

Law Week 2009

Supplement to: **THE DAILY TRANSCRIPT**
SAN DIEGO'S BUSINESS DAILY

sddt.com/lawweek09



Thursday, April 30, 2009 / Vol. 124, No. 86

Close-up: Ross G. Simmons

Local lawyer advises clients via a preventative — and personal — approach

By JILL BLACKFORD

Special to the Daily Transcript

Ross G. Simmons knew at age 5 he would be a lawyer. And today, his childhood dream has turned into a successful career in helping clients — before trouble arises.

“I just always knew I was going to be a lawyer,” Simmons said. “I remember having conversations about it with my best friend in kindergarten. We talked about being lawyers in San Diego — and both of us are. We laugh about it to this day.”

In 1997, Simmons started his own practice, **The Simmons Firm ALC**, which largely advises small businesses in dispute-avoidance strategies and transactions. Simmons views his work as an opportunity to keep clients “out of harm’s way.”

“Litigation is as bad as or worse than everybody says it is,” he said. “The expense of it all, the disruption of it all, the risk it exposes you to. If you are a huge company, out of sheer scale, it’s the cost of doing business and there will be some lawsuits you just have to shrug your shoulders and accept. But

for small businesses, a lawsuit is a major thing — and money and time they don’t have.”

Instead, Simmons advises clients on how to avoid — or minimize — the risks and problems often inherent to starting or owning a company. He enjoys acting as a sounding board for clients and cultivating intimate, long-term relationships with them. From attending weddings and bar mitzvahs to describing his clients as friends, Simmons tends to work with clients who want their attorney to feel more like part of the family than a service-provider. Because of this, Simmons said he would walk through walls for his clients.

“I don’t know that I’ll ever make the *Fortune* 1,000, and I’m not going to make a whole lot of money operating my practice the way I run it,” he said. “But that’s not what makes me get up in the morning.”

Still, Simmons is doing well, even in the current economic climate. Because he currently represents more than 100 private companies, Simmons says



Simmons

his range of clients creates a sort of diversified portfolio. While his real estate clients may not be doing extremely well right now, others in the agricultural sector are thriving, despite the water issues the industry is facing.

“In 2001, right after 9/11, all my transportation clients were not doing so well, especially in

the airline industry. But the flipside was that interest rates were good, so my financial clients were flying high,” Simmons said. “In almost any sector, people are still doing business; when some pull back, others expand to fill the void. The media wants to make a big deal about sectors underperforming, but I see renewed interest in energy, farming and employment compliance. For every bad sector, there’s a good sector.”

Looking forward, Simmons sees a continuation of the tendency for some industries to come to prominence as other former leaders flag. He notes the perpetually cyclical nature of the markets.

“It never ceases to amaze me,” Simmons said. “The dot-com thing was devastating, and we recovered. This is a devastating time for our country, and we’ll recover. We’ll forget what happened in two more years and go through the same cycle again.”

For San Diego, he expects

the energy sector to continue to grow. Some of the high-tech and science sectors will rebound and start bringing new business ventures, he added.

Working regularly with startup companies makes Simmons most proud. Yet he has found great success in larger cases and those outside of his areas of expertise as well. From serving as lead corporate counsel for clients in multimillion-dollar asset-backed securitizations to overturning a federal court contempt order in Texas, Simmons has succeeded for his clients — even in cases far out of his “safety zone.”

“My view is that success in the law requires only two attributes: gratitude and conscientiousness. Ability lies within us all when those intangibles call upon us to apply it,” said Simmons. “What I would like to think is true of all lawyers is that for the right client, and for the right reasons, there is little one cannot do.”

Simmons applies these principles in the community as well, through philanthropic work and teaching. He is co-vice chair of the San Diego County Bar Association Legal Ethics Committee and is a probation monitor for state bar attorneys that have been disciplined. He also works to convey the power of the law — and share his passion — with students at the University of San Diego. He teaches professional responsibility as an adjunct professor at the USD School of Law and believes professionals can make a huge difference in their field by working with those just coming into it.

“Teaching at USD really is a passion,” he said. “I have a strong belief, a sense of optimism about the professional responsibility of lawyers. We have the ability to change the world if we accept the responsibility to do so.”

Blackford is a Los Angeles-based freelance writer.

Source Code: 20090430cre

Fed court revives rendition lawsuit against Boeing

By PAUL ELIAS

the program was illegal. The

Hawkins wrote for the appeals

the court’s decision.”