

# OPINE EXPERTS

## Fact Sheet

### Opine Experts In a Nutshell

- Opine Experts was launched by two California attorneys in 2011 as the first full-service talent agency representing real estate consultants and forensic experts.
- Opine matches highly-credentialed authorities with clients needing expertise regarding any matter involving California real estate. This vast arena includes every type of property and all aspects of real estate – bricks and mortar, financial, transactional, landlord-tenant, operational, premises liability, environmental and regulatory matters.
- Services include business consulting, forensic analysis, expert testimony, mediation and arbitration.
- Clients include plaintiff and defense attorneys, insurance companies, real estate agents, investors, developers and property managers.
- Unlike pay-to-play expert directories, Opine Experts is focused solely on real estate and invites only a limited number of the best real estate authorities to its talent pool. If a client needs a specialist not represented in Opine's talent pool, Opine searches for and pre-screens the best experts available.

### Founders

Opine Experts' founders Bill and Merrie Lightner also operate the San Francisco-based real estate investment and management firm Lightner Property Group. Over three decades, Lightner Property Group has formed successful investment partnerships • renovated and managed commercial properties • operated rent-controlled apartment buildings • developed for-sale residential projects • served their industry and the community in leadership positions • provided expert witness services • mediated disputes • educated fellow professionals • contributed to state and local legislation • published articles for the real estate industry. Bill and Merrie Lightner are both licensed attorneys and real estate brokers. They met studying for the Bar Exam in 1980 and married in 1983. They formed Lightner Property Group in 1984.

### Opine Experts from the Attorney's POV

After providing expert witness services for fifteen years, growing requests for a wide range of real estate specialists revealed a startling fact to Opine's founders: There was no one firm focused on providing highly-qualified real estate experts. Yes, there were phonebook-like directories, even search firms, but there were no full-service providers with a real estate focus. It was difficult, time-consuming and frustrating for lawyers to find bona fide experts. And from the experts' point of view, advertising, contract negotiations, skills development, administrative practices, and collections all presented daunting challenges. This revelation was the genesis of Opinexperts. California lawyers finally have a one-stop shop for real estate expertise.

### The Expert's Role in Dispute Resolution

The right real estate expert can play a vital role throughout the dispute resolution process, from investigating and analyzing the situation, to educating contestants, lawyers and juries regarding industry standards, to helping mediate settlements by offering their unbiased view of reality.

The high stakes involved in real estate problems often cloud the contestants' objectivity and ability to sort out their dispute. Lawyers will impart their professional perspective but as skilled as they may be, they usually are not real estate experts. Without the guidance of real estate specialists, their brilliant advocacy may do no more than entrench indefensible positions. Inevitably, some contestants fight it out in court, expecting judges

and juries to dispense justice. But without the requisite expertise, how can they be expected to make informed judgments? A subject matter expert can overcome these constraints to speedy resolution.

### **Proof Points**

- Both of Opine's founders have been licensed attorneys for over 30 years, real estate brokers for nearly 30 years and professional income property managers since 1984.
- A Past President of the California Apartment Association and former San Francisco Rent Board Commissioner, Merrie Lightner has been a forensic consultant in more than 25 legal matters, having testified in more than 11 depositions and 5 trials over the past 15 years.
- When a legal client needs expertise not already represented in the Opine talent pool, Opine typically presents the client with suitable expert witnesses within 48 hours.
- Though located in San Francisco, Opine has been able to provide Southern California lawyers with qualified experts within 24 hours.
- With growth driven by the needs of its statewide clientele, Opine has added 14 experts, with specialties ranging from horticulture to escrow fraud during 2011.

### **Opine Experts from the Expert's POV**

Opine Experts offers its real estate experts, who are all independent contractors, the advantages of a large firm without the pitfalls of formal partnerships, including:

- Administrative support
- Buffering from contract negotiation, documentation and enforcement, all handled by skilled professionals
- Collective exposure to the legal sector
- Collaboration with other first-rate real estate experts
- Greater capital base, more cumulative experience, more skill sets, and more stakeholder incentive to drive the group forward

### **News Sources**

Opine's real estate experts provide an unprecedented collection of real estate authorities for real estate journalists.

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