

Daily Journal

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

TOP

100

EDITORS' NOTE

Every year, the editors of the *Daily Journal* look at the work of hundreds of California lawyers. Lawyers who have impact – on an industry or on the larger society – are whom we seek to honor. They get results by the sheer force of their intellect and skill and sometimes just by sheer force.

Lawyers in California

CORPORATE

JOSEPH M. YAFFE

SKADDEN, ARPS, SLATE, MEAGHER & FLOM LLP | PALO ALTO

SPECIALTIES: executive compensation, benefits

While Yaffe relishes the work he does for his clients, he finds the actual individuals themselves especially stimulating.

"I am lucky enough to work with a lot of interesting and influential personalities," Yaffe said, "especially here in Silicon Valley."

Recently, Yaffe served as lead executive compensation attorney on behalf of Jimmy Iovine, former chairman of Interscope-Geffen-A&M Records, and Dr. Dre, a hip hop artist and producer.

They served as the principal shareholders of Beats Electronics and Beats Music in the \$3 billion sale of the two companies to Apple Inc.

Beats Electronics makes headphones, speakers and audio software and Beats Music is a subscription-streaming music service.

"It was interesting to be on the largest transaction that Apple has ever done," Yaffe said. "With Dr. Dre and Jimmy, it was fun to get to work with them and be their advisers."

The complex structure raised a number of interesting executive compensation issues, Yaffe said.

"The goal for them was to be part of the management of Apple," he added. "They are selling and moving on to keep what they've been building at Apple, and this needed to be structured properly."

Among his other high-profile clients, Yaffe also has worked Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook Inc.'s chief operating officer, and author of "Lean In," a treatise on female empowerment in the workplace.

Early on, before the book was released, and she was meeting with Fortune 50 senior executives in connection with the book's release, Sandberg called on Yaffe for assistance.

At issue were concerns by some of the executives about the potential legal liabilities in discussing such issues as maternity leaves with female employees.

To address this, Yaffe said, he and Sandberg drafted an op-ed piece for the *Wall Street Journal*, which evolved into a full-blown feature that ran last year — "Sheryl Sandberg: It's OK to Talk About Babies," by Rachel Emma Silverman.

Yaffe also works with Sandberg's husband, David Goldberg, CEO of SurveyMonkey, a Web survey development



cloud-based company that provides free, customized online surveys, among other services.

"I've watched it develop into one of the more significant companies in the valley," said Yaffe, who has worked with SurveyMonkey on a variety of transactions.

These entrepreneurs are changing the face of technology in Silicon Valley, Yaffe said, noting, "It happens here at a much more rapid pace than anywhere else in the country."

<< Pat Broderick