

## An Idea to Better Serve Your Small Business Client

By Tim W. Hrastar



“The average small business owner spends \$7,647 per employee in staying in compliance with government regulations, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. That’s 45 percent more per employee than larger companies. Small businesses make up more than 99.7 percent of all U.S. employers, so there are a lot of folks out there who can use information on the fed’s compliance demands.”

[Source: October/November 2006 issue of Law Practice magazine published by the Law Practice Management section of the American Bar Association. Check out the government’s small business website <http://www.business.gov> ]

### Look at the Opportunities

Wow! What an opportunity for a corporate lawyer! When you consider that lawyers who practice corporate, or business law, have the advantage as “gate-keepers.” This opens up a lot of opportunities for additional business with existing clients. As a business lawyer you need to be thoroughly engaged with all your client’s needs. For example; this covers everything from contracts and employment issues to mergers and acquisitions and litigation, even if you don’t handle many of those practice areas yourself. From your vantage point you get to see the whole operation—take advantage of that view.

### Provide Annual Check Up

What better way to help your client than to provide them with an annual check up, or audit, of all the things they may need from the compliance standpoint. It’s an excellent starting place that will help you uncover many issues that need to be addressed that they aren’t aware of. This process ensures that you detect where the land mines are hidden and where opportunities lie, especially when it comes to government compliance. But it’s also a great time to review all their business needs, not just government compliance issues. The door is open, walk in.

Prepare a list of open ended questions for various areas of their business. For example; if they have a new product they started manufacturing—is it patent protected? Do they need a new or revised employee handbook that will help them stay in compliance on the state and federal level? Are their vendor contracts up to date and protecting them as they should?

### Client Fact-Finding Meeting

Suggest to your client that you would like to get together with them and talk in general terms about their business, in order to see how they are doing and to make sure they are taking advantage of opportunities and avoiding future problems. As you probably already know, small business owners are proud of their business and will talk all about it if you give them a chance. Let them know that this initial fact-finding visit isn’t going to cost them anything. The meter isn’t running at this point because it will be time well spent in getting you up to speed on the latest happenings in their business. The time you spend with the client in this meeting will more than pay for itself with additional business.

Once you uncover specific issues you can let your client know what it will cost to improve upon or fix the situation. Your next step is to provide a short proposal outlining the things you talked about and your recommendations. If the client is in agreement you then follow the proposal with an engagement letter that spells out what will be accomplished and for how much. After all the first question any small business client will ask is; “how much, and what does it include?”

This is the process you use to get business instead of sitting back and waiting for the phone to ring. The benefit to the client is that you help them succeed and may even keep them out of trouble. It demonstrates to them that you sincerely care about them and their business. Your benefit is that you will strengthen your client relationship for the long term and end up



Rapport Marketing® Coaching, Consulting, and Professional Education to Help Good Lawyers Become Better Lawyers



184 Abbey Drive • Springboro, OH 45066 • Voice/Fax: 937-886-0186 • E-mail: [tw@rapportmarketing.com](mailto:tw@rapportmarketing.com) • Web: [www.rapportmarketing.com](http://www.rapportmarketing.com)

making more money in the process. It's a win-win opportunity!

This is all about thinking ahead of your clients in order to help them succeed. Now get to work and call your client to set the first meeting.

© 2002-2006 Tim W. Hrastar Associates. Tim W. Hrastar Associates Rapport Marketing® coaching, consulting, and professional education helps good lawyers become better lawyers by improving their client development and relationship management, presentation, and communication to clients and colleagues.



Rapport Marketing® Coaching, Consulting, and Professional Education to Help Good Lawyers Become Better Lawyers



184 Abbey Drive • Springboro, OH 45066 • Voice/Fax: 937-886-0186 • E-mail: [twh@rapportmarketing.com](mailto:twh@rapportmarketing.com) • Web: [www.rapportmarketing.com](http://www.rapportmarketing.com)