

Car Condos Spin Some Heads

REAL ESTATE: Collectors love extra space, fancy ambiance.

By **CAROL LAWRENCE** Staff Reporter

What is a high-end car collector to do when there's no more space in his home garage? He can join the list of auto enthusiasts waiting for the next phase of mini-warehouses that **Rick and Tony Principe**, father-and-son real

estate developers and automobile collectors, plan to build to meet the demand for quality auto storage.

The pair recently finished 16 "man caves" – industrial condominiums they carved out of a 60,000-square-foot industrial building in Westlake Village to create fancy garages with high ceilings, room for nine or 10 vehicles, roll-up garage doors and an amenities-rich lounge the condo owners share.

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PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

Aficionado: Developer Tony Principe.

Lawyers Learn People Skills

PROFILE: Consultant co-authors book on firm management.

By **HELEN FLOERSH** Staff Reporter

It's no secret that lawyers often lack warm and fuzzy people skills. But **Marcia Watson Wasserman**, owner of **Comprehensive Management Services Inc.** in Northridge, and attorney **Andrew Elowitz** are determined to change that with their book titled "Lawyers as Managers: How to Be a Champion for Your Firm and Employees."

"That which makes them a successful lawyer – the reliance on hard logic and problem-solving – doesn't always work with people," Wasserman told the Business Journal in an interview. "I've lived it – I know what it was like to be a non-lawyer in a law firm."

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Blizzard Opens Esports Arena

ENTERTAINMENT: 'Tonight Show' venue gets rewired for games.

By **CHRIS CASACCHIA**

Studio 1 looked every bit its age before the demolition crews arrived.

Worn carpets, stained walls, tattered fabric, an unwelcoming darkness. It was a relic of late-night TV, a location that once entertained the country with appearances from the likes of Frank Sinatra, Joan Rivers, Ronald Reagan and **Arnold Schwarzenegger**.

The famed lot at Burbank Studios, home for

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E-Impresario: Blizzard's Adam Rosen.

FASTEST FIFTY



Entrepreneurs find diverse pathways to higher revenue

The Fastest Growing Private Companies in the Valley region might surprise you.

Against the backdrop of a slow-growth economy, the No. 1 company on the list, **USA Link System** in Glendale, grew its revenue 425 percent since 2014. And the last company on the list, **Keyes Automotive Group** in Van Nuys, grew 11 percent in two years, showing that even

large players in mature markets can find ways to expand.

Outstanding performers include companies in online marketing, e-commerce, precious metals investment, construction and debt collection. Regardless of their sector, management faces a common challenge of delivering quality results for customers while simultaneously scaling up the process behind those results.

"To maximize growth, you can't be a micromanager," advised **Trevor Gerszt**, chief executive of **Goldco Precious Metals** in Woodland Hills, the No. 8 company on the list. "By hiring experienced, knowledgeable people and trusting them to do the work, it frees me to focus on growing the company."

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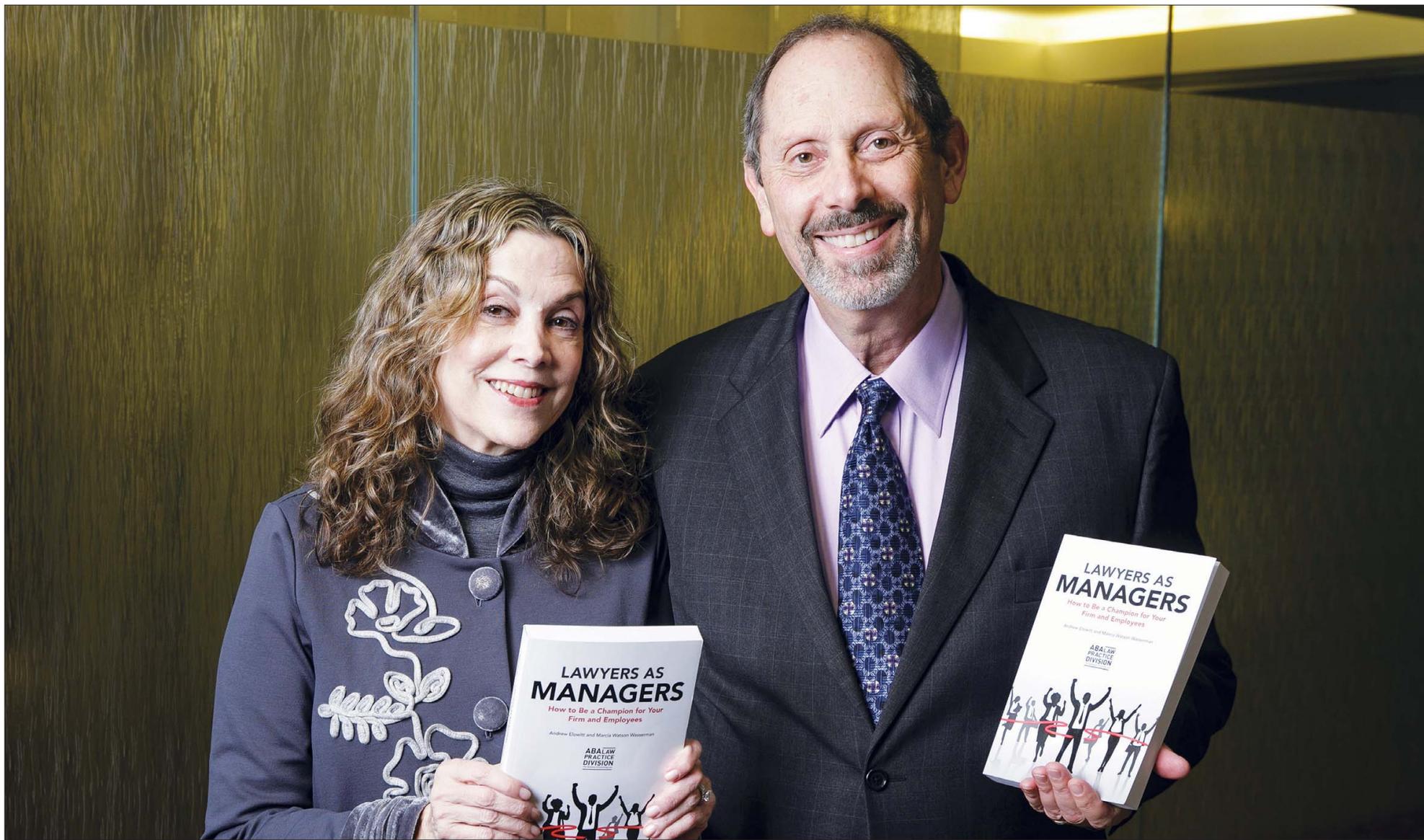


PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

Book 'em: Marcia Watson Wasserman and Andrew Elowitz with copies of their manual 'Lawyers as Managers,' published last month by the American Bar Association.

Legal Diplomats

Law firms need managers with special people skills, say authors Andrew Elowitz and Marcia Watson Wasserman.

By HELEN FLOERSH Staff Reporter

People skills are essential to the success of any business, but in the legal industry, the traits that make one an exceptional manager often seem to be at odds with those that make a good lawyer. To merge those skillsets, Marcia Watson Wasserman, owner of Comprehensive Management Services Inc. in Northridge, and attorney Andrew Elowitz teamed up to write an American Bar Association book titled "Lawyers as Managers: How to Be a Champion for Your Firm and Employees." While the book, which launched on Oct. 17, aims to help lawyers and those who manage them, Wasserman and Elowitz believe its people-management principles can be applied to virtually any industry. Prior to founding Comprehensive Management Services, which provides consulting and mentoring to the partners at startups and boutique law firms, Wasserman served as chief operating officer and executive director of various law firms for more than two decades. She also chairs a management roundtable for law professionals in Calabasas. Elowitz is a former corporate lawyer and the founder and managing director of New Actions, an L.A.-based business coaching and management consulting firm.

Question: What's unique about managing people in a law firm?

Marcia Watson Wasserman: Lawyers are independent and do not like to be managed. They liken trying to manage a law firm to trying to herd cats, owing to lawyers' personality traits. They are skeptical, not trusting, auton-

omous, which makes it extremely difficult for anyone trying to corral them.

Andrew Elowitz: Law firms are also pretty flat organizations, meaning that they're not real pyramidal and they're not real deep. So you can be a manager of people or of the whole firm, and you may be managing people who are as influential as you, have a bigger book of business than you have, more money, better education and more equity in the law firm. It is very different in many respects from leading other kinds of organizations.

What defines a "champion manager?"

Elowitz: First, managers who are champion managers are champions because they have the highest level of people management skills. Second, they are devoted to championing the people who work in their firm and developing them to their full potential. And third, their development efforts can turn firm members into champions in their own right, so champion managers end up managing a team of champions.

Wasserman: A champion manager has a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset. That individual will be open to change and embrace it. They also make management a priority rather than saying, "Well, it's not billable time – I don't want to deal with it."

How does a champion manager behave on a daily basis?

Elowitz: A champion manager knows that people management is something that goes on 24-7, 365. It's all in your interactions – with your partners, your associates, your paralegals, your staff. It has the potential to change the

5 Traits of Champion Managers

1. Champions make people management and talent development a priority, not an afterthought.
2. Champions embrace the responsibilities of management.
3. Champions rely on emotional intelligence and treat those they manage as individuals.
4. Champions have a growth mindset that inspires the people they manage to challenge their own limits on what they can achieve.
5. Champions constantly work to become better managers. They embrace failure as part of the path to success.

Adapted from "Lawyers as Managers: How to Be a Champion for Your Firm and Employees."

culture of a firm, for better or worse.

How does a lawyer become a champion manager?

Elowitz: You start with the champion manager mindset. There are a lot of resources that will tell you how to manage, and take a cookbook approach of "do this, do that." The approach we took was inside-out: If you want to be a champion manager, you have to think like a champion manager.

What personality traits are associated with champion managers?

Elowitz: We strongly feel that being a champion manager – or even a good manager – is a matter

of learning skills. You aren't just born into being a great manager. It may be easier for some than for others, based on genes or neurobiology, but that's really such a small part. It's skill development and having the right mindset. That said, there are distinct lawyer personality traits. The personality traits for being an effective lawyer do not coincide, to a large degree, with the personality traits of being a people manager.

Why is that?

Wasserman: The lawyer mindset is untrusting and skeptical. They don't trust people easily, making them less social than other people within the organization. It doesn't mean they aren't social – they just take a long time to trust. For instance, if you assign a new secretary or associate to them, they're reticent to delegate anything, so they end up hoarding all of their work or mismanaging the person because that's the way they think. That's how they're wired. They're busy, they have tunnel vision.

Are those inherent or learned characteristics?

Wasserman: Some of it has to do with their innate qualities, some of it has to do with their training in law school. That which makes them a successful lawyer – the reliance on hard logic and problem-solving – doesn't always work with people. Millennials, for example, want to be part of a team. They want input, how the work they're doing fits in with the rest of the project. They want to be appreciated, and the lawyer mindset typically doesn't do that.

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Elowitz: Lawyers can be very narrowly task-oriented, sometimes unfortunately to the exclusion of people. They can be more pessimistic, too. These are great things if you're practicing law – you want to take care of the client's issues and be looking for the downside of something, because you want to prevent harm. But if you get so acculturated to the point that you look at every situation that way, it can get in the way of effectively connecting with people. That doesn't mean that good lawyers can't be champion managers. It means they need to pick up another mindset, another set of skills that are very complimentary and actually support one another. Relying solely on one or the other is not a good recipe.

What's an example of how those skillsets complement each other?

Wasserman: I was doing a teambuilding communication workshop using an assessment for a law firm, and we were dealing with the personality styles of the individual attorneys. One of the questions we asked around the room was about communication preference. One of the partners – a rainmaker and a big force in the firm – said "I have an open door, just come on in and talk to me." You could see the looks on the associates' faces, like, what? When your door's closed and the blinds are closed, am I supposed to come in? And he said, "Oh no, that's when I'm working on something, but even then, knock on the door, open the door and ask if that's a good time. I'll find a way to talk to you, and if not then, I'll tell you when to come back." That little bit of interaction and communication opened the door for a more collaborative conversation in the future.

Can lawyers improve client relationship with people management skills?

Wasserman: Absolutely. If they develop better communication skills, which are really the foundation of all of this, and they become better listeners and better at giving and receiving feedback, they'll be more empathetic toward the client and really hone in on what the client has to say.

Elowitz: Mindset really informs the conversations that you have. That is going to lead to interactions that then become the relationships, and those in a law firm are what get stuff done. We're very practical-minded and that's the orientation of the book. It's about getting stuff done. You can have the best people, the best e-library, the most number of degrees and certificates but if you can't get stuff done better and cheaper than the other law firm, today, you're not going to do that well. If you can't connect with people and market and develop your clients, you're not going to do really well either.

Are people management skills becoming more important to the field?

Wasserman: We think they're more important than ever. Particularly in dealing with millennials in the workforce today – they had helicopter parents who were very involved in everything and communicated with them. They do not want to be put in an office with a computer. They need to have a manager that really cares about them and their development. In order to get them to the next level, they need that kind of hand-holding. They want warm fuzzies.

Elowitz: Some people complain about them, but we think millennials are probably going to be the saving grace of the legal profession. They want work that's meaningful. They don't want cursory feedback – they want descriptive feedback. They want the sense that their managers are interested in their individual development, and they want a sense of belonging. A champion manager is perfect for all of those things. You're going to find that millennial managers are going to warm more to this style of management.



PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

Counsel: Elowitz, an attorney and executive coach, teamed with Wasserman, a management consultant, to pen project.

In addition to millennials, you also talk about a variety of employee types in your book. How did you choose what "categories" to focus on?

Wasserman: It's based largely on our experience and what we're asked by our clients when we do workshops. They tell us what areas need to be developed and where there are problems. Sometimes it's the "superstar," and not knowing how to manage that individual. Sometimes it's the person who's barely there – not knowing how to develop them more nor when to say goodbye.

What are the most difficult personalities to manage? What are the easiest?

Wasserman: Some of that depends on your own frame of reference – what's difficult to me may not be difficult to you.

Elowitz: You can be your worst enemy. There isn't a worst or easiest kind of person – every different kind of person can present challenges. One of the reasons I put in superstars is because often, people just assume they're great. They're kicking butt, they're billing amazingly, getting a lot of good press. But even a person like that can be really hard to manage. They may think they're bigger than the firm, you have questions of retention and cohesion, how do they treat other people in the firm. You have someone who on paper looks great, but may be causing a lot of problems.

What makes teaching management skills to lawyers challenging?

Elowitz: The legal community ... aren't really adapters. They're pretty risk-averse; they want to know that at least three people have had tremendous success with something before they even consider it. So a lot of what we brought to the book was best practices from both inside and outside the legal profession.

What does your book offer that other management books don't?

Elowitz: The books out there on law firm management tend to be more about the technical aspects of management – budgets, finances, technology. As far as we know, this is the foremost, maybe the singular book on people management at law firms.

Besides your own experience, what research did you do for the book?

Wasserman: I lead three managing partner roundtables a month with the managing partners of boutique and mid-sized law firms. I had

Andrew come to a meeting and asked them what were their biggest issues. We wanted to make sure we addressed them. That was part of the research. Some of it was having a grown-up managing law firms, from the smallest when I was in undergrad at UCLA to much larger firms. I've lived it – I know what it was like to be a non-lawyer in a law firm, and we knew what needed to be addressed.

Elowitz: We've both worked with law firms, but my background is different. I work as an executive coach, so I'm in the business sector. So I kind of brought a different perspective in that I see the best practices that are in the business world and bring them to the legal profession.

Has the legal profession evolved so that more non-lawyers are managing law firms?

Elowitz: It's a matter of scale. In smaller firms, it's still lawyers managing other lawyers. More enlightened firms, a little bit larger, will

have a full-time manager – office administrator is often the title that's used. I say it's smart because there are a lot of issues that lawyers just aren't that great at managing. As you get into the larger firms, you now are definitely developing a class of people who have no responsibility for cases or clients. In the big, big firms there are now professionals who specifically serve as chief operating officers or chief technology officers, the whole gamut.

What separates the mediocre law firms from the great firms?

Wasserman: Appreciating their people. It goes back to the beginning when you hire someone new. The best firms take their time to figure out what kind of person they need, the firm culture and will this person, even if they have a great skillset, will that person fit in.

Elowitz: The best firms realize that management needs to be a priority and that management takes time. It's not an afterthought.

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UNTRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATOR — Marcia Watson Wainess, executive director of Los Angeles-based Richards, Watson & Gershon, performs some tasks usually associated with a managing partner. "Basically, I'm responsible for the business management of the firm — everything except the actual practice of law. That comes straight from my job description."

Experience: Wasserman has managed Los Angeles law firms as a non-lawyer.