

Big law office loses key litigator to rival

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By Bob Shallit

--Call this one a coup for the local branch of DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary.

The eight-lawyer office has just hired away top litigator **Matt Jacobs** from Downey Brand, the city's largest firm. The move fulfills a promise Gilles Attia made last year when his firm, Gray Cary, merged with Piper Rudnick and DLA.

He vowed the local office would branch out of its technology and patent law specialties and start legislative, real estate and white-collar crime legal work. As of this week, it has a lawyer with high-profile experience in all three areas.

At DB, Jacobs represented the Sacramento City Unified School District when some challenged the conversion of Sac High to a charter school. He represented the Legislature in its probe of former Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush. He represented Kevin Shelley, the former secretary of state.

His charge at DLA Piper will be to establish the new practices and gradually add staff, a prospect Jacobs calls "exciting, challenging and a little daunting as well."

One of the strengths he brings, according to Attia and others, is experience from a nine-year stint as a prosecutor with the U.S. attorney's office.

That gives him "a deep understanding of what his adversaries are doing" when defending people or companies facing government charges, says Bill Portanova, another prosecutor-turned-private litigator.

Portanova is asked what DLA Piper is getting with its new hire. His response is botanical.

"You're not planting seeds or bringing in a (sapling in a) one-gallon pot," he says. "You're getting a mature tree."

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Quick turn: Retailer-turned-real estate investor Sol Price is usually a buy-and-hold kind of guy. But the San Diego multimillionaire has already "spun" one of three vacant Rancho Cordova office buildings he purchased in February from Intel Corp.

Why the quick sale of the 51,000-square-foot building at 9800 Old Placerville Road? "An offer we couldn't refuse," says Ron Thomas, a member of the Colliers International team that's now helping Price lease the properties.

Schools Insurance Authority, which has outgrown nearby office space, is paying \$7.1 million for the building - or about \$139 a square foot. Price, known as the father of "big boxes," paid about \$86 a square foot for the three buildings with a combined 280,000 square feet.

"The gamble is paying off," Thomas says of Price's purchase of empty buildings on a corridor where office vacancies are hovering around 15 percent.

How is the leasing going in the two other buildings? "Significant, advanced interest" could lead to full occupancy on one, Thomas says. The other also is generating leasing interest.

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Studio city: Lucy Steffens of the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau was a little skeptical about reports a film production studio was starting up in the Delta.

Over the years, the city's top recruiter of film business has heard lots of talk about studios being established here. Talk, but never lights, camera or action.

She feared news of the Hooks and Taylor Entertainment operation in the town of Hood could be another baseless rumor.

So she drove to the Delta. Found an impressive sound stage in a former pear storage building, where a horror film called "7eventy 5ive" was being filmed. She returned home happy.

"I was pleasantly surprised," she says.

* * *

Radio ham: Comedian Kevin Nealon is long gone from "Saturday Night Live." But he still does his "Subliminal Man" gag, in which he gives a pitch but, sotto voce, tells us what he's really thinking.

Local ad firm Mering & Associates has Nealon doing just that in some funny radio spots for next month's American Century Championship Celebrity Golf Tournament at Lake Tahoe.

One of them has Nealon (a Tahoe resident and tourney regular) talking up the event. He declares that it's a "great celebrity event (overrated)" that attracts "gentlemen (cheaters) ... with a total prize purse of over \$700,000 (pocket change)."

The spot is hilarious (sleep inducing). Just kidding.

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Reach Bob Shallit at (916) 321-1049 or bshallit@sacbee.com. Back columns: www.sacbee.com/shallit.

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