



ATTORNEY SPOTLIGHT SERIES:

Building a Recession-Proof Law Firm with Attorney Dan Minutillo

Attorney Dan Minutillo is the founding shareholder of **Minutillo Law Corporation**, a small boutique firm in San Jose, California that's been around for over four decades—a testament to both his passion for the law and the business strategy behind it.

The firm practices exclusively in two key areas: U.S. government contract law and international trade.

And Minutillo is quick to credit those practice areas as the reason his firm has been so successful through the years. “The reason I’ve chosen those two areas of law is because, together, they’re recession proof,” he explains.

A RECESSION-PROOF STRATEGY

But rather than being modest about his recession-proof claim, Minutillo doesn't hesitate to demonstrate how his strategy works.

“When the economy is in the doldrums, when it's not doing very well, the U.S. government pumps a huge amount of money into keeping the economy going, and to grow it,” he says. “That radically boosts our government contract work.”

Conversely, he explains that when the economy is booming, the government pulls back, which reduces the firm's contract work. But that same healthy economy also means that the firm's clients are doing well and are exporting products all over the world—boosting the international trade side of the business.

“It creates the ideal balance,” Minutillo says. “So, we're never out of work.”

While it's obvious that not all lawyers want to focus on government contracts and international exports, there is a broader takeaway here. Minutillo encourages anyone thinking of starting a new firm to try to position their practice areas for both good economic times and bad.

“Whether it's 1,000 lawyers or ten, think about structuring your firm so that it's recession-proof.”

THE COVID ECONOMIC STRESS TEST

When the COVID-19 pandemic caused the worldwide economy to grind down, many companies (even those historically thought of as recession-proof) took a financial hit. But Minutillo explains that, even amidst a global recession, his firm was able to blunt the impact.

“We had a huge amount of cases from pharmaceutical companies, health-oriented companies, on the U.S. government contract side,” he says.

In other words, when the government pumped billions into the economy as a result of the pandemic, the government contract side of the firm’s business went way up, which allowed it to absorb the dip in business resulting from less export work.

GROWING & SUSTAINING A RECESSION-PROOF BUSINESS

While Minutillo tends to avoid traditional advertising channels, he makes it clear that prudent marketing also plays a big part in his recession-proof strategy. “We’ve never advertised,” he states, “but I lecture all over the place.”

In addition to his public speaking, Minutillo does a ton of writing which the firm publishes in a newsletter to help educate clients and potential clients. This exposure has established the firm’s expertise in the industry—and built a reputation for providing top-notch service to clients. “We try to do good work,” he says. “And we get the work out really quickly.”

Client retention is critical too, according to Minutillo. He reveals that several of the firm’s clients represent relationships that stem back over twenty years. When it comes to retention, Minutillo says it helps to be responsive. “We have a policy that, if a client sends us an email, within an hour, we’ll send a response.” He explains how even a simple acknowledgement that the email was received can go a long way to build client goodwill.

DEEPER ROOTS OF SUCCESS

Recession or not, a law firm’s long-term viability often relies on the will of its founder. And that’s especially true here—it’s tough to overlook the passion Minutillo brings to his work.

“When I was 14, for some unknown reason, something just hit me and said, ‘You need to be a lawyer.’ That’s the honest truth.”

From that “a-ha” moment, Minutillo began working towards his goal. “I know it sounds far-fetched,” he reveals, “But it’s true. And it stuck with me. I never looked at another profession.”

Though he points out that having such a clearly defined goal isn’t always a good thing.

“It makes you singularly focused,” Minutillo says. “I was, and I still am.” He admits with a laugh, “I love to practice law.”

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