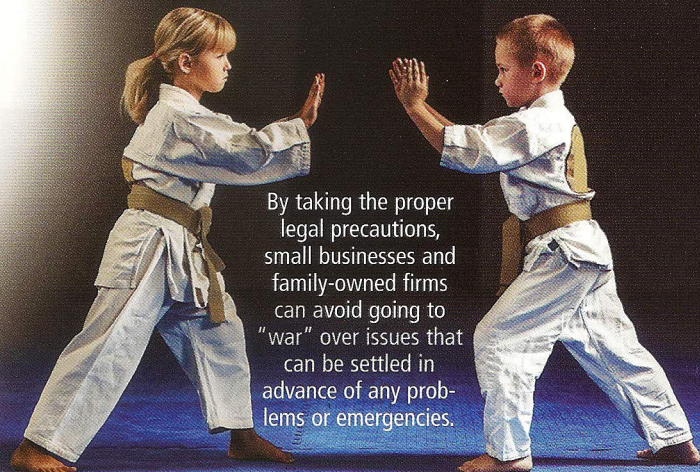


Legal Best Practices for Small Businesses/Family-Owned Firms

BY GIANFRANCO A. PIETRAFESA, ESQ.,
ARCHER & GREINER, P.C.

FAMILY AND SMALL BUSINESSES NEED TO PROTECT their confidential business information through agreements, employee handbooks, and policies and procedures. First, every employee should agree to maintain the confidentiality of, and not disclose, confidential information, such as customer lists and production methods. They should also agree not to use confidential information except to perform their duties as employees of the company.

Next, key employees, such as managers and salespeople, should agree not to solicit customers, vendors and employees if they leave the employ of the company. Finally, certain employees should agree not to compete



By taking the proper legal precautions, small businesses and family-owned firms can avoid going to "war" over issues that can be settled in advance of any problems or emergencies.

with the company in the geographic areas where the company does business.

Generally, the non-solicitation and non-competition restrictions will last for no more than two years, but it gives the company the time to preserve its relationships with customers, vendors and employees. These three types of restrictions will protect the company's confidential business information, and ensure the continuation of the business in the event employees leave the company. ■

Gianfranco A. Pietrafesa, Esq., is a partner with Archer & Greiner, P.C.



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