

# Fearless, Forward-Thinking, and Fun

## The Law Offices of Adrienne D. Cohen is Not Your Typical Insurance Coverage & Defense Firm

by Karen Gorden

**A**drienne D. Cohen, founder of The Law Offices of Adrienne D. Cohen, with offices in Santa Ana and San Rafael, started her firm with a five-month-old baby, and a husband who was in law school full-time. “I was working for a litigation firm, and while I had a large book of business, I did not make partner. As disappointed as I was at the time, it turned out to be the best thing that happened to me,” she says with a smile.

The decision Cohen made 20 years ago did indeed change the course of her career, though she admits that at the time the bold move was intimidating. “I gave notice, and notified my clients. I was terrified. But I knew I was a good lawyer and that my clients trusted me. Two of my very active clients came with me, and remain my clients to this day,” she says. From that moment on, Cohen has been full-steam ahead. “I opened my firm in May and was in trial by September,” she recalls.

### Fearless By Nature

Cohen’s fearlessness was publicly acknowledged soon after venturing out on her own. After winning an appeal in a published opinion, Cohen recalls *The Daily Journal* contacting her. “I had just started my own firm, and the reporter contacted me. The article that came out was titled something like “Shark Meets its Match in Defense Lawyer,” Cohen says with a laugh. “It was humbling and flattering.”

Since that time, Cohen—who at one point dreamt of a career in theatre or music (until as she says, “Madonna stole

her job”)—has had four more published opinions, including the very recent *Bigler-Engler v. Breg, Inc.*, 2016 Ca. App. LEXIS 921 (Cal. App. Oct. 28, 2016).

In this published win for Cohen, *The Daily Journal* again featured the fearless attorney’s results—her appeal overturned a jury’s \$12.7M award, resulting in the appellate court reducing the general damages from \$5 million to \$1.3 million. Furthermore, the court found that MICRA and Proposition 51 did indeed apply to her client, further reducing the award as Cohen’s client was found to be only 10% responsible for the claims.

Opposing counsel have reason to fear Cohen; she’s clearly not a stereotypical insurance coverage and defense attorney. Cohen is a fierce trial attorney who loves litigation. Her recent admission into the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) is evidence of just how deep her love for trial runs.

“I’m very proud to have been admitted into ABOTA. It took a long time, and there aren’t a lot of female insurance coverage and defense attorneys admitted. But I do a lot of trials, and many of them are very long. We recently finished an 18-month period of three back-to-back-to-back trials,” she says.

As proud as Cohen is of her individual accomplishments, it’s very clear that her greatest professional pride comes from the firm she’s built. “All of our attorneys practice insurance coverage and defense, which makes us exceptionally good at seeing the big picture,” she says candidly. In addition to versatility, the unity of the firm plays an invaluable role in success for clients.

“Most of us have worked together for over 10 years, which



gives consistency and quality to our work,” Cohen explains. By way of example she talks of a case wherein a terrible accident on the freeway resulted in the death of 4 individuals, with 8 others injured. “The insurance coverage was limited to \$750,000. We had everyone fill out a questionnaire, and submit all medical records and bills, and worked hard to get everyone who was fighting with each other to settle every single claim. Our whole team was very proud of that. Of course, our client was very pleased as well.”

Make no mistake, in cases where trial cannot be avoided, Cohen and her team rise to the occasion. “We are a small firm staffed with aggressive litigators. We earn and maintain the respect of our opposing counsel while also obtaining the best possible outcome for our clients. We always work towards an early and amicable resolution. However, we take cases to trial when necessary. We all have trial experience, and we are always ready for our next big trial,” she says earnestly.

### Forward Thinking: Flexibility & Fun in The Firm

The cohesiveness of Cohen’s firm is due in large part to Cohen’s flexibility with her team. “We are transitioning to a nearly paperless environment, and we store all files digitally. This allows our attorneys to be more efficient, and have the

flexibility to work remotely, which results in great value to our clients,” she says.

Continuing she adds, “Some of our most experienced writers and litigators work from home a couple of days a week. These are outstanding attorneys who I would put up against any opposition out there. If they need to work from home because they have children, I am perfectly fine with that. “They don’t need me to babysit them.” Moreover, Cohen is certain that her flexibility with the attorneys who need or desire a modified work situation has allowed her firm to retain some incredible people.

Cohen’s colleague Veronika Zappelli (based in the firm’s Northern California office) confirms this flexible arrangement has been incredibly well-received. “I have been an associate with the Law Offices of Adrienne D. Cohen for ten years. I find our firm to be unique in that most of us have stayed here for our entire legal careers. Our loyalty speaks to the mentorship we receive, the opportunities for career growth and success, and to the support Adrienne and the firm provide for our personal lives. This is truly a family friendly firm that allows us to enjoy professional success while also nurturing our personal and family relationships. Balance is important and it makes for good lawyers.”

A second reason her team of attorneys and support staff have remained a loyal, long-term team is they simply refuse to take





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themselves too seriously. "We have a good time together, and we support each other in having a good time outside of work as well," Cohen says. "If you look at our Facebook page, you'll see me wearing a pink wig. We make fun of ourselves, and we laugh often," she says.

But what about nurturing her inner Madonna, when she's not in trial? She's always thrilled to speak and participate in events and seminars with colleagues. For example, she spoke at two different events for The Rutter Group in November, held in San Francisco and in Marina del Rey. This month she's a featured presenter at the Inaugural Construction Defect, Claims & Litigation Strategies ExecuSummit in Connecticut. And in March, she'll be a panel speaker at The Seminar Group's Insurance in the Construction Industry Seminar held in San Diego. Aside from work-related excitement, Cohen finds fulfillment in music, and jokingly describes herself as a "groupie," who loves attending live concerts.

Suffice it to say, Cohen is grateful for her decision to forge her own path. She loves her work, and the opportunities it provides to learn, grow, and have fun, and her profound respect and enjoyment for her colleagues and clients is simply palpable. "We've worked with many of our clients for years, and our clients are good, fun people. So, every day, we get to work with people we genuinely like. I love my work." ■

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