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TOP BOUTIQUES

IN CALIFORNIA 2017



Alex Dreucun / Special to the Daily Journal

From left, Jennifer Keller and Kay Anderle of Keller/Anderle LLP.

LITIGATION

IRVINE AND LOS ANGELES

Keller/Anderle LLP

It's a poorly kept secret that trial experience is an increasingly rare asset in the legal community. So it irks Jennifer L. Keller a little bit when she sees law firms dressing up motion wins as trial victories because it detracts from firms like Keller/Anderle LLP that have real expertise.

"We specialize in trying cases, and very few firms do that anymore," Keller said. "When people say 'You're a litigator,' I say 'No, I'm a trial lawyer.'"

It's not an idle brag: with over 150 trials under her belt, Keller is one of the most seasoned trial litigators in California. Her co-founding partner, Kay Anderle, has over 100, and the firm recently hired two former public defenders who have a combined re-

cord of 75 trials.

Those numbers tell a potential client the one thing they need to know about Keller/Anderle.

"There's absolutely no one out there who knows their way around a courtroom like we do — no one," Keller said.

The firm's trial expertise was recently on display during an eight-month trial in San Bernardino. Keller served as co-lead counsel representing a prominent developer who had been accused of bribing three county officials. In August a jury acquitted all four defendants, which Keller said was accomplished without needing to call a single witness. *People v. Biane et al.*, FSBI102102 (San Bernardino Super. Ct., filed May 10, 2011).

Keller credited part of the victory to her firm's methodical approach to managing the enormous, information-heavy matter. She praised the younger attorneys in her firm for creating a comprehensive database with hundreds of witness statements so the trial attorneys could easily locate and cross-reference information.

"These sorts of nuts-and-bolts things sound really boring, but in modern litigation cases rise and fall on them," she said.

Unlike many boutiques, Keller Anderle was designed from the outset to remain small. But Keller emphasized that the other side of the firm's brand is its reputation for courting gargantuan "bet-the-farm" matters.

Keller said the firm is currently working a case on behalf of the private loan company CashCall Inc., which is seeking \$200 million in damages from a Washington, D.C. firm that allegedly committed mal-

practice. *CashCall Inc. et al. v. Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP et al.*, 30-2017-00914968 (Orange Super. Ct., filed Apr. 4, 2017).

According to Keller, the defendant advised her client it could skirt state and federal usury laws by setting up call centers to pursue loans from Native American reservations.

"You can imagine how that worked out," Keller said, noting that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is pursuing a suit against CashCall, along with 34 state attorneys general.

The firm is also gearing up for a trial in November in which it will be defending Creative Arts Agency founder Michael Ovitz from allegations that he hired operatives to intimidate and threaten journalist Anita Busch. *Busch v. Pellicano et al.*, BC316318 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed May 28, 2004).

Keller said there's no basis to Busch's lurid allegations, including an accusation that Ovitz hired someone to put a dead fish in her car with a rose in its mouth. But with an estimated \$70 million on the line, the firm is working the case with the same methodical approach as any other.

To attract major clients, the firm deploys its resources as strategically as possible. Keller said she and her colleagues make a point of not wasting time on insignificant witnesses or pursuing angles that won't pan out before a jury.

"We're not interested in just running up billable hours," Keller added. She pointed out that big corporate clients have started to notice and appreciate this attention to honest billing.

Even with the addition of two new attorneys, Keller Anderle has trouble keeping up with the flood of potential work. Keller noted that the firm recently referred out a matter that could have kept her new attorneys busy for the next several years.

"It's never a question of having too little work, it's a question of having too much."

— Eli Wolfe