

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2012

Small LA firm reflects on 60 years and path less traveled

Valensi Rose has avoided the pitfalls that have befallen small firms in the past

By **Ryne Hodkowski**
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Many small law firms eventually take the opportunity to get gobbled up by bigger firms. Others wither and die because they can't adapt to economic or business changes over the years.

But Valensi Rose PLC hasn't taken either path. This month marks the 60th anniversary of the Century City firm founded by Stephen G. Valensi and Sidney R. Rose, and its lawyers say it's reached the milestone by staying small and creating a culture in which attorneys regularly refer work to one another.

"If any of the attorneys here wanted to work in big firms, they could," said Arlen R. Gunner, managing partner. "But we don't want to. I like the type of practice we have here."

Sixteen-attorney Valensi Rose is a full-service law firm, handling an

array of matters including business, tax, real estate, entertainment, family law and litigation. The attorneys agree that "cross-selling" one another is one of the main reasons the firm has thrived for so long.

"Anytime a client asks 'What do you do,' I like to tell them what the firm does," said Michael R. Morris, partner and member of the firm since 1989.

'If any of the attorneys here wanted to work in big firms, they could, but we don't want to.'

— *Arlen R. Gunner*

Morris is a former trial lawyer for the Internal Revenue Service who focuses on tax and entertainment law, but he refers to colleagues clients who have real estate, litigation or family law needs.

"Cross-selling is big because we can keep nearly all of the work under one roof. Clients are happy that if they have different issues, they can count on us."

The tactic, the attorneys said, also helps explain why the firm has held on to some clients for decades.

The firm has served as general counsel and secretary to the Simon Wiesenthal Center since the early 1980s and is also general counsel to the Beverly Hills Bar Association. Philip S. Magaram, who is still with the firm, and Mark S. Levin represented members of the wealthy Getty family in a dispute with the IRS in 1988.

"You have to look for continuing business," Gunner said. "A one-shot deal is okay, but in the long run isn't going to work."

While Valensi Rose has been approached with offers to merge, talks have never proceeded beyond preliminary discussions. The firm's lawyers said they enjoy the ability to remain agile and practice in numerous areas — something that might not be possible in a bigger firm.

"All of the partners are committed to this firm," said M. Laurie Murphy, partner and member of the firm since 1989. "The attorneys here are here because we enjoy it more. Many have tried big law and we just like being more nimble."

ryne_hodkowski@dailyjournal.com



Ryne Hodkowski / Daily Journal

Valensi Rose partners M. Laurie Murphy (seated), Arlen R. Gunner and Michael R. Morris (standing, right)