

## **Mistake to Avoid**

### **Choosing the wrong legal advisor**

At some point, nearly every small business owner will need the assistance of an attorney. It may be when the business is first established or later to assist with various legal contracts. Having the wrong one can result in bad decisions or frustrations and expenses at the least. Here are some issues to consider when choosing a new attorney or evaluating the service you are receiving from your current legal advisor.

#### **What services will the attorney perform?**

As with most professions, many attorneys have expertise in certain areas and not in others. Many attorneys can assist in setting up a corporation or reviewing a simple office lease, but only a few are experts in copyright laws or securities work. Make sure your attorney is capable of doing what you need done. If your attorney is inexperienced in an area, their advice may be poor or you may pay for extra time as they learn about your issue.

Choose an attorney that will say, "I don't know the answer and you should consult an expert in that field." Many small business owners use different attorneys for different tasks.

#### **What size law firm makes sense for you?**

Small firms may provide more personal service, but what happens when your attorney is on vacation when you have a time critical issue? Larger firms may have back up, but may be more expensive.

#### **How much do you want to spend?**

Attorneys that specialize in a certain area generally are able to charge higher rates because of their expertise. But if you need the expertise, their rates may be a bargain.

Don't be afraid to ask about rates and billing practices. You may be able to save money by shopping around.

#### **How can you find the right attorney?**

Business associates, bankers and other small business owners are probably your best source of information about attorneys that can serve your needs best. You can also contact the American Bar Association or its local chapter to learn more about attorneys in your area. Initial consultations are usually free and can be a great way to determine whether a certain attorney can provide what you need and do it in a professional and comfortable manner.

Your attorney can be an integral part of your team, with advice, counsel and potentially business for you. Choose wisely.