

For the Tough Cases, the Tough Attorneys

As Seen In... Forbes, November 21, 2011

Peterson • Bradford • Burkwitz

Most of us enjoy a challenge, but perhaps not like these gentlemen do. The more dramatic the case, the more George Peterson, Tom Bradford and Avi Burkwitz relish it.

While that probably doesn't cheer their opponents, it's very favorable for their professional liability, employment/labor law and other clients, whose difficult circumstances have led them to Peterson • Bradford • Burkwitz. All across Southern California, this Burbank-based firm fights for those whose medical judgment has been savaged; for employers facing harassment, abuse and discrimination claims; and in a variety of other areas. The practice is famed for its skills at trial.

"We learn, we fight, and we welcome the tough cases. We take up the cause of our client."

— George Peterson

"The litigation process is far more trustworthy than most people think," says Mr. Peterson. "Jurors are far more insightful than most people give them credit for."

While many cases are resolved out of court, sometimes forced by the economic nature of litigation or other circumstances, many matters concern professionals who will not settle and/or feel compelled to see them through to the right conclusion — which tends to be a trial.

Why would anyone choose that route? Mr. Peterson says physicians, dentists, health care providers and other professionals who are sued for malpractice often consider this to be an assault on

them personally. Their reputations, their fortunes and their licenses are at risk. "They think it's hideously unjust," Mr. Peterson says. "We help them get justice."

The outcomes can have serious consequences on the licenses and professional standing of the firm's clients, something that Peterson • Bradford • Burkwitz knows full well. They regularly go to battle for clients confronting licensing board investigations and disciplinary actions,



Thomas Bradford • George Peterson • Avi Burkwitz

as well as those dealing with peer review body and hospital privilege matters.

Mr. Peterson claims the way to prevail is with a cool head and the client's full confidence. Earning trust demands listening intently — learning what happened, the reasoning behind the actions and why the client stands by that approach. "It takes time. They feel they have everything at stake. And they're right. They do have

everything on the line. But if they trust you, they'll follow what you recommend."

Mr. Peterson speaks from 35 years of experience on this. And in the next breath, he says, "It's not just listening. It's investigation. It's unraveling the mystery. These cases are fought not on the basis of documented records but on what's between the lines. We work closely with our experts and examine the case from every perspective. Answers are often subtle and complicated. The jury has to be satisfied in the end that what they're hearing is the truth."

The dynamics in employment/labor law are almost the reverse of those in malpractice cases, Mr. Peterson says. Jurors want to believe in health care providers. Not so with employers; they've been there and they know the employment landscape — they think.

"Their biases are against the employer, and you have to explain this constantly to jurors," Mr. Peterson says. "That takes an accomplished advocate."

As with medical cases, it also takes substantial investigation — and preparation, since managers often don't communicate their motivations and decisions effectively. "You have to rely on supervisors to express themselves well, but they may be intimidated. Doctors, in contrast, are used to explaining decisions to patients."

Peterson • Bradford • Burkwitz works with organizations of all sizes, nonprofit and for-profit alike; every medical, dental and health care specialty; and a variety of other professionals. "We learn, we fight, and we welcome the tough cases," Mr. Peterson says. "We take up the cause of our client."

A trial can be expensive — unless lawyers identify "the essence of the case," as Mr. Peterson calls it. "I focus on pivotal issues first, then seize opportunities to resolve the matter. At trial I simplify, while educating the jury about the complexity of the client's decisions. My message is, 'I'm going to tell you a straightforward story about people who do complex things very well.'"

Peterson • Bradford • Burkwitz

100 North First Street, Suite 300 | Burbank, CA 91502
(818) 562-5800 ext. 252 | (818) 562-5810 Fax
mestrada@pbbllp.com | www.pbbllp.com