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Entrepreneur: Attorney David Squeri on starting his own firm

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David Squeri's intent was not be an entrepreneur, but rather to create an environment where he could do the best work that he possibly could and to build something substantial.

"Perhaps you could say that I became an entrepreneur because it was the next natural step that I needed to take," he told Pacific Business News.

About a year ago, Squeri started his own firm, Greater Pacific Law Office LLLC, focusing on dispute resolution and litigation, and business and transactional law. Before that, he spent a total of more than seven years at Honolulu law firms Otsuka & Associates and more recently [Badger Arakaki](#).

The [University of Hawaii](#) Manoa William S. Richardson School of Law alumnus, who once worked in digital media production and advertising in New York and Japan, said he was very fortunate after voicing his intent to open his own firm.

"Almost all of the clients I was already servicing opted to continue with my representation and came along with me," Squeri said. "I was, to say the very least, surprised and very pleased by this overwhelming show of support. I am very grateful for the confidence that these clients had in me and worked to ensure that they did not have cause to regret their decision."

PBN caught up with him to talk about the biggest rewards of owning his own business and the one piece of advice he has for other entrepreneurs.

Q&A by Duane Shimogawa



TINA YUEN PBN
David Squeri

How did you come up with your concept/product/service? My practice is centered on two main areas, business- and asset-related litigation and transactional business law. I developed this dual track practice intentionally, as much of my work in one practice area allows me to leverage experience into work done in the other. Aside from keeping my work fresh, I think this also makes my practice more dynamic.

Who are your customers? One thing that I have deliberately stayed away from is taking on representation of cases regarding matters outside of my usual practice. My focus on specific areas of law has allowed for the development of a level of expertise in these fields, and therefore I do not usually take any cases outside of this established range. I occasionally get calls regarding legal matters that are not within my practice area, and I quickly provide the potential client with a referral to another attorney. As a result, clients know that if they call with a legal issue, they will be provided with the proper level of service. And if their issue is outside of my practice range, they will receive assistance in finding an attorney that can help. This builds trust and long term respect.

Who are your competitors? I enjoy competing and love to win, and probably this is why I am attracted to litigation. However, in a business context, I try not to see other attorneys or law firms as competitors but rather as colleagues. Each attorney has their own style, and clients should choose the attorney that best fits their needs. I just concentrate on providing a high level of service to my clients.

How many people work for you? I seem to be currently heading into a period of growth. I expect to be hiring an additional attorney sometime in the next coming year, and there has been some discussion regarding others joining at the partner level. However, I am content to move forward slowly, with strong and stable support underfoot, and only in circumstances that offer the right fit.

What's the biggest reward of owning a business? Having the control needed to make sure that things are done right. Having the ability to determine how matters are handled and how clients are treated. To be able to perform and excel at the highest level possible, without being burdened with office politics and bureaucracy.

What is your one piece of advice for other entrepreneurs? Stay grateful and get humble. Starting my own business was a very humbling experience, and it taught me things that logically I probably already knew but emotionally may not have been fully realized. Nothing exists in a vacuum, and everything is the product of many combined elements. The successes are not just mine, but also belong to everyone who has helped me, and continues to help me, for which I am extremely grateful. Family, God, clients, friends, and even other attorneys, all have played a large role in helping me move forward. No matter how good you think you are, you are nothing without the goodwill of others.

What's the biggest challenge of owning a business? A professional services business is really two jobs. One is running the business, and the other is providing work for the clients. This is a bit different from tangible goods based business, as the work of providing services is the only actual product. It is a challenge to fully operate a business, only to need to do additional work in order to create actual revenue producing product. Then there are additional things I do just for the learning opportunity, such as my work as chairperson of the Hawaii State Bar Association, Business Law Section.

What do you wish you had known before starting a business? How satisfying it really is. When we win a case or provide a valuable legal service to a client, there really is a strong feeling of accomplishment.

What is the most important lesson you've learned? Keep moving forward. Don't get hung up on issues, solve the problem and move on. Set up a system for dealing with any problem that is likely to occur again, and then forget about it. Second guessing doesn't help, and placing blame only leads to hard feelings. It doesn't matter who caused the problem, the only concern is that it gets solved, and that steps have been taken to ensure that it is not likely to occur again.

Do members of your family work with you? Everything I do is for the benefit of and with the support of my family. I would be truly lost without them. My wife has a background in internet project management and marketing, and is a tremendous asset to my business. My young son keeps me smiling with his preschooler antics.

When did you take your last vacation? I try to take working vacations wherever possible. The stress of not knowing what is going on with my clients' matters would quickly kill the purported relaxation of a work-free vacation.

When do you get your best ideas? The best ideas seem to pop out of nowhere. While taking a hot shower, out on a morning run, driving home after work, the subconscious is always working and sometimes it can spit out the most amazing things.

How do you start your day? I try and get up to some exercise whenever possible. As an attorney, it sometimes feels like all the world's problems fall on your desk and exercise can really help to reduce the stress.

Who inspires you? Everyone who strives to overcome obstacles, puts their best effort into achieving a worthwhile goal, and bounces back even harder if they fail. I am constantly inspired by all the good in the world, and by those who take on risk to try and eliminate the bad. Soldiers charging up beachheads in World War II, good Samaritans helping out, political dissidents in repressive societies, rescue workers saving lives, young U.S. Marines kicking in doors to get at the bad guys — all the people who put up a good fight for the right reasons.

Duane Shimogawa
Reporter
Pacific Business News

