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Special Feature: Coffee Break With Denice Gierach

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'We speak in the same language as our business clients'

Q: Describe your company.

A: Our company is all about creating value for clients, as well as team members. We focus on small to midsized businesses of \$10 million to \$80 million in revenue and who want to grow the businesses. We have an outsourced general counsel program, called YourOGC, that is geared to focus on growth, rather than putting out "fires" in the business. We focus on exit strategies that become part of the strategic planning process. We also work with complex estates, and this often is helpful to business owners as well. We help our clients to attain their vision for their company and for their lives.



Q: Do you plan to hire any additional staff or make any significant capital investments in your company in the next year?

A: We are definitely hiring additional team members. We look for the right fit, people who have particular talents and skill, including ownership or participation directly in privately held or family-owned businesses, so that their vantage point first comes from the business side of things and secondarily from the legal part. This is how we can offer the best value to our clients. We speak in the same language as our business clients.

Q: What will your company's main challenges be in the next year?

A: Like many of my clients right now, the biggest challenge is finding the right team members, as it is a very confused market for finding people. Some are out of the job market; some are working remotely and like it. You need to find people who support your mission, love what they do, and can efficiently work remote or hybrid if necessary. Overall, we are growing and there are some real opportunities for both the team members and our firm.

Q: What's the hottest trend in your industry?

A: Becoming a paperless and more efficient law office that can give better service to clients using technology to make things easier. This is something growing firms need to focus on so legal processes get easier for clients not more complicated.

Q: If you had one tip to give to a rookie executive, what would it be?

A: Learn everything you can from other businesses, even those outside your industry. Apply things that you have learned from other industry applications can put you ahead of your competition.

Q: Do you have a business mantra?

A: Always give value, and make sure that the value you give matters to your customer.

Q: From a business outlook, whom do you look up to?

A: I read many books written by successful business owners to see the secret of their businesses prospering. One that I like in particular at the moment is Cameron Herold, who parlayed 1-800-GOT-JUNK from a company with just over \$2 million in revenue to \$106 million in revenue in just six years.

Q: What is one interesting fact about you or your company that most people may not know?

A: Our firm focuses on the whole business owner - from legal issues, tax planning and strategic planning at their companies, to providing complex estate planning needs for them and their business. A one-stop-shop for business owners. An interesting fact about me, is that I'm able to approach my business clients not just as a lawyer but also as a CPA and as a master's graduate from Northwestern University Business School, as well as a business owner who has owned a variety of companies from real estate to manufacturing. This gives me a unique perspective to see the whole business and not just the legal side of things. This greatly helps my clients.

Q: Was there a moment in your career that didn't go as you had planned? What lesson did you learn from it?

A: In 2008 I did not see that the coming recession in residential real estate would impact the entire economy as it did. The lesson is - if the government pushes too much cash in the market, making something seem too good to be true, it is time to put in place your recessionary rules and how to make money during a recession.

Q: What do you like to do in your free time?

A: I enjoy what I do so much, I don't often look at things from a work time/free time perspective! But I have loved working with DuPage Foundation over the years, on their board and as president of the board. This is a really talented organization that measures the impact that they are making. I currently spend time out of the office reading, visiting with family and keeping up with learning new things, as this is a lifelong endeavor of mine.

Q: What book is on your nightstand?

A: Business books such as Double Double by Cameron Herold, and The Road Less Stupid by Keith Cunningham.

Q: What keeps you up at night?

A: I have learned that you can't be your best by losing sleep. I sleep knowing that I have done the best during that day that I can in helping other people. This is why I love what I do because every day I can see a tangible difference my work has done.

Q: If you were not doing this job, what do you think you would be doing?

A: I would be in a different business that would be growing, creating value and helping people. This is where I find the most happiness.

Q: What was your first paying job?

A: A clerical position

Q: If you could put your company name on a sports venue, which one would you choose?

A: Interesting question but putting my name on a sports venue is not my style. I would rather put that money into an organization that was helping people.

Denice Gierach

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Denice Gierach is an attorney, CPA, Northwestern University business master's graduate, and has owned several businesses from real estate to manufacturing. She is the lead attorney at Gierach Law Firm in the Chicago area. With more than 30 years of experience, she has been a respected and sought-after resource for businesses looking to grow, sell, solve problems, and succeed long term. Her insights across business areas gives a fuller lens to business issues and solutions, and helps businesses grow and succeed with less time spent on legal issues and other time-consuming problems.