

## **Types of Attorneys and Legal Skills Every Business Needs**

Like doctors, lawyers are becoming increasingly specialized. Someone who does mostly wills, house closings and other "nonbusiness" matters is probably not a good fit for your business. At the very least, you will need the following sets of skills. The more skills reside in the same human being, the better!

1. Contracts. You will need a lawyer who can understand your business quickly; prepare the standard form contracts you will need with customers, clients and suppliers; and help you respond to contracts that other people will want you to sign.

2. Business organizations. You will need a lawyer who can help you decide whether a corporation or limited liability company (LLC) is the better way to organize your business, and prepare the necessary paperwork.

3. Real estate. Leases of commercial space--such as offices and retail stores--are highly complex and are always drafted to benefit the landlord. Because they tend to be "printed form" documents, you may be tempted to think they are not negotiable. Not so. Your attorney should have a standard "tenant's addendum," containing provisions that benefit you, that can be added to the printed form lease document.

4. Taxes and licenses. Although your accountant will prepare and file your business tax returns each year, your lawyer should know how to register your business for federal and state tax identification numbers, and understand the tax consequences of the more basic business transactions in which your business will engage.

5. Intellectual property. If you are in a media, design or other creative-type business, it is certainly a "plus" if your lawyer can help you register your products and services for federal trademark and copyright protection. Generally, though, these tasks are performed by specialists who do nothing but "intellectual property" legal work. If your lawyer says he or she "specializes in small businesses," then he or she should have a close working relationship with one or more intellectual property specialist.

6. Litigation: Sooner or later (according to Forbes Magazine) you will need a trial lawyer because a deal will go bad and either you are being sued or you need to sue someone. (For the 10 Reasons why you will never have to Hire a Lawyer). Your lawyer should know a good trial lawyer with a reputation for ferocity. These tend to be specialists and, if your lawyer says he or she "specializes in small businesses," then he or she should have a close working relationship with one

KAUFMAN LAW, A Professional Corporation  
11350 Random Hills Rd. Suite 800  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
703.764.9080  
703.764-0014 (fax)

or more trial attorneys to refer you to when the deal goes bad.

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