



Esquega Law Office Presentation on Entrepreneurship

A Legal Perspective

February 20, 2014

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- Born and raised in Thunder Bay
- Member of the Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay First Nation)
- Graduated Undergraduate University in 2001
- Graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2004
- Called to the Bar of Ontario in 2005
- Practiced with a local regional law firm from 2004 until August 2012
- Went solo in August 2012 and have been on my own for about 1.5years



Areas of Practice

- Aboriginal Law
 - Advising First Nation bands and their businesses on many legal issues
 - Specific and historical claims
- Business law
 - Incorporations
 - Partnerships
 - Trusts
- Civil litigation
 - Inquests, employment law, debt collection proceedings, personal injury law, and various other civil proceedings (no family law and no criminal law)



Why the decision to start my office?

- Sure it was comfy to stay put but something inside me was pushing me to be my own boss – instinctive.
- I was at a cross roads in my career and my former job.
 - I need to buy in or go solo.
- I assessed all of my options – I still wanted to practice law.
- When I made the decision to go on my own the wheels began to roll with executing my plan.
- At the same time I still needed to service my clients.

The Planning

- Every entrepreneur must PLAN...and PLAN...and PLAN..
- Decisions:
 - Who would be assisting me with my office?
 - What did I need to start my office?
 - Where was I to start my office?
 - When would I make the move?
- GOAL – to provide legal services in a cost effective and efficient manner. Keep it simple and modern.
- RISK – I was on my own!

Who would be assisting with my office?

- I knew that human resources would be one of the toughest challenges of operating my business – I witnessed it in my practice.
- So, I wanted to minimize this cost and this administrative burden.
- My clerk joined me but on part-time basis – it is working.
- I contract:
 - Receptionist – my phone is always answered and messages are taken or relayed;
 - Corporate clerk services – hiring an experience clerk would have been very difficult. So, I contract experienced corporate clerks; and
 - Bookkeeping – I maintain my own books with my legal accounting software. I have an experienced bookkeeper come look it all over. My accountant does the final review.

What did I need to start?

- Computer system
 - I needed to ensure my technology was current and I wanted to be mobile.
 - So, invested in a good server which is backed up all the time in the “cloud”.
- I invested in a good scanner – everything that comes in gets scanned and stored into my server
 - GOAL – be paperless
- Photocopier-printer, telephones, office furniture, supplies, telephone and internet.
- I set up a fax to email account where all faxes are emailed to me wherever I am.
- Software: legal accounting and Microsoft Office.

Where was I to start my practice?

100 Anemki Drive, Suite 106, Fort William First Nation

- An physical space but nothing too extravagant – office space is expensive!
- Strategic location – on reserve and in the same building where Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (“AANDC”) is located. Exposure included with the costs of my rent!
- I have a small office that can be renovated to accommodate another lawyer at some point.
 - Another Example: I have a friend in BC who purchased a loft style office where the lawyers primarily work from home.

When was I to start my practice?

- Once the decision to go on my own was made I was excited to implement it.
- So, I decided to make the leap as soon as possible.
- I gave the notice that I was required to give under my employment contract.
- I started my transition of files and notifying my clients soon after that.
- When I secured my lease space I started to order the equipment needed and arrange for the telephone/internet service at least one month in advance. I wanted to hit the ground running.

Other considerations - Marketing

- I prepared a website since people primarily shop online nowadays.
See: www.esquegalaw.com
- I reluctantly put a yellow pages ad in the phonebook. You should note that advertising in it is expensive. So you really need to decide if you should be in there.
- I also sponsor some events each year to get my name out more.
- I also network when time permits.
- However, due to the nature of my business I tend to get a lot of referrals from current and past clients – this is the best form of marketing.

Other considerations

- You will need to get some advice on whether you need to set up a corporation.
- Maybe a partnership may be the preferred model for you?
- You should consider whether you need to get any special licences or permits to operate.
- You will likely need to register your business name. A search should be conducted early on to ensure that a name that you like is available.
- Insurance - Shop around for the insurance that you need. It is important to always maintain insurance for your business activities.
- Benefits - You may need to purchase some health and disability benefits. Shop around and see what is available.

Other considerations – financing

- Starting a business can be expensive. Preparing a detailed business plan with a monthly and yearly budget for the first 3 years is a good ideal. All funders will ask for this.
- You will want to keep your costs down as much as possible. So, put the “bells and whistles” aside for now.
- You will need to determine where your cash flow will be coming from and when.
- Most financiers require you to have some equity (your own funds) to put into a business before they will lend to you.
- Possible financiers: Aboriginal Business Canada, NADF, Ontario Heritage Fund, and Thunder Bay Ventures.

Helpful Resources

- Nisnawbe Aski Development Fund – www.nadf.org
- Thunder Bay Ventures – www.thunderbayventures.com
- Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Corporation - <http://www.thunderbay.ca/cedc.htm>
- The Business Development Bank of Canada – <http://www.bdc.ca/EN/Pages/home.aspx>
- Service Canada/ Canada Business - <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/lifeevents/business.shtml>
- Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation - <http://nohfc.ca/en>