



By Debra Gelbart

# Walker & Peskind, PLLC

**W**hen you think about superior legal services delivered by exceptionally experienced, skilled attorneys, what comes to mind? If you're like many people--both in and outside the legal community--a high billable rate may be what pops into your head first. The law firm of Walker & Peskind, PLLC in Scottsdale is trying to change that.

The three attorneys who currently comprise the firm have more than 100 years of legal experience combined, and each has commanded a high-end billable hourly rate while working at larger law firms. But when longtime friends Richard Walker and E.J. Peskind founded their own law firm in January 2009, they knew they could give

clients better value while continuing to provide legal services that are in every way equal to those provided by the large firms.

"Our clients are able to have access to the first-rate level of service we can provide at substantially less cost than they would encounter working with firms that can provide comparable quality," Walker says. "All of the attorneys in our firm have previously worked in large, nationally known law firms, and we came to believe that the cost structure in those firms has driven them to charge what most clients justifiably consider to be exorbitant rates."

Walker says he and Peskind have adopted a new client-focused approach that strives to make premier



Walker & Peskind Law Firm: from left to right: Steven Guttell, Joyce Hemmen, E.J. Peskind, Tina Simonetti, Richard Walker and Michelle Giordano.

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legal services available at a moderate cost. “We have built this firm around a business model that is designed to keep our cost structure about 30 percent below the norm so we can provide services at rates that are substantially less than what clients were charged for our time years ago. Our basic idea is that legal services have become too costly, and we have set about conscientiously to do something about that.”

The practice of Walker & Peskind emphasizes business litigation, labor and employment law, commercial transactions and real estate. “We also have extraordinary experience and expertise in dealing with business fraud, including matters implicating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and state anti-racketeering statutes,” Walker says. He adds that with the addition of attorney Steven Guttell, the firm is also especially well positioned to help clients take full advantage of alternative dispute resolution options.

All of the attorneys at Walker & Peskind have received the highest possible Premier AV® Preeminent™ rating from Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review Ratings, indicating a lawyer has the highest ethical standards and professional ability.

Each of the lawyers has decades of experience. Walker has been a partner in some of the most prominent national firms in the U.S. and has successfully handled a considerable number of very complex litigation matters, and he has represented employers all across the country in virtually all aspects of labor and employment law. He is especially well known for defending employers against claims brought under whistleblower protection laws. In Arizona, he is one of only a small handful of lawyers with significant experience and expertise in handling claims under the RICO Act. He is a former law professor at the University of South Carolina. Walker also has been listed



**Richard Walker**

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for several years in “The Best Lawyers In America” and “Southwest Superlawyers.”

For nearly 40 years, Peskind has helped clients with complex real estate and commercial transactions and disputes, both nationally and in Arizona. He has been an active real estate developer in the Valley, and served for 10 years as general counsel for a major Phoenix-based real estate development company. He helped found a successful Scottsdale-based law firm and was engaged in solo practice for a number of years prior to becoming a founding partner of Walker & Peskind.

Guttell’s practice focuses on employment and labor law as well as alternative dispute resolution. His expertise includes wrongful discharge, wage and hour, discrimination, harassment, individual employment contract applicability, and other employment-related issues. He is also an accomplished litigator who previously spent several years as a trial attorney with the U. S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. and New York City. Prior to joining Walker & Peskind, Guttell spent almost 28 years with Gust Rosenfeld PLC.

“We really do think of the companies we represent as business partners,” Peskind says. “We believe our relationship with our clients only begins with the legal

services we provide.” In fact, Walker says, “we think it’s our responsibility to look for business opportunities for our clients---such as putting clients together to conduct business jointly when appropriate---for which we don’t charge anything. If our clients thrive, everyone benefits.”

The founders plan to expand the firm’s focus to include such additional areas as intellectual property, corporate law, tax law, environmental law, health care law, and bankruptcy. “We are always on the lookout for experienced and highly capable lawyers who are compatible and who subscribe to our business model and client service philosophy,” Walker says. The firm is also committed, however, to being careful about the way in which its growth objectives are met. “We want to be a broad-service, full-service business law firm and we want to grow, but not to the point where we have ‘big firm’ problems,” Walker says. He adds that the firm will ultimately have between 25 and 30 lawyers. “More than that and we may start bumping up against some of the problems that plague larger firms, compound costs, and make it all but impossible for those firms to keep their rates in check.”

Walker and Peskind are interested in bringing in

only lawyers who are highly skilled and have considerable high-quality experience. “It’s very unlikely that we would seriously consider hiring someone who has been in practice less than five or six years,” Walker says. But an attorney with perhaps a decade of experience who has caught the attention of the legal community and distinguished himself or herself as an outstanding lawyer would be “someone we would be very interested in talking to,” Walker says.

Walker and Peskind “inadvertently chose a tough time with respect to the economy to establish a new law firm,” Peskind says,



**Steven Guttell**

“but things have gone very nicely for us despite the poor economy.” He adds that he is especially proud that “the quality of legal services and advice given by this firm is second to none and we are truly competitive with the larger law firms in our community.”

Peskind says the firm recently obtained a multi-million dollar settlement of a very large case for a corporate client who had been the victim of fraud. “The client’s expectation was that the case would have to be litigated because the opposing party would only be willing to settle for millions less than we were able to obtain.”



**E.J. Peskind**

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Doug Camping of the Camping Companies also has high praise for Walker & Peskind. The firm has litigated a complex matter arising out of financial dealings that adversely affected members of Camping's family. "Rick Walker has done an excellent job helping us with this situation," Camping says, "and he has been extremely detailed in pulling up a lot of case history where very similar situations have already been resolved. Walker is intelligent and aggressive, and I've been very impressed."

The bottom line, Peskind says, is that "we can be of assistance to corporate clients and individuals and provide an extraordinarily high quality work product at a much more reasonable price than the large law firms."

## At a Glance

### Primary Practice Areas

- Complex Civil Litigation
- Class Actions and RICO
- Corporate and Commercial Law
- Commercial Transactions
- Executive Employment Agreements
- Business Planning and Exit Strategies
- Labor and Employment Law
- Collective Bargaining and Labor Arbitration
- Real Estate and Commercial Transactions
- Real Estate Development Services
- Real Estate and Commercial Litigation

### Peer Recognition

#### Richard Walker:

Martindale-Hubbell AV® Preeminent™ 5.0 out of 5 rated (highest legal ability and ethical standards)

Best Lawyers in America (Labor and Employment 2006 - 2009)

Southwest Super Lawyer, 2005 - 2010 (Labor and Employment 2005 - 2008) (Business Litigation 2009 - 2010)

#### E.J. Peskind:

Martindale-Hubbell AV® Preeminent™ 5.0 out of 5 rated (highest legal ability and ethical standards)

#### Steven Guttell:

Martindale-Hubbell AV® Preeminent™ 5.0 out of 5 rated (highest legal ability and ethical standards)

#### Community Service:

Arizona Theater Company, Board of Trustees (Richard K. Walker)

Arizona Foundation for Eye Health, First Vice President, Board of Governors; Member, Executive Council (Steven Guttell)



Walker & Peskind, PLLC

ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS

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