

Daily Journal

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Top boutiques | BANKRUPTCY/RESTRUCTURING



PACHULSKI



GRASSGREEN

The first word that comes to mind when thinking of bankruptcy law and corporate restructuring is probably not ‘fun.’ But for the attorneys at Pachulski Stang Ziehl & Jones LLP, that is exactly how they describe it.

“It is the most fun practice,” said named partner Dean A. Ziehl.

The firm has been having fun doing business in bankruptcy and corporate restructuring since it was founded in 1983 by Richard M. Pachulski and James I. Stang, who left Sidley Austin LLP to start the small boutique in Los Angeles. Thirty-one years later, the firm has become one of the most highly regarded bankruptcy/restructuring groups in the nation.

“Our goal from the beginning was to become the best bankruptcy firm in the country,” Stang said. “We are not O’Melveny. We are not Gibson Dunn or Kirkland, but we are competing with those firms all the time.”

In the past three decades, the firm has grown from a small boutique to a national group with more than 60 attorneys in four offices — Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Wilmington, Del. Pachulski said that despite being a boutique, the firm is large enough to handle any type of case.

The boutique nature of the firm is attractive to clients because of the personalized services the attorneys provide.

“Quality over quantity rings true when I summarize Pachulski Stang’s role as outside counsel for our Chapter 11 reorganization,” said Michael Lotz, president and chief financial officer of Mesa Air Group Inc., in an email. “What a great feeling walking into delicate negotiating sessions knowing we had an edge with two lawyers with a mastery of the issues versus the team from an overleveraged big law firm.”

Pachulski Stang has represented high-profile as well as mid-market clients.

San Francisco-based partner Debra Grassgreen has been involved in cases with high-profile clients including singer Toni Braxton and boxer Mike Tyson. Grassgreen said it takes a certain kind of attorney to handle bankruptcy and restructuring cases.

“Our practice attracts people who would otherwise get bored,” she said. “It really draws on a lot of different skill sets. It is a little bit of transactional work; it is a little bit of negotiation; a little bit of game theory. ... We all have the ability to be multifaceted and can respond to a lot of different issues within a case.”

PACHULSKI STANG ZIEHL & JONES LLP

*Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York
City and Wilmington, Delaware*

Bankruptcy, corporate restructuring

Managing Partners: Robert Feinstein, Laura Davis Jones, Henry Kevane, Ira Kharasch, Richard Pachulski, Jeffrey Pomerantz and Dean Ziehl.

Other Key Partners: Jeff Davidson, John Fiero, Debra Grassgreen, Isaac Pachulski, Brad Sandler and James Stang.

- Representing the litigating trust in the Chapter 11 of Circuit City Stores Inc., the former national electronics retailer
- Representing David Gottlieb, the Chapter 7 trustee of KSL Media Inc., formerly one of the largest independent media buying companies in the country
- Co-counsel to the creditors’ committee in the Chapter 11 case of Residential Capital LLC, formerly known as GMAC Mortgage

Pachulski said that because the firm does not advertise, most of its work comes from a network of referral sources including other bankruptcy attorneys, financial institutions and large firms.

“We have to rely on sources that are comfortable with us, and we have to deal with the cyclical nature of the business.”

No matter the times, the firm has kept together with almost no turnover. Jeff Davidson said that is a testament to the reputation the firm has built over the last three decades. Grassgreen took it a step further.

“I often tell recruiters that unless Richard Pachulski dies or retires, please do not call me.”

Pachulski, whose brother Isaac also joined the firm from Stutman in May, has been practicing more than 40 years. He said he hopes the firm will continue to operate in the future as it does now.

“I would like the firm to be handed over to people who are going to keep our culture,” he said.

“People come here because of the culture.”

— Jason Pafundi