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Number of Civil Filings Plunges in Courts

Action in Injury Cases Takes Notable Decline

By SHELLY GARCIA
Senior Reporter

Civil court filings have dropped considerably throughout the Los Angeles Superior Court system causing both consternation and concern among attorneys, judges and administrators.

LAW UPDATE

Although the reasons for the drop-off, especially notable for personal injury firms step up marketing.....Page 10

A Lull in Civil Litigation

Superior Court civil filings decline

Type of Complaint	Location	'03-'04 Filings	'02-'03 Filings	Percent Change
Personal Injury/Vehicle	North Valley	827	1,059	-22%
Personal Injury/Vehicle	N'west Valley	1,102	1,544	-28
Personal Injury/Other	North Valley	499	556	-10
Personal Injury/Other	N'west Valley	576	770	-25
Malpractice	North Valley	72	90	-20
Malpractice	N'west Valley	159	167	-5

Source: Superior Court data

cases related to motor vehicle incidents, are not yet entirely clear, many believe the numbers reflect a trend to settle these

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Computer Forensics Plays Role in Litigation

By SHELLY GARCIA
Senior Reporter

When two attorneys charged with misappropriating trade secrets denied any wrongdoing, David Gurnick headed straight for a computer expert.

Gurnick, an attorney and shareholder at Lewitt, Hackman, Shapiro, Marshall & Harlan LLP in Encino, wanted to show that

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Getting Motivated

Personal Growth Gurus Become Big Resource For Valley Executives

By JEFF WEISS
Contributing Reporter

FEELING disorganized? Not adequately juggling your personal and business life? Do you feel unfocused? If so, you're not alone.

Expressly designed to combat these business maladies, personal growth coaches are becoming almost common in the corporate world. While most people have heard of pioneering "gurus" such as Tony Robbins and Zig Ziglar, fewer are aware that numerous lesser-known growth coaches have cropped up to specifically cater to the business community. Many local executives and company presidents attribute a great deal of their success to coaches that have aided their managerial abilities.

Stepping into Marx Acosta-Rubio's Chatsworth office, one notices the autographed framed photos of the nine personal growth coaches that have heavily influenced the One Stop Shop's president and CEO's life.

"These coaches have played a major role in my business and personal life. I have learned to always have a positive mental attitude. The coaches that I have used teach discipline,

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THEIR ADVISORS



Acosta-Rubio

'The coaches I have used teach discipline, focus and integrity.'
- Marx Acosta-Rubio
One Stop Shop



Robbins



Bishara

'I've become more focused and more accessible.'
- Marc Bishara
Venbrook Risk Management and Insurance



Edwards



Wood

'It has let me be more confident in taking risks.'
- H. David Wood
Willis North America



Pearlman

focus, and integrity. The philosophies embedded in their teachings help me to achieve my goals," Acosta-Rubio said.

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'Growth' Aids Firm's Move To Inc. 500

By JEFF WEISS
Contributing Reporter

Chatsworth-based One Stop Shop has made for the first time Inc. 500's list of the 500 fastest growing companies in the country - partly a credit to the influence of personal growth coaches, according to its president and CEO Marx Acosta-Rubio.

The company ranks No. 383 on the magazine's recently published list.

Also making the list from the Valley are Canoga Park's DSL Extreme, which was ranked at No. 13, with a staggering four/five year average annual sales growth of 1,214.5 percent. Chatsworth's Millennium Rugs finished at 115, with annual growth of 258.5 percent, while Glendale's Red Peacock International placed 164 with 202.5 percent growth. Calabasas' iHomeowners came in at 389 with 94.2 percent annual growth, followed by La Crescenta's Pacific Paving-stone (403, 92 percent growth), Chatsworth's Micro Solutions Enterprises

Seven other local companies make magazine's rankings

Please see ONE STOP page 33

Kaiser Plans Ambitious High-Tech Records Revamp

By JONATHAN D. COLBURN
Staff Reporter

Throughout Kaiser Permanente's Southern California hospitals, doctors and patients are experiencing a transition into the future of medical records and information.

As part of a nationwide project linking all of the company's hospitals and doctors, the company will be keeping records of every patient's doctor visits, medical tests and prescriptions ordered. The data will then be accessible to anybody in the company's computer systems.

Matthew Gerlach, senior vice president of business development for Kaiser, is heading up the project in Southern California. He said the company sees itself to be excelling in almost every area, with the notable exception of electronic records.

"We consider ourselves to be one of the most integrated health care delivery systems in the country, yet our information systems weren't really paralleling that," Gerlach said.

When the new system is in place, Gerlach said, patients and doctors will have appointments based less

upon patients trying to recall their medical history, since everything will be available on a computer, regardless of how many doctors a patients has seen.

"Patients tend to forget," said Gerlach. "You go to a doctor, and you don't know exact specific information. That information will be in the system. Instead of a doctor having a patient come in and starting to ask questions, it will become a situation of confirming the information that's already in there."

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Health Care Leadership Awards

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2004
Warner Center Marriott Hotel • Woodland Hills
5:30 p.m - 7:30 p.m.

For reservation and sponsorship information call: 818-676-1750 or email: events@sfvb.com

Solid Growth Reported At Annual Conference

By **JEFF WEISS**
Contributing Reporter

The 16th annual Valley Industry and Commerce Association Forecast Conference, held on October 29, provided Valley businesspeople with concrete evidence that the local economy is on the upward slope. A report issued by Cal-State Northridge San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center director Daniel Blake claimed that job growth has returned to the San Fernando Valley. The Valley's private sector added more than 7,600 jobs last year, a 1.2% increase when compared with 2002.

"The San Fernando Valley economy is on a solid growth. All of the local indicators point to a continued expansion of Valley jobs and payrolls," Blake said. "Consistent with the leap in job growth, Blake also asserted that the Valley's unemployment claims descended sharply in the first half of 2004.

"This 2004 descent even defied the Valley's normally strong seasonal pattern of rising unemployment claims in the first half of the year," Blake said.

Jack Kyser, chief economist at the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. followed Blake at the lectern, issuing a more measured but still optimistic prognosis for the Los Angeles economy.

"We've had 4.5% growth which is very solid. The economy is going to slow down in terms of GDP but job growth will be a little bit better. In order to keep the economy going we will need a very strong push on productivity," Kyser said. "Consumer confidence has started to recover and after-tax profits are strong. That generally means more jobs, but companies are still very cautious."

Kyser also mentioned that the budgetary woes that have plagued Sacramento in recent years will continue into 2005. "We'll be faced with a major budget issue next year in Sacramento, so get ready," Kyser said.

Even with the possibility of Sacramento's financial struggles continuing into the next year, Valley businesspeople in the audience came away pleased with the economists' latest findings.

"I'm a community college president and this conference gave me an idea of what my job is going to be like in the next year and what programs and curriculums we can strengthen. It was good information that showed some positive growth and trends for the future," Pierce College President Thomas Oliver said.

Outsourcing discussed

Another highlight of the VICA conference

was a discussion of the future workforce, outsourcing, and "home" sourcing. In that panel, Darren Dang, managing director of **Karen Hill Scott Co.**, Teague McKnight, vice-president of **Outsource Plus**, and USC professor Frances Pereira debated the pros and cons of outsourcing.

"Something to consider when outsourcing, is whether or not the task to be outsourced is core to your company or not. Such things such as creative tasks and intellectual property can never be outsourced," Dang said. "Sometimes when people outsource, they get too hands off. Always leave a paper trail and be in constant communication with the other company you are working with."

Pereira advised companies not to necessarily rush to outsource, as "home" sourcing can also be a viable option.

"Jet Blue provides customer support in a virtual environment saving them a great deal of overhead in terms of office space and other factors. We have to change the way that we do business in order to get full savings. There needs to be a new matrix in productivity measures. Working from home and not going into an office can minimize traffic congestion as well," Pereira said.

Outsourcing inevitable?

Ultimately, all three speakers agreed that outsourcing was the inevitable product of globalization and in the long run it will be a boon to the American economy.

In another session, Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, John Chiang from the State Board of Equalization, and Bruce Seaton, interim executive director of the Port of Los Angeles weighed in on globalization in Los Angeles.

Antonovich advised Angeleno city planners to improve their utilization of the Palmdale and Ontario airports.

"In the 1960s, the city planners actually had a vision for a regional airport system and accordingly they bought land in Palmdale and Ontario for the airports. Today's vision can't even be called a vision. They feel that this one plan from the past can fit the Los Angeles of the future. It can't," Antonovich said.

Chiang stressed the importance of bringing California's antiquated tax code into the new century.

"The greatest concern for Los Angeles and globalization is that we have to make sure we have the ability to compete internationally. The key tax financial structure was created in the 1930's," Chiang said. "Our financial structure indicates that we need a monumental turn."

One Stop: Firms Make List

Continued from page 1

(453, 82 percent growth), and **Topaz Systems** (500, 73.4 percent growth).

Acosta-Rubio's six-year-old computer and peripherals supply company had a four/five year average annual sales growth of 96.4 percent. Acosta-Rubio attributed the business' success to providing superior customer service and a hard-working and focused staff.

"Customer service at most companies is dismal at best. We create a service that not only anticipates our clients' needs but allows them to do their jobs better," Acosta-Rubio said. "We truly love our clients."

Starting the company with only \$70,000 from his mother's life savings, Acosta-Rubio parlayed that cash into \$5.8 million in revenue last year. In 2004, One Stop Shop is expected to gross more than \$7 million, he said.

"I think the company has been successful because of the type of business that (Acosta-Rubio) runs and the type of person that he is.

They won't pressure you into anything," One Stop Shop customer Jarrod Stabnow said. "They respect the customers and really get to know them on a personal level. It doesn't surprise me that they were named to the Inc. list. If you do what they do it's bound to pay off."

Acosta-Rubio has implemented a rigorous training program to initiate employees into the company. Each employee is required to memorize a labyrinth of flow-charts, metrics, and company by-laws. Additionally, Acosta-Rubio has encouraged the use of personal growth coaches.

"What has made our company so unique is implanting our beliefs and philosophy into our existing representatives," Acosta-Rubio said. "Personal growth is the engine that drives One Stop Shop. In order for the business to improve, we have to improve ourselves. We don't make it mandatory but everyone here is into it."

"We have a completely different philosophy than most other companies. We really try to build client relationships so that they're more than just business." One Stop Shop account representative Mike Oranksky said.

Newsmakers

Consulting

Matthew W. Doyal has joined Westlake Village-based Millennium Business Solutions Group Inc. as SalesLogix implementation specialist.

Doyal has six years of experience as a business analyst and IT implementation specialist. His expertise is in front office to back office integration.

Woodland Hills-based Right Management Consultants has named **Dewayne Sode** as vice president of client services. Sode is responsible for building relationships and securing business with major corporations throughout the greater Los Angeles area.

Sode has over 15 years of experience in sales, marketing and business development. He has previously worked as a business development manager with Parson Consulting and as an associate director of business development with Ernst & Young.

RBF consulting, has named **M. Violet Gray** project manager in the geographic information systems group of the firm's Camarillo office.

Gray's background includes providing strategic planning, database design, data conversion, systems implementation, staff training, supervision and systems integration.

Internet

Westlake Village's RENTNET, a division of Homestore Inc., has named **Maria Pietroforte**, a 20-year veteran of the multifamily housing industry, to be its new president.

Most recently, Pietroforte served as president of KSI Management Corporation, one of greater Washington D.C.'s largest developers. Pietroforte helped launch the company's luxury line of apartments known as The Metropolitan, and pioneered several different marketing programs. Prior to that, Pietroforte was president of E&S Ring Company, a Los Angeles based apartment managing company. Pietroforte, will be relocating from Washington D.C. to Westlake Village.

Law

Rutter Hobbs & Davidoff Inc. has announced that Sherman Oaks resident **Andrew Apfelberg** has joined its corporate and securities law practice. Apfelberg's primary focus is in business and finance, and he will work with the firm's bankruptcy, reorganization and capital recovery practice group, as much of Apfelberg's transactional experience has been in the insolvency context.

On corporate matters, Apfelberg's focus is in mergers and acquisitions. He serves as primary outside counsel to companies and entrepreneurs, advising on entity formation, finance and securities issues, and critical agreements with employees and third parties.

Media

Jonathan D. Colburn has joined the San Fernando Valley Business Journal as staff reporter covering politics, health care and hospitality.

Colburn began his career as an editorial intern with the San Francisco Business Times. Most recently, he was a business reporter at The Desert Sun in Palm Springs, where he covered real estate and economic development.

He is a graduate of the University of King's College in Canada.

Camarillo-based Salem Communications, a radio broadcaster focused on religious and family-themed programming, has named **Mike Moran**, manager for the company's Atlanta cluster of stations. In this newly created role, he will be involved in all aspects of the operations of the stations and will report to the general manager and the vice president of operations, Allen Power. Moran is a 27-year veteran of media and broadcasting, having worked on the agency, rep firm, and station sides of the business. Most recently he served as vice-president/director of Media of Leading The Way, the international media ministry of Michael Yousef in Atlanta.

Real Estate

Jo Ann Poole has joined Troop Real Estate, Inc. as a residential real estate agent in the company's Simi Valley/Wood Ranch office. Poole had formerly worked at Century 21 Hilltop LaCarre in Simi Valley, where she had been the top producing agent and earned "Centurion" status (recognizing the top one percent of Century 21 agents worldwide).



Poole

Jody Driver, a 24 year veteran of residential real estate in Simi Valley, the Santa Clarita Valley, Camarillo, and the San Fernando Valley, has joined the Simi Valley office of Troop Real Estate, Inc. Driver had previously worked for Century 21 Hilltop La Carre, earning "Centurion" status.

Retail

Robinsons-May/Meier & Frank has promoted **Robert B. "R.B." Harrison** to chairman.

Harrison joined The May Department Stores Co. in 1986 as an analyst at the Kaufmann's division and was named senior vice president and CFO at Robinsons-May in 2002.

He replaces Robert M. Soroka who was named chairman of Marshall Field's, a division recently acquired by May.

Guitar Center, Inc. announced that its Board of Directors has approved a management succession plan to be implemented during the fourth quarter of 2004. Under this plan, **Marty Albertson**, presently president and co-CEO, will assume the position of chairman of the board and become sole CEO of the company. **Larry Thomas**, presently chairman and Co-CEO, will become chairman emeritus. In addition, Mr. Thomas will serve as chairman of the Guitar Center Music Education Foundation, a private foundation to be established to administer charitable giving by Guitar Center in support of music participation and music education. Mr. Thomas will also remain a member of Guitar Center's board of directors. Both Thomas and Albertson are long-term Guitar Center employees, with 27 and 25 years of service respectively.

Tech

Calabasas based Ixia, a global provider of IP network testing solutions, announced that **Mike McHale** has joined the company as vice president. McHale has over 20 years of sales, sales management and team building experience. In his most recent position, he served as the country manager for the United Kingdom at Anritsu where he was responsible for the leadership and direction for the UK field office.

McHale served at Anritsu since 1999. Prior to Anritsu, McHale managed the European sales staff of Tescon Company Ltd., a Japanese manufacturer of automatic test equipment and industrial robotics. In this role, he was responsible for the sales and marketing efforts for the region.



Apfelberg



Colburn