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| EXECUTIVE PROFILE |

## Staying on par

Legal insiders must chase down business to stay in the game

BY LISA VAN DER POOL  
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**C**hristopher Litterio gracefully drove golf balls into the far corners of the driving range at **The International** golf club on a recent crisp spring afternoon, as he reflected on why he's passionate about the game.

"There's a Zen side of it. You feel like it's a chance to let your mind wander and hopefully not think about the important things, but think about all the other things you don't spend enough time thinking about when you're at work," Litterio said. "It's a great way to recharge the batteries."

Those relaxing moments on the green are essential for Litterio, managing shareholder of **Ruberto, Israel & Weiner PC** in Boston, a 24-attorney law firm that specializes in business and commercial litigation. More often than not, Litterio is thinking about the evolving legal services industry and what his firm needs to do to stay on par.

"When I took over as managing partner, I realized that being just a law firm with a bunch of good lawyers will only get you so far. That's really entry level nowadays," Litterio said. "The firms that are going to succeed and thrive are the firms that understand that here is a huge sales component to what you do, not just marketing. Marketing is very important but it's completely different."

For more than half of his 3 1/2-year stint as head of Ruberto, Israel & Weiner, Litterio has strategized about how to



### CHRISTOPHER P. LITTERIO

**Position:** Managing shareholder, Ruberto, Israel & Weiner PC

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts, Assumption College, 1984; J.D., Suffolk University Law School, 1987

**Age:** 46

**Quote:** "When I took over as managing partner, I realized that being just a law firm with a bunch of good lawyers will only get you so far. That's really entry level nowadays."

survive and thrive during the recession. To complicate matters, the recession has set the stage for significant change in the legal industry, as clients show increasing resistance to the billable-hour model and companies move more work in-house.

Litterio has come to the conclusion that the billable hour is not the primary issue for law firms, rather it's the bloated associate salaries and pricey real estate that make sky-high billing rates a necessity at some firms.

# Litterio: Drumming up business is a key part of practicing law

So while Litterio's firm is perfectly willing to discuss alternative fee arrangements, often those arrangements aren't necessary given that its rates range from \$250 to \$495 for high-level partners. And the 35-year-old Boston firm only hires associates with a minimum of three or four years of experience.

Litterio is also adamant that his attorneys aggressively chase new business.

"I try to treat it like we're in a sales organization, just like a life insurance brokerage," Litterio said. "We sit down and talk about, 'Who are your leads? Who are you going to out to see? What's in the pipeline?'"

Despite the fact that he loves his job, Litterio did not always want to be a lawyer.

Growing up in Clinton, Litterio loved all sports, especially ice hockey and baseball and entertained dreams of going professional. He was the youngest of five siblings and his dad worked in construction, while his mom worked in a clothing shop. A kid from a blue-collar family, Litterio lived down the road from the International in Bolton, where he is now a member.

After graduating from **Assumption College** with an English degree, Litterio chose to attend law school more as a practical career choice than a passion. But once he got there, his thinking changed.

"Up until law school it was gentleman's

**'He's very straight-forward and easy to work with. He has a manner that almost suggests he's not a litigator. He's got a good combination of talent and perspective on what life's all about.'**

## **Charles F. Claeys**

Partner at Nixon Peabody LLP

Litterio decided he wasn't cut out for that work.

"I felt that a lot of the people didn't need or want the help," Litterio said. "Doing that the first thing out of law school, you're so young and so inexperienced ... it's just overwhelming."

Litterio met Barry Weiner while volun-

B's," said Litterio. "But then when I got to law school, I enjoyed it."

After graduation Litterio clerked in the Superior Court system because he wanted to be a trial lawyer. When his clerkship concluded he hung his own shingle for a year in Clinton, so he could be close to his father, who was struggling after his wife's death.

While in Clinton, Litterio did criminal defense work, beginning with drunken driving offenses and working his way up to the sexually dangerous.

After a year, Litterio decided he wasn't cut out for that work.

teering during Michael Dukakis' presidential bid, and decided to join his firm in 1989.

Over the years, Litterio has built a good reputation, even among the competition.

Charles F. Claeys, a partner at Boston-based Nixon Peabody LLP, often refers cases to Litterio and his team when his firm has a conflict.

"He's very straightforward and easy to work with," Claeys said. "He has a manner that almost suggests he's not a litigator. He's got a good combination of talent and perspective on what life's all about."

Indeed, Litterio treasures time with his wife and two children, who all love golf and skiing.

Litterio's biggest challenge moving forward is adapting with the changes in the legal industry. To that end, Litterio and his firm have recently taken part in discussions to add a small group of attorneys from another firm.

"I'm trying to turn that mind-set of, 'I'm a good lawyer, so the phones are going to ring.' Unless you're going to call that person, get together for lunch and then ask that person for their business at lunch, you're not going to survive in this market," he said.

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