

# Q&A With Gilchrist & Rutter's Jonathan Gross

Law360, New York (January 03, 2012, 5:54 PM ET) -- [Jonathan S. Gross](#) is a managing shareholder in the Santa Monica, Calif., office of [Gilchrist & Rutter PC](#). He specializes in commercial real estate, including major office and retail leasing, construction, design, engineering and management agreements, and real estate secured lending.

He has been selected as a "California Dealmaker" by the California Real Estate Journal for two consecutive years and named a Southern California Super Lawyer for six consecutive years. He has been selected for inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America and is AV-rated by Martindale-[Hubbell](#).

He received his law degree from Stanford School of Law and earned his bachelor's degree from Amherst College, Amherst, Mass. He and three others formed Gilchrist & Rutter in 1983.

## **Q: What is the most challenging case or deal you have worked on and what made it challenging?**

A: Sale of the Sacramento National Basketball Association (NBA) Basketball Team and Arco Arena.

What fun! What complexity! There were a multitude of parties: the buyer, several selling partners, the NBA, other NBA owners, the city of Sacramento and lawyers for all scattered around the country.

The transaction had unusual areas of law for a real estate lawyer like me to address, such as tax structuring, municipal bond finance, and the NBA constitution and rules, as well as a complex deal in the first place, including varied assets — the arena itself, surrounding land, the team and related intellectual property rights, as well as the partnership interests being transferred to effectuate the deal, and a "two step" purchase a portion now, with an option to buy the remaining controlling interest at a later date.

The deal had it all, and then some.

## **Q: What aspects of your practice area are in need of reform and why?**

A: We need to learn from our recent debacle in real property lending and ensuing foreclosure problems to protect not only the larger economy, but also protect individuals still suffering the aftermath of the burst housing bubble.

On a personal note, I really need to straighten up my desk and get organized for once after 30 years of practice!

**Q: What is an important issue relevant to your practice area and why?**

A: The economy and its recovery are of paramount importance to our real estate practice. While we can't expect our business to be as robust as it was in, say, 2007, we need to see economic growth and, in particular, job growth for our owner/developer clients to prosper.

More jobs means more physical space requirements which translates into more construction, more leasing, and more value — growing value — that drives real estate transactions, including purchases and sales and financings.

**Q: Outside your own firm, name an attorney in your field who has impressed you and explain why.**

A: Alan Wayte at [DLA Piper](#).

I worked opposite Alan, one of the true “deans” of California real estate practice, in my first year as an attorney on a purchase and sale of a marina and retail complex.

He showed me, merely by example, how a lawyer should be and act in any business transaction. He was a pure professional and a gentlemen throughout — completely knowledgeable, courteous but keen on advancing and protecting his client's interests, and very practical in getting the deal done.

I've had the pleasure of working with him from time to time over the years since, including negotiating his former firm's lease in downtown Los Angeles, and, in each instance, he has been a paradigm worth emulating in my own practice.

**Q: What is a mistake you made early in your career and what did you learn from it?**

A: For a good portion of my first year of practice, I worked in matrimonial law, assisting in contested divorces for high net-worth individuals. That choice of fields was not a fit for me as I found some of the work difficult and sometimes distasteful on an emotional level.

However, the lawyers I worked for were absolute gems, both professionally and personally, so I survived and eventually transferred over to the transactional/real estate side of the firm. The experience taught me that who you associate with, the quality and character of those you work with day to day, is first and foremost for pursuing your career and life goals.

Satisfaction with the actual work and everything else depends on the people you are with.