

Starting and Running a Business (With or Without a Lawyer?)

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You don't need a lawyer to start and run a business, but your chances for success are greatly enhanced if you have a good attorney for advice, and not just legal advice. Anyone can start and run a business; all you need is a product or a service; customers, and a way to get paid. Sounds easy, right? Wrong!

A good lawyer can help you get your business off to a good start, and s/he can help you run your business smart. A lawyer won't necessarily find you your customers; though it has happened, but a good lawyer will help you get properly organized; find ways to limit your legal exposure (personal and business); make sure your contracts and standard forms are in tip top shape; and iron out the wrinkles in all your vendor relationships. For example, would you ever consider signing a lease without a lawyer's review of the document?

Do you have a business partner? Formally or informally? What happens if one of you dies, or becomes disabled? Or what if one of you just wants out? What happens to the business? What happens to your family? A business lawyer can help you plan in advance for these possibilities.

An experienced business lawyer has been around the block many times; s/he knows the pitfalls and risks of operating a business. Proper planning and preparation lay the foundation for a successful business. A good business lawyer, an independent minded advisor, can give you his/her best advice, even if it is not the answer you are hoping for, to lay that foundation and maintain it. If s/he earns your trust, a good business lawyer serves as a sounding board, your own "Board of Directors."

It gets better. If you have an experienced business lawyer, the chances are excellent that s/he can help you when you require other professional assistance. Need an accountant, a bookkeeper, an insurance representative, a computer consultant? The odds are high that your lawyer will have a Rolodex filled with names and phone numbers to enable you to get the right help, when you need it; professionals with whom s/he has already had a high quality experience. A seasoned business lawyer is an excellent resource to help you solve problems.

Many people think of a lawyer as an expense, an unnecessary cost. Think again; think value. A good business lawyer will contribute to your bottom line. You can count on it!