

DOING BUSINESS: Consumer Alert
Consumer Alert: 1st Article in 12 month series
Word Count: 802

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Who Are You Doing Business With?

Are you doing business with a seller of goods or service, or a seeker of work? The past twenty months have brought over 95,000 layoffs to a once bruised Florida economy. Though this may have raised questions on the future survival of the entire job market, which now seems to be surviving fine, what may raise more eyebrows than questions is that requests for incorporations have risen over 15% in those same recent twenty months. Those without jobs are creating companies and creating their own jobs.

The Division of Corporations in Tallahassee reports an increase from 153, 521 requests for incorporation, and other new business entities, in 2001, to 182,708 in 2002 and _____ in 2003. But is the boom in new business entities due to a sudden increase in entrepreneurial spirit or a once sudden decrease in job options and a continued need to pay the mortgage?

The greater question is would you prefer to work with a successful business owner who is growing his or her business, or someone who is planning to bail on the venture as soon as something better or more steady and dependable, comes along? As the

consumer, you want to know the difference and be able to make a choice between a reliable business owner and someone else's employee in business owner's clothing.

It takes a burning desire, talent, and a boatload of persistence to run and grow a successful business. Michael Gerber, author of *The E-Myth Revisited*, even describes a need for an entrepreneur to be a "three-part person". One must be the "technician", who performs the trade or skill, the "manager", who oversees the daily operations and employees, and the "entrepreneur", who sees the big picture and future vision. One, he says, without the other two, will lead to business failure.

Is the newest addition to your vendor or supplier list, someone who has recently begun a business as a three-part person or as a technician, who has little knowledge of running the daily business? Think of what may happen when you have an urgent need and the "technician" you have begun to work with has other customers and no system for follow-up or returning calls when he or she is busy. Many technicians would prefer to work for someone else who will handle all the details while they work on one task at a time. These are the job-seekers, not the successful seller of a good or service, or owner of a long-term business venture.

With competition, cost conscious efforts, and creative new business ideas in abundant supply, you probably shop around frequently for a better deal if not a better product, than what you currently use. The better stuff and better price may be with one of those _____ new business entities trying to break into the market last year.

If they provide the better value, do business with them as long as they do. But be aware of the warning signs that this new small business may be a job-seeker in disguise

and one who may not be fully equipped or interested in handling your needs as well as an established entity.

Find out if your new vendor or supplier or merchant is a seller of goods and services or a job-seeker by asking the following questions:

1. Would he or she be interested in talking with you about a potential employment opportunity? If yes, this is a job-seeker.
2. How long has he or she been doing what they do? (Not how long have they been in business as even successful businesses must start somewhere. For example, I have been a public speaker for 15 years, but only the owner of my own public speaking company for slightly more than a year.) The longer the better. The longer, generally, the more skilled and more committed. Generally.
3. What type of training or licensing does he or she have in this field? (if none, chances are they have not done proper research or preparation before beginning a business venture.)
4. Does he or she have a five year plan? A business plan? A marketing plan? (Those in business only to pay the bills will not have thought past their most recent 5/1 ARM re-fi on their home office.)

A job-seeker is generally motivated by money, security, and limited responsibility, and would relish the opportunity to work for someone else or someone else's company. A business owner who sells goods or services is motivated by what they do, ownership, freedom, and usually job quality, as

the job is often his or her passion, with his or her name and credibility wrapped up in the image. Who would you rather do business with, the person who shies away from responsibility or the person filled with passion for top quality work and service?