

# Shareholder's Online Tool Looked Good on Paper

**INTERNET:** Eugene Ryu's document platform added by Littler Mendelson.

**L**ABOR and employment law firm **Littler Mendelson** this month unveiled a new online tool designed to provide California employers with ready-made template documents to expedite some of the legal paperwork businesses are often required to complete.

The program, known as the Littler X-celerator, is yet another example of how technology is increasingly finding its way into the practice of law.

**Eugene Ryu**, a shareholder in Littler's downtown L.A. and San Francisco offices, said he came up with the idea for the digital platform after several friends began launching startups and needed his help navigating legal documents.

"I went to school in the Bay Area in the '90s and when I came out of law school, almost all my friends started working for startups," Ryu said. "I just happened to be the only attorney all my friends knew so I kept getting a lot of legal questions."

Eventually, he decided to develop template documents for his friends to make the process faster and simpler. Then, about eight months ago, he said his firm asked him to implement his model into a tool that would be easy for clients to use.

The Littler X-celerator now includes template Form I-9s, confidentiality agreements,

employee handbooks and the like, Ryu said. The online tool also provides resources for employers to use to ensure compliance with the state's wage and hour laws, discrimination laws, and poster and training requirements, among other regulations.

Ryu said he couldn't disclose the price of the program but said users pay a flat annual fee.

"We think it's at a really exceptional price point that makes it a no-brainer for those who are interested," he said.

**Aria Safar**, head of corporate communications at downtown L.A. litigation technology firm **e-Stet**, said he has noticed more firms have become tech savvy in recent years – a stark contrast to the industry's historically conservative reputation.

Still, he said, many firms are wary to give up billable hours to new digital tools.

"A lot of times technology makes the practice of law more efficient, which can be a detriment to the bottom line," Safar said.

"You're going to be billing less hours and therefore your revenue is down and, a lot of times, your profits are too."

## Bad Breakups

About a month after Santa Monica media company **WebXU Inc.**'s plan to acquire near-by marketing firm **Media Trust**



Ryu

**Performance Marketing Inc.** fell through in 2013, it was slapped with a \$45 million breach-of-contract lawsuit.

But last month, after a long and expensive legal battle, a Los Angeles Superior Court judge confirmed a \$700,000 arbitration award in favor of **WebXU**.

Troubling as the battle was, said **Uri Litvak**, who represented **WebXU** in the litigation, it could have been avoided if the companies included a breakup-fee clause in their original agreement.

Litvak said his client is far from alone when it comes to omitting such a clause in acquisition contracts. And as capital could soon become tougher to secure, the attorney said he has begun advising other clients to really consider including breakup fees – which require a seller to pay a predetermined sum if it backs out of a deal – as well as reverse breakup fees, which require a buyer to pay a fee if it should back out.

"They really haven't been paid much attention to lately," he said. "But as we move to a different point in our economic cycle, reverse breakup fees are going to be more and more important."

## Legal Landscape

**Alston & Bird** has hired **Jeffrey Tsai**, a former senior official in state Attorney General **Kamala D. Harris'** office, as a partner in its downtown L.A. and Silicon Valley offices. The firm has also added **Gregg Loubier** as a partner in Los Angeles. ... **Amitabh Banerji** has joined Century City

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firm **Elkins Kalt Weintraub Reuben Gartside** as a litigation associate. ... Torrance firm **AgnewBrusavich** has hired **Terry Schneier** as an associate. ... **Michael O'Hara Duff** has joined the downtown L.A. office of **Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCloy** as a partner. ... **Covington & Burling** has hired **Mitchell Kamin** as a partner in the firm's Century City office. ... The **American Bar Association** has named **Samantha Grant**, partner in the West L.A. office of **Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp**, to its commission on women in the profession. ... **Sidley Austin** has hired **Vijay Sekhon** as a partner in its Century City office. ... **Jarrett L. Fugh** has been hired as a partner in the downtown L.A. and San Francisco offices of **Squire Patton Boggs**. ... **Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton** has named **Derek Havel** co-managing partner of the firm's downtown L.A. office. ... **Vedder Price** has hired **Thomas H. Petrides** as a shareholder in its Century City office.

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