



## CLOSE-UP: JEFF SAYWITZ

### Who's Who in Real Estate

## Head of commercial brokerage: It's a tenant's market

By **JENNIFER McENTEE**,  
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It's a great time to be a tenant, and likewise a great time to represent those tenants. So says Jeff Saywitz, who heads the San Diego regional operations for **The Saywitz Co.**, a commercial real estate brokerage and consulting firm.

"The big slump is over. Things are starting to level off a little bit," Saywitz said in a recent interview from his La Jolla office. "Companies that were in a freeze mode, we're seeing a lot of those companies get back into the game and sign longer leases."

The Saywitz Co. represents tenants in relocating and negotiating leases. Saywitz said the firm's business model is somewhat recession-proof because tenants need help securing the best price in good times and bad.

"A down market for us, we see it as a good thing. Rates are at new lows, so it becomes a tenant market if you know what to ask for and how to get it. We've been able to do a lot of creative deals."

The Saywitz Co.'s recent transactions have included:

\* A five-and-a half-year, 13,908-square-foot lease on behalf of tenant **Hexagon Metrology**. The metrology equipment and software company relocated from Carlsbad to Oceanside's Seagate Corporate Center. The deal was valued at more than \$1 million.

\* A three-year, 107,006-square-foot lease, with an option to expand to five years, for the corporate headquarters of online motorcycle parts store **BikeBandit.com**. The lease was valued at more than \$3 million.



Jeff Saywitz

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The Saywitz Co. annually negotiates upwards of \$300 million square feet of transactions throughout North America, according to Saywitz.

"I don't know that we're the biggest. I like to think that we're the best," said Saywitz. "I don't see us ever wanting or needing to be **CB Richard Ellis**."

The Saywitz Co. is privately held and headquartered in Newport Beach, Calif. It has about 25 employees, four of whom are in San Diego.

Saywitz, 41, has been with the company since 1992; the Chicago native was previously a financial analyst with **Merrill Lynch**. His older brother, Barry Saywitz, purchased the outstanding stock of Howard Ecker & Co. in 1994 and changed the corporate name to The Saywitz Co.

Jeff Saywitz is the company's senior vice president. Barry Saywitz is its president.

Jeff Saywitz said working with his brother is both challenging and rewarding. Since Jeff runs the San Diego operation, and Barry the one in Newport Beach, the siblings are able to work in tandem without too much conflict.

"You have varying ideas of how you want things to be done," he explained. "We have a great relationship in general. At the end of the day, there's a certain trust level there that you can't get anywhere else."

A younger brother opted out of the real estate business; he's a painter and graphic artist in New York.

The Saywitz Co. attracts new clients through referrals, and also by keeping a database of when leases are due to expire throughout the region. The firm handles leases for commercial properties of all sizes, said Jeff Saywitz.

"I'd like to see us to do more larger-size transactions," he said. "I think there's plenty of growth to be had.

"Not a lot of people are doing what we do. The bulk of brokerage is on the listing side."

Saywitz is a member of the San Diego Jewish Chamber of Commerce. His professional networking ends there, he said, because local trade groups don't necessarily put him in touch with potential clients.

"We want to find companies that are business opportunities for us. That's anybody that has a lease. I don't want to hobnob with **Irving Hughes**, but I would with **Qualcomm**."

The Saywitz Co. represents clients in a numbers of industries, including banking, retail, restaurant, manufacturing, nonprofit, technology, education and health care. Saywitz said he's not

seeing a lot of startup businesses these days, but has worked with a number of existing companies looking to move locations within their current submarket, or even upgrading to a higher class of building because leasing rates have come down.

There are deals to be had, said Saywitz. Market conditions have meant that landlords in some markets are offering incentives to prospective tenants and their brokers.

The right representation can make all the difference when negotiating a lease, he said.

“People should be aware: just because you’re locked into a lease, doesn’t mean there isn’t the opportunity to re-examine it and make the most of these economic times,” said Saywitz. “You have the ability to renegotiate or restructure your lease.

“Like I tell our junior guys, if you don’t know what to ask for, you’re going to leave money on the table.”