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Litigation Firm Chapin Wheeler Hangs Out Shingle in San Diego

San Diego litigation boutique Chapin Wheeler announced its opening May 9.

The firm is led by name partners Edward Chapin and Jay Wheeler, both trial attorneys who left practices at larger firms to focus on complex litigation for businesses and individuals.

Chapin came from a partnership at Gordon & Rees in San Diego; Wheeler came from the San Diego office of Latham & Watkins, where he previously chaired the litigation department. The firm also has an associate, Jill Houlihan, and a paralegal.

Like a lot of litigators at smaller firms, the two plan to transition from the litigation defense they did at their old firms to plaintiffs' work. However, Wheeler says, they're hoping they can put a nontraditional twist on plaintiffs' work by offering business clients, as well as individuals, an opportunity to retain their services for a contingency fee, or another outcome-dependent fee structure.

"We think a lot of the big firms that traditionally do their defense work aren't as appropriately structured in billing and fee arrangements to handle plaintiffs' work for business as well as we can," he says. "We have a lot more flexibility to enter into a results-oriented fee agreement...than most big firms do."

Wheeler brought no clients to the partnership; Chapin brought clients but prefers not to name them.

Chapin says Chapin Wheeler officially opened its doors on Feb. 14, but because he was in trial for seven weeks with a matter carried over from his time at Gordon & Rees, the firm is just now getting up and running.