



**LEWITT | HACKMAN**  
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## BUSINESS PRACTICE GROUPS

- Business & Civil Litigation
- Commercial Finance
- Corporate
- Employment
- Environmental
- Franchise & Distribution
- Health Care
- Intellectual Property
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Real Estate
- Tax Planning

## CONSUMER PRACTICE GROUPS

- Family Law
- Personal Injury
- Trust & Estate Planning

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SEPTEMBER 2025

## Recent Professional & Community Accomplishments

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We are pleased to congratulate 10 of our attorneys selected to the **Best Lawyers in America** and **Ones to Watch** lists for 2026, by *Best Lawyers Magazine*. They include **Sue M. Bendavid** (Litigation – Labor and Employment), **Tal Grinblat** (Franchise Law), **Michael Hackman** (Tax Law), **Jeffrey A. Kobulnick** (Litigation – Intellectual Property, and Trademark Law), **Barry Kurtz** (Franchise Law), **Kira S. Masteller** (Trusts and Estates), **Vanessa Soto Nellis** (Family Law, Collaborative Law: Family Law, and Family Law Mediation), **Andrew L. Shapiro** (Personal Injury Litigation – Plaintiffs), **Lynn Soodik** (Family Law), and **Nancy Martinez** in *Ones to Watch* (Family Law).

Congratulations to **Sue M. Bendavid**, honored as the *2025 Mentor of the Year* at the *Los Angeles Business Journal's* Valley Women's Leadership Symposium & Awards. This honor recognizes Sue for her commitment to mentoring and bettering the careers of women.

**Tal Grinblat** and **Katherine L. Wallman** sent a cease-and-desist letter on behalf of a client to an infringer operating in San Diego, who adopted and used marks similar to our client's marks in a competing business. After receiving Tal and Kate's letter, the infringer agreed to rebrand its business within 90 days. This result avoided the need to engage in litigation with the infringer, and provided our client with a satisfactory resolution.

**Keith T. Zimmet** guided our client through the sale of a large industrial and retail real estate project. The closing followed a lengthy process during which Keith resolved numerous old title and government regulatory issues which were jeopardizing the sale.

**Kira S. Masteller** represented the father in a mediation with stepchildren following the death of his spouse. The deceased spouse bequeathed a principle residence to her children, though our client lived in the home for over three decades. The case settled as a result of the legal issue related to our client's community property interest from a long-term marriage.

**Barry Kurtz** and **Matthew J. Soroky** (Certified Specialists in Franchise & Distribution Law) represented a franchisee who sought to rescind their franchise agreements and promissory note after the franchisor's representatives made misleading statements about attractive financing opportunities. Barry and Matt quickly resolved the matter, and the franchisor refunded all our client's initial fees. In a separate matter, Barry and Matt are representing a client in the termination of contract dealer gasoline and mini market agreements involving multiple gas stations. In yet another matter, Matt is advising a developer of meat market businesses on opening and operating an additional location under a license agreement.

**Sue M. Bendavid, Nicholas Kanter,** and **Thomas M. Morrow** secured an early victory for a firm client against a former employee. The employee falsely accused our client of wage theft and sought waiting time penalties, emotional distress damages, punitive damages, and attorneys' fees. Sue, Nick, and Tom filed an early motion to dismiss, as the claims lacked merit. The Court agreed and dismissed the case in its entirety. Our attorneys will help our client seek recovery of its costs from having to defend the meritless claims.

**Barry Kurtz** and **Katherine L. Wallman** (Certified Specialists in Franchise & Distribution Law) are advising a client with a sports instruction business, who is purchasing a software rankings and analytics company. In a separate matter, Barry and Kate are handling the franchise related matters for a client selling a substantial number of strength training & bodybuilding fitness studios, to an industry leader.

**Jeffrey A. Kobulnick** sent a cease and desist letter on behalf of a health and wellness space client that successfully stopped a third party's use of our client's trademark.

**Nicholas J. Vitale** and **Kira S. Masteller** are working with clients on a Liability Release for a dance studio that leases space for film/theater production casting calls.

**Nancy Martinez** helped a client prepare for marriage by drafting and finalizing a prenuptial agreement. This agreement provided a solid foundation for the young couple's future together.

**Steven L. Feldman** resolved an Americans with Disabilities Act claim filed in Federal Court against our small business client and our client's commercial landlord. The parties settled for a low four figure amount.

**Kevin E. Rex** and **Kira S. Masteller** are working with business owners with respect to their succession planning to continue the business via the next generation. Tax planning, retirement income planning, estate planning and ongoing business governance issues are being reviewed and addressed in the multi-layered planning project.

**Mark J. Phillips** (California Certified Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law) handled the closing of a long trust administration. The trust, established by elderly clients who passed away in 2020, provided for their disabled son until his recent passing. Mark worked with the trustee in completing administration, obtaining waivers of accounting from the remainder beneficiaries, and allowing final distribution within months instead of years without unnecessary court supervision.

**Tal Burnovski Yeyni** and **Joshua S. Stein** resolved our client's case for a fraction of the original demand.

**Steven L. Feldman** worked with an environmental consulting company in their subsurface investigation of underground petroleum storage tanks which established that there is no Recognized Environmental Condition for the property.

**Wanjia "Olivia" Li** and **Kira S. Masteller** filed a petition with the Court for our Trustee client to confirm assets held in the Decedent's name, rather than her trust's name at her death. The successful filing, called a Heggstad petition, provides for a shorter process than a probate proceeding, and allows the trust estate to be distributed much earlier.

**Barry Kurtz** and **Tal Grinblat** (Certified Specialists in Franchise & Distribution Law) are helping our client with the preparation of a license agreement for the use of proprietary equipment and trademark registration for the client's name and equipment.

**Sue M. Bendavid** successfully helped a client in a breach of contract claim. Sue filed suit and sought damages to recover our client's losses, and the Court awarded judgment for the full amount demanded.

**Jeffrey A. Kobulnick** presented on acquired distinctiveness under U.S. trademark law at the Brazilian Intellectual Property Association's (ABPI) Annual International Congress in São Paulo, Brazil.

## Publications & Media Mentions

### **Valley Lawyer, San Fernando Valley Bar Association**

*Unintentional Franchises*  
**Barry Kurtz** and  
**Kate Wallman**, authors

### **San Antonio Lawyer**

*Trial of O.J. Simpson, Part 2*  
**Mark J. Phillips**, co-author

### **Los Angeles Business Journal, Inside the Valley**

*The Valley 200*  
**Barry Kurtz**, selected

### **San Antonio Lawyer**

*Trial of O.J. Simpson, Part 1*  
**Mark J. Phillips**, co-author

### **LA Times Studios**

*Top 125 Law Firm and Top 25 Real Estate Practice Group in Los Angeles County*  
**Lewitt Hackman**, designated

### **State Bar of California**

*Certified Specialist in Taxation Law; and in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law*  
**Alex J. Hemmelgarn**

### **Franchise Times**

*Legal Eagles 2025*  
**Tal Grinblat**, selected

### **Franchise Times**

*CA Legislation Could Inspire States to Enhance Franchise Protections*  
**Tal Grinblat**, quoted

### **Super Lawyers**

*2025 Southern California Super Lawyers*  
**Zane S. Averbach**  
**Paul C. Bauducco**  
**Sue M. Bendavid**  
**David B. Bobrosky**  
**Tal Grinblat**  
**Stephen T. Holzer**  
**Jeffrey A. Kobulnick**  
**Barry Kurtz**  
**Kira S. Masteller**  
**Vanessa Soto Nellis**  
**Mark J. Phillips**  
**Andrew L. Shapiro**  
**Lynn Soodik**  
**Keith T. Zimmet**