat is a trusted advisor to private equity firms, venture capitalists and Fortune 500 companies across industries as diverse as technology, industrials, healthcare, A&D, financial services and consumer.

Chuchawat's fingerprints are on some of the most complex and high-impact deals in recent years. His ability to navigate both billion-dollar transactions and middle-market deals with precision and insight has earned him national recognition.

**MAITE COLÓN***Senior Counsel  
Andrade Gonzalez LLP*

Maite Colón stands out as an exemplary legal professional, serving as a skilled and respected senior counsel at Andrade González LLP. What distinguishes Colón is her consistent ability to excel in high-stakes matters, deliver meaningful results for clients, and lead with integrity.

Colón's practice includes representing public entities in both insurance coverage and liability matters, and representing large corporate clients in catastrophic injury and wrongful death cases arising from major construction and project development disputes. She has secured numerous favorable settlements in high-stakes commercial, construction, and public-entity matters, including multi-million-dollar disputes involving public infrastructure and catastrophic workplace incidents.

**KATY CONROY***Partner  
Sklar Kirsh LLP*

Katy Conroy is a partner in the Corporate and Real Estate Departments at Sklar Kirsh LLP, where she has built an impressive record of achievement guiding clients through sophisticated corporate and real estate transactions. With extensive experience in mergers and acquisitions, and equity and debt financings, she is known for her strategic acumen and ability to anticipate and navigate complex deal dynamics. Conroy provides comprehensive counsel from structuring and negotiation through execution and post-closing, ensuring that every transaction aligns with her clients' objectives.

In the real estate sector, Conroy's depth of experience extends to equity investments, syndications, fund formations, and joint ventures involving multifamily, industrial, hospitality, development and office properties.

**ANDREW COPANS***West Coast Co-Chair, Private Wealth  
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP*

Andrew Copans is a partner and West Coast co-chair of Willkie's Private Wealth Group in Los Angeles. He is a skilled and talented lawyer. His strategic thinking contributes to his success in being a trusted advisor for his clients. He focuses on tax and wealth planning for high net-worth individuals, trusts, and estates in myriad industries. Copans' guidance is sought after for business succession planning, creation of private trust companies, charitable planning, family office structuring and administration, and posthumous estate and trust administration.

Over the past year, Copans assisted a 96-year-old business owner with a complex combination of wealth transfer and business succession matters. The client is now relieved that the business he built from scratch will have the opportunity to flourish when he is not here.

**ELIZABETH COUSINS***Chair, Infrastructure Group  
Nossaman*

Elizabeth Cousins, chair of Nossaman's Infrastructure Group, has advised clients on an array of important infrastructure projects delivered through public-private partnerships (P3s), progressive and fixed price design-build, design-build-operate/maintain and other alternative delivery methods for more than 18 years.

Public and private entities have benefited from Cousins' strategic and commercial advice in procuring complex and cutting-edge projects in the water, social and transportation infrastructure sectors. As a former attorney at one of Australia's leading law firms, she advised on some of that country's highest profile P3 deals. She now uses her skills to advance large US projects. Cousins is often called upon to help public agency clients launch their own alternative delivery programs to produce high-impact, one-of-a-kind projects.

**JESSE CREED***Partner; Trial Attorney  
Panish | Shea | Ravipudi LLP*

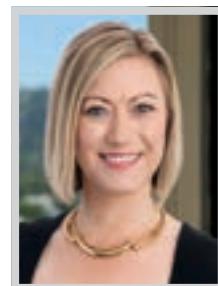
Panish | Shea | Ravipudi LLP partner Jesse Creed focuses his practice on complex and catastrophic personal injury, wrongful death, sexual abuse, and product liability cases and has obtained billions of dollars in recoveries for plaintiffs. A three-time California Lawyer of the Year Award recipient, Creed is admitted to practice in Arizona, California, Hawai'i, and Nevada, and currently serves as co-liaison counsel in the Maui Fire Cases litigation.

In the Maui Fire Cases, Creed was instrumental in developing one of the most creative and innovative mass tort settlements. In order to fulfill a condition to the \$4.8 billion global settlement, Creed was the lead lawyer to argue before the Hawaii Supreme Court that the plaintiffs had a right to settle their claims without interference from Subrogating Insurers.

**ALESHA DOMINIQUE***Partner  
Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP*

Early in Alesha Dominique's career, she learned to trust her instincts when she was the only first year associate on a significant patent litigation case. Thinking out of the box, her draft jury instructions were contested as controversial. They were eventually accepted by the court, heavily benefiting the client and leading ultimately to a successful result in the case.

Today, as a partner in Norton Rose Fulbright's Los Angeles office, Dominique uses her years of experience to continue to benefit her clients. Her national litigation practice currently focuses on trademark, false advertising, unfair competition, copyright, defamation and right of publicity matters. In addition to federal court litigation, she represents clients before the US Trademark Trial and Appeal Board.

**ELIZABETH DRYDEN***Partner  
Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP*

Elizabeth Dryden is a highly accomplished real estate attorney whose practice reflects both depth and versatility across all facets of real estate transactions. As a partner in the Real Estate Department, she represents a diverse range of clients — including institutional and private lenders, property owners, developers, private equity investors, and high-net-worth individuals — on acquisitions, dispositions, leasing, financings and joint venture formations.

With a strong foundation in finance, Dryden is particularly adept at structuring and negotiating sophisticated real estate finance transactions, including first mortgage and mezzanine loans, preferred equity and joint venture structures, syndicated credit facilities, and bridge and construction loans. Her experience has shaped her ability to handle high-value, complex deals with precision and skill.

**HASSAN ELRAKABAWY***Partner  
Yukevich | Cavanaugh*

Known for his exceptional client service and strategic litigation results, Hassan Elrakabawy has been an active civil litigator and trial attorney since 2005. From serving as a judicial intern for Chief Justice Wallace B. Jefferson of the Texas Supreme Court, working at the Court of Appeals for the First District of Texas, to practicing law at a top global law firm in California, his wealth of legal experience has allowed him to represent clients in a wide range of matters involving complex legal issues.

Elrakabawy's experience in the day-to-day management of federal and state court litigation has made him a major player in the civil litigation space. His legal practice focuses on product liability, premises liability, business torts, and other complex commercial litigation.

## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**RYAN EVANS**

Principal  
Scali Rasmussen, PC

Ryan Evans is a principal at Scali Rasmussen, where he combines sharp legal insight with a pragmatic, business-minded approach to complex litigation. He represents employers and companies across California in matters involving employment disputes, contract claims, and other commercial conflicts, consistently achieving favorable results in state and federal courts as well as in arbitration and mediation. Known for his ability to distill complex legal issues into clear, actionable guidance, Evans provides clients with the confidence and clarity needed to make informed, strategic decisions.

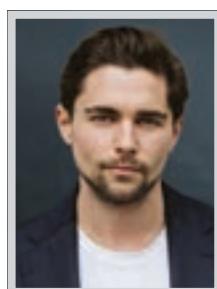
Beyond his litigation success, Evans is deeply committed to helping clients prevent disputes before they arise. He partners with businesses to develop effective policies, manage risk, and foster healthy workplace practices.

**PADRAIC FORAN**

Partner  
Hueston Hennigan LLP

A creative and forceful litigator, Hueston Hennigan partner Padraic Foran focuses on complex civil litigation—primarily fraud, trade secret and professional liability matters—in California and across the country.

Foran has guided a wide variety of clients—from Southern California Edison, Epic Games, Bausch Health, Genworth Financial, and Endo Pharmaceuticals, to Qualcomm, SpaceX, Tesla, Willis Towers Watson, and GlaxoSmithKline—through sensitive, high-stakes litigation. He also advises corporate officers and directors in a broad range of industries, such as telecommunications, real estate, and financial services, on their most important and urgent matters. Foran is an integral member of teams on many of Hueston Hennigan's highest profile matters.

**CARL GAMBINO**

Founder; Principal  
Gambino Group At Compass

Carl Gambino is one of the most influential and widely recognized agents in the real estate industry. With over \$2 billion in sales, Gambino has continually broken records while representing the most reputable names in business, sports and entertainment. Gambino's team, the Gambino Group at Compass, operates in six distinguished markets: New York, Los Angeles, Miami, New Jersey, North Fork, and the Hamptons and is renowned for privacy and discretion.

Gambino has shown remarkable community leadership in the wake of the California wildfires. When families were forced from their homes, he immediately coordinated with brokers across Los Angeles to identify available furnished rentals and short-term housing. Gambino worked tirelessly to help clients find safe places to land.

**BRIAN GRAY**

Partner  
Gursey Schneider LLP

Brian Gray, CPA, tax partner at Gursey Schneider, is one of Los Angeles' most highly sought out tax advisors. Advising a notable roster of entrepreneurs, executives, and other high-profile, ultra-high-net-worth individuals and family offices, Gray is known for designing and implementing tax-efficient estate plans and identifying income tax savings opportunities via asset-holding companies, family limited partnerships, trusts and foundations in support of his clients' wealth transfer and philanthropic goals.

With nearly 25 years of experience in his field, Gray has witnessed the needs of wealthy clients evolve, and his tax practice has kept pace. In particular, he has become an invaluable resource during the last five years as major tax legislation has altered the tax landscape, forcing clients and their accountants to swiftly adjust course.

**LUKE GUERRA**

Partner  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Luke Guerra is a corporate partner in the Los Angeles office of Kirkland & Ellis LLP. Guerra's practice primarily focuses on highly structured and complex private equity transactions, including mergers & acquisitions, leveraged buyouts, restructurings, recapitalizations, and financings. He represents several leading private equity and their portfolio companies, as well as a number of public and private companies, in their most significant and complex matters. His diverse practice spans California's most significant industries—entertainment, media, retail, cybersecurity and fintech.

Guerra's client roster includes some of the largest and most profitable private equity firms, including TPG, Clearlake Capital Group, Vector Capital, Lovell Minnick Partners, as well as emerging next-generation firms.

# Partners in excellence.

We congratulate Partner Kate Imp for being recognized on the *Los Angeles Business Journal's* list of Leaders of Influence: Thriving In Their 40s. The honor is a reflection of her leadership and the strength of DLA Piper's global Media, Sports, and Entertainment team, bringing local fluency, sector-specific insight, and commercial alignment to every deal.



[dlapiper.com](http://dlapiper.com)

## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**SUSAN GUTIERREZ**

Partner, Litigation Department; Co-Head, Mass Torts & Product Liability Group Proskauer Rose LLP

**E**lected to partner at just 35 years old, Susan Gutierrez is co-head of Proskauer's Product Liability Group. She is renowned for representing Fortune 500 companies in high-profile and intricate civil and commercial trials, and litigation matters. Gutierrez's expertise spans across various industries, including consumer products, pharmaceuticals, media, entertainment and sports, where she serves as a litigator and trusted advisor to her clients.

Gutierrez's achievements as a trial lawyer are impressive, marked by her specialization in high stakes matters and complex disputes. Gutierrez has demonstrated substantive versatility, strategic instincts, and a record of winning challenging cases with precision. She strives to be a truth teller which allows her to build trust with judges and juries, a strategy that has helped her successfully try multiple cases to verdict.

**JEFFREY HAMMER**

Partner  
King & Spalding LLP

**J**effrey Hammer is a partner in the Trial and Global Disputes Practice Group. Hammer is an experienced litigator and counselor who focuses on complex commercial litigation matters. He regularly represents clients in a broad spectrum of industries, including technology, financial services, real estate, consumer products, and insurance. He represents clients at all stages of litigation across the country, from pre-suit counseling through trial and appeals.

Hammer has significant experience in wide range of substantive areas, including disputes involving securities claims, business torts, M&A disputes, trade secret claims, consumer fraud, and contract disputes. He also represents clients in putative class and collective actions throughout the country. Hammer previously worked as a civil engineer designing bridges, highways, water systems, and other projects.

**MARC HAMUD**

Managing Director, Corporate Banking  
PNC Bank

**M**arc Hamud's career is defined by service, leadership, and a deep commitment to helping others achieve their goals. From his early days in the US Air Force, where he rose through the officer ranks, his professional journey reflects a lifelong dedication to purpose-driven work and people-centered leadership.

Today, as part of PNC, Hamud continues to embody the same values of helping people. He takes immense pride in supporting clients across industries, providing them with the capital and counsel they need to execute their vision. For Hamud, banking is not just about transactions, it's about strong relationships. His favorite part of the job is helping businesses grow knowing that each success story contributes to stronger communities and economic vitality.

**MICHAEL HARBOUR**

Partner  
Irrell & Manella LLP

**M**ichael Harbour has spent the past few years being a "Swiss Army Knife" for his clients. Whether he is litigating patent infringement, breach of contract or federal antitrust claims for a life-saving drug or technology that underpins computer memory, Harbour always has the right tool to prevail for his clients.

In March 2025, Harbour helped secure a trial victory for client Netlist in a suit against Samsung, which involves patents relating to computer memory technology. The case centered on allegations that Samsung breached a 2015 agreement to supply crucial NAND and DRAM memory products at a competitive price in exchange for licenses to Netlist memory patents. The jury returned its verdict in less than two hours agreeing with Netlist.

**DAVID HARRINGTON**

President  
Matthews

**D**avid Harrington serves as president of Matthews, where he oversees company growth, strategic direction and national operations. With over 20 years of experience in commercial real estate, David has been a driving force behind the company's national expansion, operational excellence, and a culture of collaboration. His career is defined by vision, consistency, and an unwavering commitment to people, qualities that have elevated both Matthews and the professionals who work within it.

Since stepping into the role of president, Harrington has led the company through a period of remarkable growth. Under his leadership, Matthews has opened 20 new offices nationwide and recruited more than 75 senior and executive-level professionals, strengthening the firm's market presence and talent base across the country.

**JULIE HAWKINSON**

Founding Partner  
Atheria Law, PC

**J**ulie Choi Hawkinson is an accomplished attorney who has dedicated her entire career to representing insurers in high stakes matters involving technology, media, intellectual property, privacy, and directors and officers claims. As a child raised by immigrant parents who couldn't afford health insurance, it is meaningful that she built her career in insurance law.

In 2019, after serving as a partner at a global law firm and founding its Los Angeles office, Hawkinson co-founded Atheria Law with a team of attorneys who shared a belief that the best client representation comes from fostering diversity of thought, openness to new ideas, and a willingness to challenge convention. The firm has emerged as a premier insurance firm exclusively representing insurers and reinsurers and has grown to more than 70 professionals.

**LAUREN HORWITZ**

Partner  
BD&J, PC

**L**auren Horwitz, a partner at BD&J, PC, has recovered more than \$220 million for plaintiffs, spent nearly 200 days in trial, and built a reputation as a tenacious advocate for victims of catastrophic injury and wrongful death. As the only female partner in the firm, she has become a leader in complex, high-stakes litigation and a role model for women in trial law.

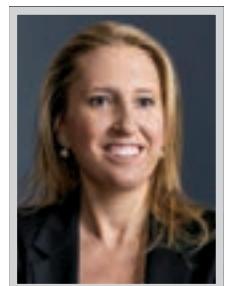
Horwitz has devoted her career to seeking justice for people injured in trucking accidents, unsafe structures, and building fires. She recently secured a significant settlement for 37 people who were harmed in an apartment fire, including the parents of a young man who died as a result. Horwitz also leads BD&J's Eaton Fire litigation, representing Californians who lost their homes.

**WINSTON HSIAO**

Partner  
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

**W**inston Hsiao is widely regarded as a key leader in advancing Skadden's West Coast litigation practice. He has earned widespread recognition for his work. Clients view him as a trusted advisor, appreciating his strategic vision and his talent for aligning litigation strategies with their overarching business goals.

Hsiao's practice centers on complex civil litigation in both state and federal courts. He advises clients on a broad spectrum of matters, including securities and shareholder litigation, commercial and contract disputes, fraud and breach of fiduciary duty claims, trade secret litigation, unfair competition, and cases involving tax shelter and accounting malpractice. Hsiao also has experience representing clients in private arbitrations, internal investigations, criminal proceedings, and appeals.

**STEPHANIE HURST**

Partner, Corporate & Securities  
Mayer Brown

**A** key partner in Mayer Brown's Los Angeles-based Corporate & Securities practice, Stephanie Hurst has played a leading role in expanding the practice's capabilities and client roster and increasing its diversity. She has worked on dozens of innovative and complex deals, involving multiple jurisdictions and in evolving and emerging areas, including tech, venture capital and ESG.

Hurst has become a go-to lawyer advising companies (both nationally and internationally) on US ESG matters, and is a part of the firm's ESG Steering Committee. Further, she is co-leading a cross-border corporate venture capital initiative with lawyers in the firm's SLC, NorCal and Hong Kong offices, and advises domestic and international clients on executing CVC strategies as well as building formal and informal innovation programs.

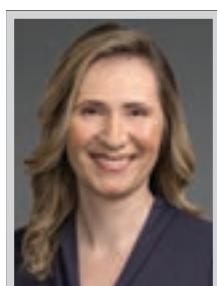
**SHELLEY HURWITZ**

Partner  
Holland & Knight LLP

**S**helley Hurwitz exemplifies leadership, innovation and unwavering dedication to the nonprofit sector. Throughout her career, Hurwitz has championed the missions of charitable, medical, religious and educational organizations, ensuring that every dollar spent on research, patient care, and education is maximized.

As a leader within Holland & Knight, Hurwitz helps guide a national team of attorneys, fiduciary accountants and paralegals who advocate for nonprofit organizations as beneficiaries of matured bequests. Her strategic approach reduces administrative costs, accelerates distributions, and increases the value of charitable gifts. Hurwitz has successfully negotiated early terminations of life beneficiary and perpetual trusts, unlocking critical funding for nonprofit missions. Her practice spans the entire nonprofit sector.

## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**KATHERINE (KATE) IMP**

Partner  
DLA Piper

Katherine (Kate) Imp has more than 15 years of experience representing media companies and brands in the financing, development, acquisition, production, distribution and exploitation of media content, including film, television, commercial, social media, videogames, podcasts, live events, books, and immersive and other location-based entertainment.

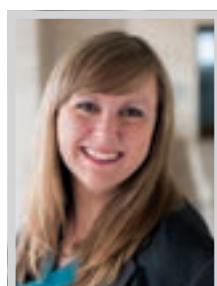
Imp's media-focused legal practice stems from her extensive experience as production counsel for scripted and unscripted audio-visual content, having negotiated and prepared development and production agreements for more than 2,000 different film, television, and commercial projects, including chain-of-title documentation, above- and below-the-line talent agreements, stage/production office studio licensing agreements, and a variety of vendor agreements.

**YOLLA KAIROUZ**

Executive Director  
J.P. Morgan Private Bank

Yolla Kairouz serves as a private banker and executive director of J.P. Morgan Private Bank. As an expert in finance, wealth management, and financial planning for public and private C-suite executives, Kairouz uses her platform as a respected authority to encourage other women to pursue a career in the industry.

In this role, Kairouz manages balance sheets of some of the most influential, ultra-high-net-worth families often with \$100 million or more in assets in the Los Angeles community. She provides multigenerational wealth management services for her clients and works with a dedicated team of professionals across all lines of business on facets of wealth planning, including trust estates, philanthropy, succession planning, credit advisory, investment portfolio management, and day-to-day banking.

**MOLLIE KAISER**

Private Wealth Advisor  
Strategic View Advisors

Mollie Kaiser plays a pivotal role at Strategic View Advisors, where she offers expert advice and guidance to the firm's valued clients. Her dedication and exceptional skills were recently recognized when she was named partner at Strategic View Advisors in January 2025, an achievement that reflects her nearly two decades of experience in the wealth management industry.

Throughout her career, Kaiser has adeptly guided clients through various phases of their financial journeys, from the onset of their careers to the establishment of their legacies. Her strategic prowess and unwavering care for our clients have paved the way for this well-earned accolade. A passionate advocate for client education, Mollie places her wealth of expertise at the core of every client interaction.

**PETER KLAß**

Profit Participation Services  
Practice Leader; Partner  
GHJ

Peter Klass, CFE, stands out as a leading voice in entertainment accounting and one of Los Angeles' foremost experts in profit participation and contract compliance. As partner and leader of GHJ's Profit Participation Services Practice, Klass has built a team that is widely recognized across the Los Angeles entertainment landscape for its technical expertise, integrity and commitment to supporting some of the industry's most prominent studios, financiers, talent and producers.

Klass' leadership has been pivotal in the practice's continued success and growth, including his instrumental role in GHJ's recent acquisition of Hacker, Douglas & Company — expanding GHJ's entertainment services portfolio and deepening the firm's bench of experts.

**BETHANY KRISTOVICH**

Partner  
Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP

Bethany Kristovich is known for her ability to resolve bet-the-company cases, having led defenses against multimillion and billion-dollar claims brought against clients from various industries. She is the go-to lawyer in times of crisis, representing some of the nation's largest companies, private equity firms, and law firms in their most sensitive matters.

Among Kristovich's notable representations has been her work for Crowell & Moring on a lawsuit filed by Walgreens Co., which sought to vacate a \$642 million arbitration award Crowell won for Humana Health Plan Inc. The lawsuit alleged Crowell had a conflict of interest when it represented Humana based on the firm's prior representation of Walgreens. Crowell reached a settlement with Walgreens, and a D.C. federal court granted a motion to dismiss the case.

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**Damaris L. Medina**  
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IN THEIR 40S  
BY THE LOS ANGELES BUSINESS  
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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**EMILY KUWAHARA**

Partner; Co-Chair, Appellate Group  
Crowell & Moring LLP

As co-chair of Crowell & Moring's Appellate Group, Emily Kuwahara is widely recognized for her strategic leadership and ability to deliver results in high-stakes, complex litigation. Clients rely on Kuwahara for her honest risk assessments and track record of securing favorable outcomes in appeals, patent inventorship disputes, breach of contract actions, business torts, antitrust and consumer class actions, unfair competition law, and other sophisticated business disputes.

Kuwahara's work has resulted in the recovery and defense of hundreds of millions of dollars for clients. She serves as one of the lead counsels for an educational institution defending against a putative class action challenging its vaccination policy. Her leadership was instrumental in securing the court's decision to dismiss a claim.

**VERLAN KWAN**

Partner  
Keystone Law Group, P.C.

Verlan Y. Kwan, a partner and top probate attorney with Keystone Law Group, P.C., not only serves as a core member of the firm's Executive Committee, overseeing business strategy and direction, but she also supervises the Probate Administration Division, managing and mentoring less experienced attorneys, paralegals and staff members in the administration of estates, trusts and conservatorships.

Kwan, who's been with the firm since its inception and represented numerous high-profile clients, like the holistic practitioner Dr. Sebi's estate and the surviving spouse of David E. Walters, the largest time-share developer on the island of Kauai in Hawaii, has been instrumental in propelling Keystone to the ranks of the largest and most prominent probate exclusive firm in California.

**AUSTIN LEE**

Principal; Practice Leader, Valuation & Capital Market Analysis  
BDO USA, P.C.

When BDO USA's Austin J. Lee won a stock picking contest in high school, he hadn't envisioned it leading to a winning career in business valuation. But after 20+ years merging his interest in finance with a keenness for accounting, today Lee is thriving in his 40s as a principal and practice leader in the BDO USA Los Angeles office and a respected leader in the firm's national Valuation & Capital Market Analysis practice.

Lee has amassed industry experience and knowledge rare in his field. With an SEC Fellowship under his belt, he returned to his Big Four employer, rising the ranks of the valuation team and making managing director by the age of 37 — among the youngest to reach this partner-level position.

**JAIME LEE**

CEO  
Jamison Realty Inc.

Jamison CEO Jaime Lee has officially been working in commercial real estate since 2007 but growing up around her family's commercial real estate business Lee was exposed to the business as a teenager, working in virtually every role in the company.

As the CEO of the Jamison group of companies, Lee is the undeniable face of the family owned commercial real estate enterprise with a market capitalization of over \$3 billion that operates 18 million square feet of office, multifamily, and retail properties throughout Southern California, generating \$390 million in annual rental revenue. To date the firm has delivered over 6,300 apartment units in the City of Los Angeles with 7,500 additional under construction or in the pipeline, making it one of LA's most active apartment developers.

**MATTHEW MACDONALD**

Partner  
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

Litigator Matthew Macdonald's cases span industries and issues—from a trial victory involving racehorses at Santa Anita Park to a summary judgment win for OpenAI in first-of-its-kind ChatGPT defamation claims, and from privacy to patent disputes. Despite this breadth, his results are remarkably consistent.

Since early 2023, Macdonald has taken two cases to trial and one to arbitration—and won three times. He also won a complete defense victory on the papers in a precedent-setting privacy class action and successfully represented Impossible Foods in a groundbreaking foodtech patent fight. In November 2023, Macdonald played a critical role on the Wilson Sonsini team that secured \$46.7 million in damages from Amazon for VB Assets, the successor to VoiceBox.

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Their leadership and dedication to advocating for plaintiffs in personal injury and wildfire litigation continue to set the standard for excellence. Their work ensures that individuals harmed by negligence receive the justice and compensation they deserve.

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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**SAHAR MALEK**

Trial Counsel

Arias Sanguinetti Wang &amp; Team, LLP

**S**ahar Malek is a partner at Arias Sanguinetti, where she represents plaintiffs in complex litigation with a focus on civil rights, sexual abuse, and catastrophic injury cases. Her practice centers on seeking justice for individuals harmed by institutional negligence or misconduct.

Malek has been instrumental in cases involving sexual abuse in schools, youth programs, and other trusted institutions — giving survivors a voice in systems that too often silence them. Before joining Arias Sanguinetti, she developed significant trial and litigation experience handling complex personal injury and employment matters. Her record of success includes numerous high-value settlements and trial results that have helped reshape policies and promote accountability.

**JANIE MARQUEZ**Senior Vice President; Relationship Manager  
Enterprise Bank & Trust

**A**s senior vice president, relationship manager, Janie Marquez brings more than 25 years of tenured banking experience primarily serving affluent individuals and business clients. She provides strategy and support for the highly visible Los Angeles market as Enterprise Bank & Trust continues to expand the reach of its successful commercial lending model.

Among Marquez's many career achievements, she is especially proud of maintaining client relationships that span decades and fostering opportunities for women in business to thrive. Her reputation for building long-term relationships is based on trust, a high standard of service with uncompromising integrity, and communication, aligning seamlessly with Enterprise's client-centric approach.

**DAMARIS MEDINA**Shareholder  
Buchalter

**D**amaris Medina exemplifies excellence in health care law through groundbreaking litigation victories, transformative leadership, and unwavering dedication to protecting provider rights. As Buchalter's Health Care & Life Sciences Practice co-chair and chief diversity officer, and a member of the firm's Board of Directors, she has achieved a remarkable combination of legal excellence and institutional leadership that distinguishes her as truly exceptional in her field.

Medina successfully litigated many landmark and high stakes cases in the health care industry. Notably, her work on *Centinela-Freeman Emergency Medical Associates v. Health Net of California* resulted in a unanimous published appellate decision that has had profound impact on the entire health care industry.

**ERIC MEYER**Partner  
Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyers LLP

**E**ric Meyer is a partner for Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyer LLP in Los Angeles. Meyer has been practicing law for 15 years and has been a commanding force and trailblazer within the profession. Meyer has represented an array of clients in a variety of fields and industries including entertainers, professional athletes, CEOs, entrepreneurs, as well as their spouses and partners.

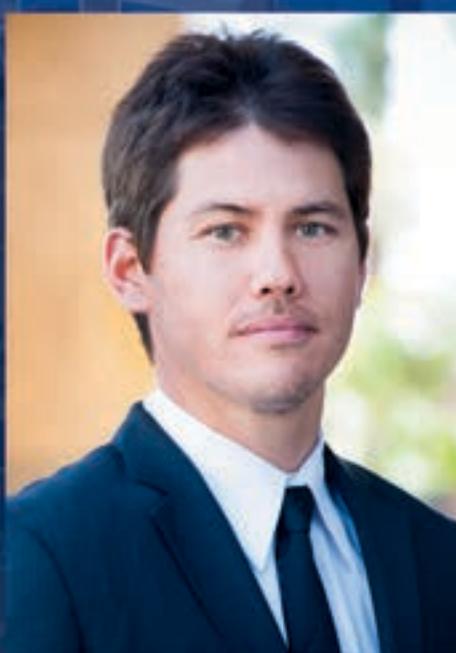
Meyer devotes considerable energy to achieving a settlement for his clients. However, when litigation is necessary, he offers experience as a hard-nosed litigator and has consistently generated favorable outcomes. Meyer is a unique family law attorney equally comfortable drafting prenuptial agreements, trying domestic violence cases, and consulting on mediation cases where clients would otherwise not be able to afford an attorney at a large firm.

**JENNIFER L. MITCHELL**Partner  
BakerHostetler

**J**ennifer Mitchell leads with purpose, navigating legal, technological and ethical complexity with clarity, while shaping the future of privacy law across industries. Her career reflects not only professional excellence but also a deep commitment to mentorship, innovation, and empowering others.

Mitchell's work spans an illustrious career in private practice and in-house, representing industries from entertainment and media to healthcare and wellness, where she advises on everything from consumer data protection to employee privacy. She has led privacy legal strategy for major global companies, negotiated with regulators in California and the EU regarding complex privacy compliance matters, and developed privacy-by-design frameworks for new technologies and data initiatives.

# MILLER BARONDESS LLP



Jason H. Tokoro



David W. Schecter

Los Angeles Business Journal

## 2025 LEADERS OF INFLUENCE

— Thriving in Their 40s —

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Trial  
Arbitration  
Appeals

## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**JAMES MOLEN**

Partner  
Greenberg Glusker LLP

In his nearly two-decade litigation career, James Molen has developed a stellar reputation for crafting innovative strategies and achieving winning arguments for a diverse clientele spanning technology firms, celebrities, athletes, real estate developers, and beauty product manufacturers. With a roster of high-profile clients including Tom Cruise, J.K. Rowling, and Vin Diesel, Molen has extensive experience in a variety of areas, including intellectual property, corporate governance, false advertising, probate and cryptocurrency fraud.

Molen's career is marked by high-profile cases for both plaintiffs and defendants, consistently steering them towards successful, cost-efficient outcomes. He recently successfully represented a tech entrepreneur Joshua Jones in a high-stakes arbitration against T-Mobile.

**PHILIP J. MONAHAN**

Partner  
Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyers LLP

Philip J. Monahan is a seasoned family law attorney and partner at Meyer, Olson, Lowy & Meyers, where he has practiced since 2010. With experience in family law dating back to 2004, Monahan expertly navigates high-conflict custody disputes and complex divorces, representing clients with diligence and deep legal insight.

Monahan recently achieved a published appellate victory establishing that the equitable defense of laches applies in family law cases—a decision that has shaped the landscape for marital settlement disputes in California. His achievements have earned him repeated recognition. Monahan holds a B.A. from UCLA and a J.D. from USC, and is an active presence in the Los Angeles and Beverly Hills Bar Associations. His leadership and advocacy continue to elevate standards in family law and client outcomes.

**KIRK MOON**

Partner  
Hahn & Hahn LLP

Kirk Moon advises individuals and entities of all types in all aspects of business, residential and commercial real estate and transactional matters, with a focus on succession planning and mergers and acquisitions. Clients appreciate Moon's thoughtful planning and meticulous execution in his approach to each unique matter.

Moon's background in healthcare representing individual physicians, medical groups and health plans in both transactional and regulatory matters provides additional insight into the administrative functions of the healthcare industry. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors, the Audit Committee, and the Finance/Investment Committee at Five Acres, an entity providing family-centered and family-strengthening services that are embedded in communities.

**ESTEBAN MORALES**

Member  
Mintz

Esteban Morales, Mintz member (partner) and distinguished litigator, is a force to be reckoned with in class action defense and consumer-related litigation. Since joining the firm, he has honed his skills to become a go-to expert for both small and large corporate clients facing complex legal challenges.

Morales' prowess lies in securing dismissals for clients at the pleading stage and employing aggressive defense strategies to thwart claims without extensive discovery. His strategic acumen has been pivotal in defending clients against a myriad of state and federal statutes and theories, including the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, the California Invasion of Privacy Act, the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act, and California's Unfair Competition Law. He is known for his legal excellence, strategic foresight, and unwavering client advocacy.

**SARAH MOSES**

Partner  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

Sarah Moses is a prominent entertainment litigation attorney representing clients in the music, media, entertainment and technology industries, including on copyright, trademark, right of publicity, First Amendment and AI matters.

Moses serves as a key member of Manatt's team representing actress and entrepreneur Blake Lively in her ongoing sexual harassment and retaliation lawsuit against Justin Baldoni, Wayfarer Studios and others related to the film *It Ends With Us*. The team secured a complete dismissal of all claims brought against Lively, and is pursuing damages under a new California statute that presents issues of first impression for victims of retaliatory litigation. Moses also served on the team which successfully defended Megan Roup and The Sculpt Society in a copyright lawsuit.

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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**LINDSEY MUNYER**

Partner

Keystone Law Group, P.C.

As a formidable litigator, partner and founding member of Keystone Law Group's Executive Committee, Lindsey F. Munyer has been a driving force behind Keystone's propulsion to California's largest and most prominent probate litigation firm, representing high-profile clients like the sons of a Greek billionaire, as well as the administrator of Hollywood producer Steve Bing's estate, and securing trial rulings with damages that are rarely awarded in cases that often involve complex creditor claims and intricate tax issues.

A recognized and sought-after thought leader in probate litigation, Munyer is both a certified specialist in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law and holds her LLM in taxation, having worked with the IRS Office of Chief counsel early in her career.

**DAVID NIEMEYER**

Partner

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher &amp; Flom LLP

David Niemeyer is a partner in Skadden's renowned Los Angeles Corporate Group who has distinguished himself as a trusted advisor in some of the most significant deals in recent years.

Niemeyer has spent the last 15 years building a multi-faceted practice that focuses on mergers and acquisitions, private equity, corporate governance and general corporate matters. He attracts a wide range of clients and is known for his ability to synthesize complex issues and generate creative, practical solutions, often in high-pressure situations. Over the last 18 months, he has led the representation of clients in several complex transactions, each requiring sophisticated legal and strategic guidance to achieve successful outcomes.

**MICHAEL NOURMAND**

President

Nourmand &amp; Associates

Michael Nourmand's career is defined by visionary leadership, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to elevating Los Angeles' real estate landscape. Since becoming president of Nourmand & Associates in 2008, he has balanced tradition with innovation — preserving the company's family-owned legacy while guiding it into a new era of growth and influence. Under his leadership, the firm has achieved more than \$700 million in sales to date in 2025.

Recognized for his strategic insight and ability to anticipate market shifts, Nourmand is known for his ability to distill complex industry dynamics with clarity and authenticity and has earned industry accolades while also shaping Nourmand & Associates' culture, reflecting his commitment to collaboration, trust, and excellence.

**PHILIP NULUD**

Shareholder

Buchalter

Philip Nulud has built a nearly two-decade career protecting and monetizing trademarks and intellectual property for globally recognized brands across fashion, apparel, retail, and consumer products. His practice spans trademark prosecution and enforcement, licensing transactions, patent protection, and emerging issues in AI and digital environments, and he has handled thousands of domestic and international trademark disputes across industries.

Nulud's clients include couture fashion houses, streetwear brands, professional athletes, celebrities, influencers and major corporations. He represents Badgley Mischka, and household-name brands across multiple sectors. Nulud's client portfolio also includes a national specialty retail chain with 250+ stores, where he managed its expansion into apparel through licenses.

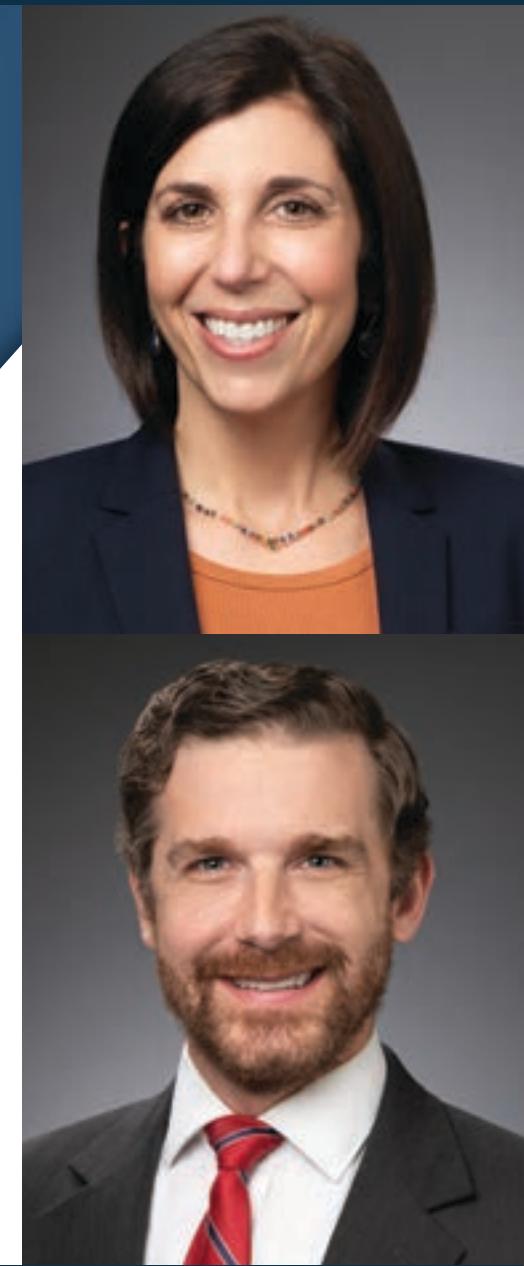
**AGUSTIN OROZCO**Office Managing Partner, Los Angeles  
Crowell & Moring LLP

Agustin Orozco is a standout leader whose career reflects excellence, versatility and impact. With a unique background as a former federal prosecutor and deep expertise in government contracts, Orozco is a trusted advisor for clients facing complex investigations and litigation. While highly regarded in white collar defense, his influence extends across criminal, civil and regulatory matters.

Orozco's achievements in trial advocacy and mentorship highlight his dedication to the legal profession. Prior to rejoining Crowell, he was an assistant US attorney in the Public Corruption & Civil Rights Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California. He represented the US in criminal investigations, prosecutions, and appeals of public corruption, bribery, fraud, and civil rights crimes.

Congratulations to  
**Beth Acevedo**  
**& Andrew Smith**  
 on their selection to the  
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 2025 "Thriving in Their 40s."

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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**CESAR OSORIO***Senior Managing Partner  
Wilshire Financial Group*

Cesar Osorio started his career as a Los Angeles Police officer, serving the community for 18 years. During this time, he took the initiative to explore the world of finance. Through networking and determination, he connected with the right people and began working at Wilshire Financial Group in his spare time. Starting as a cold caller, he quickly excelled and climbed the ranks, becoming a managing director within three years. Taking a bold leap, Osorio left the Los Angeles Police Department just one year before securing his pension to fully commit to finance. He is now the senior managing partner and principal of the firm.

Osorio is also deeply committed to the local community and actively participates as a director with the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce.

**MICHAEL PAKRAVAN***Senior Vice President; National Director  
Matthews*

Michael Pakravan serves as senior vice president and national director of retail leasing at Matthews, where he leads one of the most dynamic and high-performing retail leasing divisions in the country. With over 20 years of experience and more than 1,000 transactions closed, Pakravan is recognized for his strategic mindset, tireless work ethic, and ability to transform challenges into results.

Overseeing the national leasing division, Pakravan brings a hands-on leadership style that combines mentorship with market expertise. He advises property owners, tenants and investors across all major asset types in Southern California, with a focus on unlocking long-term value and creating opportunities in every deal. His client roster features prominent companies such as Starbucks, Chase Bank, and Petco.

**JONATHAN PARK***Partner  
Holland & Knight LLP*

Jonathan Park is known for his exceptional legal expertise, leadership in the trusts and estates field, and deep commitment to serving the Los Angeles community. As a partner at Holland & Knight LLP, Park has built a career marked by high-impact litigation victories, strategic advocacy for nonprofits and families, and a dedication to mentoring the next generation of attorneys. His work not only advances the legal profession but also strengthens the fabric of the community through pro bono service, thought leadership, and inclusive talent development.

Park leads a distinguished practice in complex trust and estate litigation, probate and trust administration, and conservatorship and guardianship matters. He represents individuals, families, private fiduciaries, financial institutions and nonprofit organizations.

**CHRISTOPHER  
PASSMORE***Partner in Charge, Los Angeles  
Withum*

Chris Passmore is a dynamic business leader, an innovative entrepreneur and an outstanding CPA. He specializes in assurance and business consulting services to emerging and middle-market companies. While Passmore services a wide variety of clients, he has developed a reputation as an expert in working with technology companies, professional service firms, franchised businesses and benefit plans. He consults on a wide range of business situations, including merger and acquisition activities, and he has advised clients on numerous transactions over the years.

Passmore is also a member of a small group of CPAs who hold an advanced level certificate for audits of 401(k) plans. His stellar consulting reputation has led to multiple recognitions in local, regional and national publications.

**CHRIS PETERSEN***Partner; Vice Practice Group Leader,  
Business Litigation Group  
Blank Rome LLP*

Chris Petersen is partner and vice practice group leader of the Business Litigation Practice Group, working out of Blank Rome's Los Angeles Office. While his practice focuses on complex business disputes, primarily in the real estate sector, Petersen handles additional areas of litigation, including trusts and estates and disputes related to California charter schools. In the last several years, Petersen has tried or arbitrated a significant volume of three-to-four cases per year. Since joining the firm in 2013, he has tried or arbitrated more than 30 cases, including as lead counsel on numerous trials and arbitrations.

Petersen is part of a Blank Rome team that represents many of the largest non-classroom-based charter schools in California.

Los Angeles Business Journal | 2025

# Leaders of Influence

## Thriving in Their 40s

Elizabeth Dryden  
Partner

Amy Russell  
Partner



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# Congratulations

**Andrea Saunders Rifenbark  
and Alicia Vaz**

Leaders of Influence:  
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Andrea Saunders Rifenbark  
Partner



Alicia Vaz  
Partner



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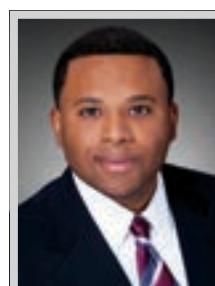
## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**DANIEL POSNER**

Partner  
Quinn Emanuel Urquhart  
& Sullivan LLP

Daniel Posner has spent his entire 22 year legal career with Quinn Emanuel in Los Angeles, following a one-year judicial clerkship for former Central District of California Chief Judge George H. King. He has distinguished himself as one of the nation's most formidable trial and appellate attorneys, achieving career-defining victories that have saved his clients hundreds of millions of dollars while protecting some of the world's most iconic brands.

As co-chair of Quinn Emanuel's Trademark and Copyright Practice Group and a leader of the firm's California appellate practice, Posner has built an extraordinary track record that places him among the elite in complex commercial litigation. Posner's work for Tesla led to obtaining a staggering 98% reduction in an employee discrimination verdict.

**DANIEL PRINCE**

Partner; LA Litigation Department Chair  
Paul Hastings LLP

Daniel Prince, chair of Paul Hastings' Litigation Department in Los Angeles and hiring partner for that office, is regarded as a leading litigator of his generation, with high-profile victories under his belt and mounting successes in bet-the-company matters under way. His experience and capabilities run the litigation gamut from corporate and government investigations to complex litigation matters, domestic and international arbitrations, trials and class actions.

Prince led the Paul Hastings team to a complete victory for client Rear Admiral Bruce Loveless (Ret.) in the case involving an alleged overcharge of the US Navy of more than \$35 million. Prince played a key role in securing a jury verdict for Admiral Loveless and in the court's decision to drop all other charges against four other defendants post-trial.

**BARBORA PULMANOVA**

Partner  
Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP

Barbora Pulmanova is a partner in the Musick Peeler's Los Angeles office whose practice focuses on complex business litigation, employment disputes and insurance coverage matters. She is known for her strategic approach to high-stakes litigation, managing all phases of the process — from trial preparation and mediation to oral argument and settlement negotiation.

Pulmanova combines sharp analytical skill with practical judgment, crafting persuasive pleadings and motions while advising clients on effective litigation and resolution strategies. She also provides comprehensive coverage analyses and tailored guidance that reflect a deep understanding of each client's business objectives and legal needs, earning her a reputation as a trusted and results-oriented advocate.

**BEE RAREWALA**

Chief Strategy Officer  
AC Martin

Bee Rarewala, chief strategy officer of AC Martin (a California-based architecture firm), has centered her 20-plus year career at the nexus of design thinking and business strategy with a passion for developing the next generation of talent and cultivating a culture responsive to both. As CSO, Rarewala drives business growth through vision-led, strategic planning and acts as a change agent for firmwide transformation.

Rarewala facilitates key initiatives and investments, drives continuous improvement, and oversees business development strategy, marketing and communications. She inspires through vision, she sees beyond challenges and empowers others to rise to their potential, fostering a culture of innovation. Rarewala is an inspirational leader in the architecture / engineering / construction industry.

**CHRISTINA VON DER AHE RAYBURN**

Partner  
Hueston Hennigan LLP

A partner at Hueston Hennigan, Christy Rayburn routinely plays a key role in Hueston Hennigan's highest profile, highest stakes IP and antitrust battles. Many of her clients are known globally, including Amazon, Stryker, Medtronic, and the Recording Industry Association of America. As a member of the patent bar and a Stanford-trained mechanical engineer, Rayburn quickly digests the technology involved in her clients' matters. More importantly, she translates that technical understanding into clear and effective oral and written communications to stakeholders, judges and juries.

Rayburn recently had an impressive slate of victories, including a string of high-profile wins for Amazon. She secured a favorable settlement for Amazon in a patent infringement suit related to Alexa.



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# Hassan Elrakabawy & Eric Sowatsky

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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s



**ANDREA SAUNDERS  
RIFENBARK**  
Partner

Cox, Castle & Nicholson

**A**ndrea Saunders Rifenbark is a leading transactional attorney specializing in real estate investment, development and finance.

Rifenbark has spent her entire 22-year career at Cox Castle, representing public pension funds and other institutional investors in all areas of real estate investments, including acquisitions, dispositions, joint ventures, commingled funds, financing, property management, development, and investment advisory agreements. In her practice, Rifenbark structures, negotiates and documents all types of real estate acquisitions and dispositions encompassing all product types, including retail, office, industrial, multifamily, mixed-use, healthcare, and hospitality, and including multi-state and multi-property transactions.



**LYSSA ROBERTS**

Attorney  
Panish | Shea | Ravipudi LLP

**L**yssa A. Roberts is an attorney with Panish | Shea | Ravipudi LLP who focuses her practice on catastrophic personal injury and wrongful death, as well as dangerous conditions of public and private property. Licensed in California and Nevada, she has extensive experience litigating single plaintiff lawsuits as well as cases involving thousands of claimants. She is deeply committed to the protection of the rights and interests of individuals who have been harmed by the negligent acts of others and a tireless advocate for her clients. Over her 20 year career, Roberts has secured hundreds of millions of dollars in verdicts and settlements on behalf of plaintiffs.

Currently, Roberts represents hundreds of plaintiffs in the 2025 Eaton Fire litigation against Southern California Edison.

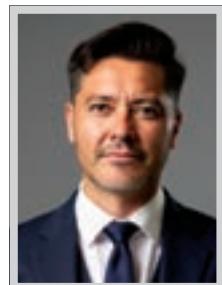


**AMY RUSSELL**

Partner  
Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP

**A**my Russell is a partner in the Litigation Department at Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP, where she has built a distinguished career representing clients in complex commercial litigation. Her practice spans a wide range of industries and issues, including real estate, construction, employment, entertainment, professional malpractice and corporate governance, reflecting both her versatility and deep command of the law.

Russell's success in state and federal courts, as well as in arbitration and mediation, underscores her exceptional advocacy skills and strategic judgment. Known for her thoughtful, solutions-oriented approach, she combines rigorous legal analysis with a practical understanding of her clients' business goals. Throughout her career, Russell has achieved successful outcomes in high-stakes disputes.



**EDI SANTOS**

Business Development Director  
Business Finance Capital

**A**s a SBA 504 Loan Specialist (BFC), Edi Santos has leveraged 20 years of experience in commercial real estate and business lending to help small business owners achieve their goals, helping to secure hundreds of millions in financing for small businesses. He's also fluent in Spanish, which enables him to serve a wider array of diverse clients more effectively.

Prior to joining BFC, Santos worked as sales manager at SoCal CDC, where he applied knowledge from his time at Bank of America and Wells Fargo to facilitate SBA 504 lending. Santos also served as a vice president at Wells Fargo, specializing in commercial lending for owner-user commercial real estate financing, lines of credit, equipment financing, practice loans, partner buyouts, expansion loans, and apartment/investor real estate financing.



**DAVID SCHACTER**

Partner  
Miller Baroness, LLP

**D**avid Schecter is an accomplished litigator and trial lawyer with a proven record of success in high-stakes commercial, business tort, entertainment, and intellectual property disputes. He has secured jury verdicts in state and federal courts and has represented clients before the US Supreme Court, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the California Courts of Appeal. Schecter has extensive experience representing high-profile celebrities, artists, entertainers and athletes, including Motley Crue, Smokey Robinson, Nile Rodgers, NBA players, and PGA Tour professionals.

Schecter served as lead trial counsel for the relator in United States ex rel. Brian Markus v. Aerojet Rocketdyne Holdings, Inc., et al., a landmark False Claims Act case.

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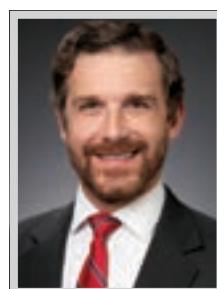
## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**GREG SKALASKI**

Executive Vice President, West Region  
Shawmut Design and Construction

With seven years as executive vice president of Shawmut Design and Construction's West region, Greg Skalaski has led the Los Angeles team in diversifying its offerings and increasing its average construction project size. With a focus on growing its education, sports & entertainment, hospitality, and life science portfolio, the team completed major projects in the past year including UCLA's Big 10 Network upgrades, Dignity Health Sports Park, and Glorya Kaufman Community Center.

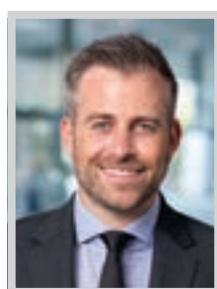
Skalaski's leadership has driven an 80% revenue increase between 2024 and 2025, with 65% growth projected into 2026. With close to 25 years of experience working on Los Angeles projects, Skalaski understands the unique impact of volatility and labor challenges on construction in Southern California.

**ANDREW SMITH**

Shareholder  
Weinstock Manion

A fervent advocate for fiduciaries, beneficiaries and institutions, Andrew Smith of Weinstock Manion has solidified his incredible reputation for resolving complex disputes in the trusts and estates litigation space. Before joining Weinstock Manion, Smith began his career as an associate in the Litigation Department at Winston & Strawn LLP, where he represented corporations engaged in various types of complex commercial litigation, including trade secret, product liability, trademark, and maritime disputes.

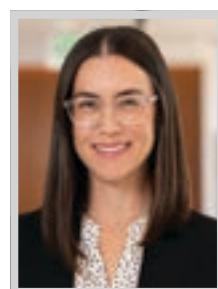
Smith then joined Weinstock Manion to specialize in estate and trust litigation, where he has since practiced for over a decade and was promoted to shareholder in 2024. Smith has taken a leading role in all aspects of trusts, estates, and conservatorship litigation before Probate Courts across California.

**ERIC SOWATSKY**

Partner  
Yukeyich | Cavanaugh

Partner at leading litigation boutique Yukeyich | Cavanaugh, Eric M. Sowatsky lends his legal expertise to large corporations, public entities, and public utilities in matters throughout California. From inception through trial, Sowatsky defends some of California's most high-profile entities in highly complex tort and contract claims, including high-exposure wrongful death, personal injury, products liability and premises liability actions.

Sowatsky previously worked as in-house complex litigation counsel at a large insurance company, where he specialized in law and motion practice and secured summary judgment and other significant victories on a regular basis. While he is most comfortable in the courtroom, Sowatsky also has significant experience formulating litigation strategies.

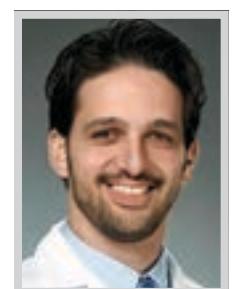
**KATE SPELMAN**

Partner; Co-Chair, Class Action,  
Consumer Brands, Food and Beverage  
Practices

Jenner & Block

For consumer product companies navigating the complex landscape of class action litigation, Kate Spelman is an indispensable strategic partner. As co-chair of Jenner & Block's Class Action, Consumer Brands, and Food and Beverage practices, she has built her reputation not just on courtroom victories, but on her ability to see around corners—anticipating legal trends and helping clients avoid costly pitfalls before they materialize.

Spelman's approach is distinct. Highly meticulous and thorough, she masters every detail of her cases while never losing sight of her clients' broader business objectives. This perspective was shaped by her time as in-house litigation counsel to The Wonderful Company before joining Jenner & Block.

**JOSEPH SPITZER**

Division Head, Developmental-  
Behavioral Pediatrics  
Kaiser Permanente

Dr. Joseph Spitzer's career in developmental pediatrics is distinguished by his leadership, innovation and lifelong commitment to improving outcomes for children with developmental and behavioral challenges. As division head of Developmental Pediatrics for Kaiser Permanente, he has built an integrated model of care that brings together physicians, therapists, psychologists and educators to ensure every child receives truly comprehensive and compassionate support.

Dr. Spitzer invests significant time in training medical students, residents and early-career clinicians at the USC and Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He is known for his generous teaching style, thoughtful guidance, and commitment to cultivating the next generation of compassionate pediatric leaders.

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Merlin Law Group congratulates Derek Chaiken:  
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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**BEAU STAPLETON**

Partner, Corporate & Financial Services  
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

**B**ea Stapleton is a highly sought-after advisor for the full range of entertainment stakeholders as they undertake complex and often cross-industry deals. With extensive experience working at the intersection of the music, film, television and digital industries, Stapleton counts some of the nation's most well-known artists, composers, producers, executives, investment funds, studios, media companies and directors among his clients.

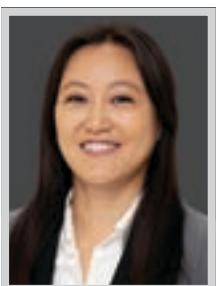
Stapleton's unique approach to client service — which combines his deep understanding of the law with his business savvy and diverse music industry experience — has afforded him the opportunity to guide his clients through high-profile and profitable deals. He is currently representing an entertainment investment firm in a deal with the estate of a rock icon for an avatar concert experience.

**JACOB J. STRUCK**

Partner  
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

**A**s a key member of Hunton Andrews Kurth's national trial team, Jacob Struck has years of experience launching into some of the firm's most complex trials. His stellar achievements early in his career led him to be promoted to counsel in 2022 and shortly thereafter, partner in 2025. Struck has overseen and led matters from inception through trial, including disputes involving consumer class actions, securities litigation, intellectual property, breach of contract, employment law and insurance coverage. Having played a significant role in securing favorable verdicts for his clients, he is particularly focused on representing clients in major litigation bound for trial.

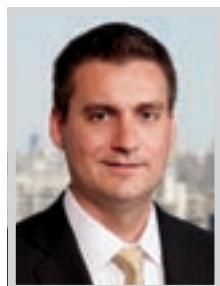
Struck played a pivotal role in helping Hunton's national trial team win a high-profile jury verdict for long-time client Spotlight Ticket Management against StubHub.

**CYNTHIA SUN**

Partner  
LTL Attorneys

**F**or the past 17 years, Cynthia Y. Sun has been practicing law as a litigator handling general liability, personal injury, product liability, breach of warranty, breach of contract, and consumer fraud. Cynthia has held partnership roles at two of the most prominent minority-owned law firms in Los Angeles, including her current firm, LTL Attorneys, in its consumer protection practice group.

Throughout her career, Sun has represented various clients from individuals and small businesses to Fortune 500 companies and public entities. She has experience with all aspects of litigation, including law and motion, discovery, taking and defending depositions, trial preparation, trial, post-judgment litigation, and appeals. She has a high success rate winning motions for summary judgment and has obtained favorable settlements.

**CLAY THOMAS**

Shareholder  
Vedder Price

**D**uring his 16-year career with Vedder Price, Clay Thomas has been a key member of the firm's Global Transportation Finance team. In his daily practice, Thomas counsels a wide range of clients, including airlines, equipment manufacturers, borrowers, lenders, lessors, lessees and other investors. His work focuses on debt, equity and lease financing transactions, with particular emphasis on the aviation, rail and maritime industries. Thomas has represented clients in US and cross-border sales, including his pivotal involvement on the Vedder Price team that secured a \$729 million aviation loan of ABS by PK AirFinance, a leading aviation lending platform.

Due to his stellar performance in the Global Transportation Finance practice, Thomas has been nominated for and is the recipient of several accolades.

**JASON TOKORO**

Partner  
Miller Barondess, LLP

**J**ason H. Tokoro is an accomplished trial attorney and partner at litigation powerhouse Miller Barondess, LLP. He has extensive experience handling high-stakes, high-profile matters for an elite roster of clients across the entertainment, professional sports, real estate, government and financial sectors. His diverse practice spans commercial disputes, civil rights, employment, intellectual property, malpractice, and complex business litigation. As outside counsel to the County of Los Angeles, he handles the County's most sensitive and complex cases, often involving public policy and multimillion-dollar exposures.

In a recent victory, Tokoro successfully defended LA County in a highly publicized \$25 million lawsuit filed by former Sheriff Alex Villanueva.

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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

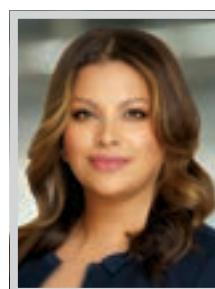
**JENNER C. TSENG**

Partner

Hill, Farrer &amp; Burrill LLP

Hill Farrer partner Jenner Tseng is a seasoned litigator with over 20 years' experience in complex litigation and regulatory matters, representing corporations, universities and individuals in their most pressing legal challenges. His practice spans employment, commercial, real estate, intellectual property, and insurance litigation, and he is recognized for crafting innovative, cost-effective strategies that consistently achieve favorable outcomes. Tseng's reputation as a trusted counselor and formidable trial advocate is built on his ability to navigate high-stakes disputes with precision, securing impactful results both in and out of the courtroom.

Tseng is particularly distinguished for his work with universities and colleges, where he has become a go-to advisor for academic institutions confronting their most sensitive issues.

**HEIDY VAQUERANO**

Partner

Fox Rothschild

As an attorney for the entertainment industry, where technology is always evolving and the corporate landscape is constantly in flux, Heidy Vaquerano is a trusted wayfinder for her clients. An indispensable adviser with a deep understanding of law and technology, she helps them capitalize on their talent and intellectual property to pursue and seize each new opportunity the marketplace presents.

A leader inside and outside the firm of a major shift in the music industry, Vaquerano has represented HarbourView Equity Partners, since its founding in 2021. In the past calendar year, she was instrumental in the client securing a combined \$3 billion in debt financing through securitization for catalogues. The debt financings were backed by portfolios from 75+ music catalogs from a variety of artists whose acquisitions she negotiated.

**ALICIA VAZ**

Partner

Cox, Castle &amp; Nicholson

Alicia Vaz is a seasoned trial and appellate attorney with a distinguished track record in real estate and high-stakes business litigation. As co-chair of Cox Castle's Litigation Department and a member of the firm's Management Committee, Vaz brings a rare combination of litigation expertise, strategic insight and executive leadership to her work.

Vaz has been hailed by clients for her effective, efficient and creative approach to resolving disputes, providing solutions that align with her clients' goals and business needs, either to avoid a lawsuit where feasible or to achieve a favorable result through litigation in a cost-effective manner. She is considered a strategist who develops crucial evidence, evaluates and advises her clients of their options, and executes a plan for settlement or success at trial.

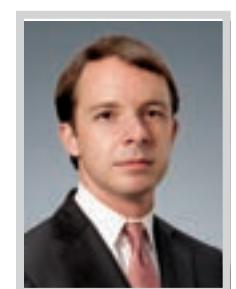
**CHESTER VENTURA**

Partner

Withum

Chester Ventura is a thought leader, business advisor and mentor at Withum. With 25 years of accounting experience, Ventura provides attestation services for privately held companies in various sectors and industries, including industrial and consumer products and employee benefit plans, servicing those with ERISA Spending Accounts.

Ventura's strategic leadership has lent itself to continued growth for the firm's Industrial and Consumer Products practice area in the greater Los Angeles region. His breadth of experience includes helping franchisors navigate the unique industry landscape. Additionally, Ventura is involved with the firm's Professional Services practice, aiding clients in staying competitive by operating efficiently while nurturing relationships and maintaining profitability.

**IAN WASHBURN**

Partner

Irrell &amp; Manella LLP

Irrell & Manella partner Ian Washburn is a lawyer dedicated to protecting beloved brands and concepts – from Skechers shoes to PopSockets to the browser toolbar. Washburn has dedicated his time defending those innovations, among others, and in the process secured billions of dollars in verdicts and judgments for clients in some of the most complex patent battles in US history.

Washburn's experience spans a range of industries including the biomedical, pharmaceutical, semiconductor and semiconductor packaging and computer networking sectors. He has represented clients in numerous federal district courts as well as before the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, the US Patent and Trademark Office, the ICC International Court of Arbitration, and the Delaware Court of Chancery.



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We proudly congratulate **Brian Gray** on his selection to the *Los Angeles Business Journal's "Leaders of Influence: Thriving in Their 40s."*

We join in recognizing Brian's dedication to his clients, remarkable leadership, and exceptional contributions to the accounting profession.



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## LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**DAWN EASH WAZZAN**

President  
Jr. League of Los Angeles

Dawn Wazzan's most successful career accomplishments start with her current position as president of the Jr. League of Los Angeles (JLLA) representing the league in its centennial year. Her natural leadership abilities and strategic thinking have catapulted her into leadership positions at the organization.

Wazzan's work as a professional statistician gives her great insight into systems problem solving and her kind, hands-on approach to helping members solve a problem is a warm and welcome leadership style to the 300 plus women within the league. She has her finger on the pulse of absolutely everything going on in the JLLA. Under Wazzan's tutelage she has always made sure that diversity, equity and inclusion are a part of who the league is and not just something it does.

**DENNIS WEE**

Partner; Senior Advisor  
Westmount Partners

From the moment Dennis Wee joined Westmount as an associate, he has looked for ways to improve the way we operate and also to support our firm's culture. He is a wizard with technology, and years ago led the conversion and customization of the firm's portfolio accounting system. He has improved all Westmount Partners' workflows and relentlessly seeks efficiencies wherever he can extract them. At the same time, he trains and supervises all of the associates, contributing positively to their education and to the firm's employee morale. In addition, he works with many of the firm's clients, and is universally beloved by them.

Wee mentors the youngest and newest members of the firm and excels in this important role.

**JASON WRIGHT**

Partner  
Jones Day

With more than 17 years of experience, Jason Wright has built a reputation for exceptional trial advocacy and unwavering client service in Los Angeles and beyond. He helps health care providers resolve disputes both before litigation starts and once in litigation. He has represented health care providers to ensure health plans pay correctly; and he has defended providers in government investigations, antitrust lawsuits, and False Claims Act matters.

Wright's record of results, leadership within the profession, and commitment to community exemplify the standards this recognition seeks to highlight. In a hotly contested dispute, Wright led a trial team to a favorable outcome in an arbitration for a client-health system. Through rigor and careful development of case theory, Wright and the team prevailed on every claim for the client.

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL'S 2025 LEADERS OF INFLUENCE: THRIVING IN THEIR 40s

**ANITA WU**

Litigation Partner  
Brown Neri Smith & Khan LLP

Anita P. Wu is an accomplished trial and appellate litigator with 20 years of experience representing leading companies and executives in sophisticated, high-stakes business disputes. She is recognized for her ability to navigate complex and sensitive matters with skill, clarity, empathy and decisive advocacy.

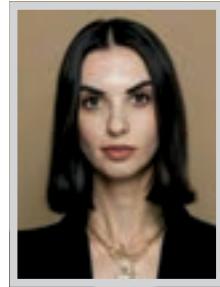
Wu is a partner at Brown Neri Smith & Khan, where she serves on the firm's Executive Committee. Before joining the firm, she spent ten years at Latham & Watkins, defending industry-leading companies and executives in complex business and securities litigation. She later served as senior counsel at Loeb & Loeb LLP. Wu maintains an active appellate practice. She has successfully argued and authored winning briefs in state and federal appellate courts and previously served in the US Department of Justice's Civil Appellate Division.

**STEPHANIE YAN**

Private Foundations Practice Leader;  
Managing Director  
GHJ

Stephanie Yan, CPA, is a managing director at GHJ and leads the firm's Private Foundations Practice, where she helps philanthropic organizations achieve their missions through financial transparency, compliance and strategy. With more than 25 years of experience in public accounting, Yan has established herself as a trusted advisor to private foundations, museums and nonprofit organizations.

Yan's career success is rooted in her ability to combine deep technical expertise with a global business perspective. Before joining GHJ in 2004, she worked in corporate accounting for privately held and public companies, gaining experience in business operations that now informs her counsel to mission-driven clients. Her ability to bridge business and philanthropy allows her to help clients remain compliant and strengthen their impact.

**NINA ZOKHRABYAN**

COO  
Christie's International Real Estate  
Southern California

From her very first role as a weekend receptionist while still a college student, Nina Zokhrabyan has exemplified determination, vision and leadership. She began her ascent in real estate during her junior year at California State University, Northridge, balancing academics with her work at Coldwell Banker. This early exposure sparked her passion for real estate and taught her the discipline that would define her career.

In 2021, Zokhrabyan was promoted to chief operating officer and vice president of sales at Christie's International Real Estate | Southern California. She now oversees operations for over 250 agents while continuing to coach, train and inspire. Her vision, tenacity, and commitment to excellence make her an outstanding leader.