

Making 'business' their business

Law firm helps entrepreneurs pair up with investors, financiers

Legal Innovations

By **Melissa P. Stewart, Esq.**

Hertz Schram, PC, has gotten into the matchmaking business.

With the help of its newly launched networking tool, The Deal Gateway, the Bloomfield Hills-based firm is bringing entrepreneurs and investors together with investors and financiers.

The goal, according to Kenneth F. Silver — who, along with Lisa M. Kavalhuna, created The Deal Gateway — “is to help diversify Michigan’s economy by helping people identify new investment opportunities and business contacts.”

To that end, the duo developed www.thedealgateway.com and began holding monthly “Deal Incubators” at Hertz Schram.

“The website is designed to be a clearinghouse for information,” Silver said. “It includes news with respect to The Deal Gateway and useful links to websites helpful for investors and entrepreneurs.”

Beyond that, the website also includes an anonymous message board where site visitors can “collaborate and brainstorm.” The Deal Incubators bring that collaboration to life by providing entrepreneurs and investors with a monthly forum through which to meet face-to-face with each other — and attorneys — to discuss ideas and investments, as well as their legal implications.

“Individuals who come up with a great idea often don’t know where to look to even develop a business plan, but often that’s the first step because it allows them to tell their stories and generate interest,” Kavalhuna explained. “In an effort to give them a roadmap, The Deal Gateway

event will provide entrepreneurs and investors with just those things.

On Jan. 8, The Deal Gateway — in conjunction with the Entrepreneur and Investor Exchange — will host “Seven Things You Must Know About Raising Money.”

The event, which begins at 5 p.m. at the Birmingham Community House, will feature a presentation by venture capitalist Carl Meyerling.

Meyerling, an early creator of Angel Investor Groups and CEO of The Meyerling Corporation, will discuss the fundamentals of raising capital, investor rights, and how to approach investors.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to tour exhibitor booths featuring the wares of entrepreneurs and inventors.

Kavalhuna and Silver hope the event will mark just one in a long line of successes for The Deal Gateway.

“Long term, we’d like this to develop some momentum of its own, so that it becomes a regular go-to resource where people anticipate the events and the website continues to grow,” Silver said.

The duo is banking on The Deal Gateway’s wide-ranging appeal to take it there.

“It addresses all different types of people from all different types of industries, so it has a diversity to it that’s very exciting,” Kavalhuna said. Michigan residents tend to focus on the automotive industry, “but no matter what industry you are in, The Deal Gateway has something for you.”

Given the current state of Michigan’s economy, diversity and an entrepreneurial spirit — both of which The Deal Gateway aims to foster — are more important than ever.

“There are still a lot of people living in Michigan with a lot of creative ideas,” she said. And, “the activities of smaller independently-owned businesses should not be underestimated, because they will provide a fundamental piece to the revitalization of Michigan’s economy.”

If you would like to comment on this story, please contact Melissa P. Stewart at (248) 865-3105 or melissa.stewart@milawyersweekly.com.

Seven Things You Must Know About Raising Money

Spons: Hertz Schram, PC
 5 p.m. Jan. 8
 Birmingham Community House
 Cost: \$20 pre-registration; \$25 at the door; \$60 exhibitor booth
 Info: Julie Coronado (248) 335-5000,
www.thedealgateway.com



THE DEAL GATEWAY’S CO-FOUNDERS
KENNETH F. SILVER AND LISA M. KAVALHUNA

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wants to expose these people to the individuals and resources that can give them those guidelines and hopefully address their needs."

So far, it seems to be working.

According to Silver, at least one match seems to have struck.

"I have a relationship with a computer software company that believes it has created a better mousetrap — a dramatically better mousetrap," he said. "They've spent a good deal of time marketing themselves ... but they can't seem to raise enough capital to really launch the thing the way they'd like and to the extent that they think they are able."

Enter The Deal Gateway.

Thanks to it, the software developer has paired up with an "angel" — a high net-worth individual who makes equity investments in entrepreneurial schemes and startup projects.

While no formal arrangement has been struck, both Silver and Kavalhuna are optimistic that the match will ultimately result in a win-win relationship for both the inventor and the investor.

But, what's in it for them?

According to Silver, it all comes down to economics.

"We are looking to generate business activity for the firm, and in this economic climate, as lawyers, we need to think of a creative means by which to develop new client relationships," he explained.

Perhaps it's no surprise that this unique approach to the practice of law would come from a firm dubbed as "not your traditional law firm."

Since its inception in 1979, Hertz Schram has prided itself on being "bold, forward-thinking, and uncommonly creative."

By the looks of their endeavor, it appears both Kavalhuna and Silver have put the firm's motto into action.

But it has been no small task for them to do so.

"One of the things that makes The Deal Gateway a huge undertaking is the fact that it is need-based," Kavalhuna said. "Trying to respond to those needs with special events and guest speakers 'keeps The Deal Gateway on the move.'"

Lately, the pair has focused on two needs in particular: Education and net-working.

And, it is their hope that an uncommon