

Law firm sees opportunities from opening Deal Gateway

BY MIKE SCOTT

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A local law firm is hoping to generate both community business investment and added firm revenue by launching a new business-to-business Web site focused on finalizing deals and finding capital.

Bloomfield Hills-based Hertz Schram PC established TheDealGateway.com with the goal of adding diversity to Michigan's economy by enabling users to identify business contacts and investment opportunities.

Principals Kenneth Silver and Lisa Kevalhuna have led the development efforts that include site resources ranging from anonymous message boards and useful business links and information to the hosting of networking and speaking events open to interested business leaders.

The concept is to drive business activity by providing entrepreneurs and investors a user-friendly forum to develop new contacts, obtain feedback on their ideas and access other resources.

"Our goal is to help diversify Michigan's economy by helping

people identify new investment opportunities and business contacts," Kevalhuna said.

The Deal Gateway also includes the concept of the Deal Incubator, a monthly meeting that began in November in which business professionals are invited to Hertz Schram's offices for free brainstorming sessions. Topics such as organizational structures, marketing and business management are expected to be discussed.

A primary reason for establishing the site was that the firm's clients consistently ask Silver to help find money and investors for their projects. This was a way to help direct clients and other business leaders toward a potential resolution.

"I'm not in the money-raising business, so we wanted to create a forum to bring like-minded professionals together to learn more about financing opportunities," Silver said. "It's exciting to be generating some business buzz."

The Deal Gateway targets high-level business professionals with the specific intent to help them discover and discuss potential deals and partnerships. It is more focused than traditional networking groups, Silver said.

"Some of those networking events have great intents, but they can be hit or miss because the (nature) is that it is very broad-based," Silver said.

The focus appealed to Andrew Hayman, executive vice president of Hayman Co., a commercial real estate firm in Troy. Hayman attended a seminar The Deal Gateway held in October that featured information from the Michigan Economic Development Company, which helped him learn more about available grants that can help Hayman Co. fill its commercial office buildings faster.

"The key is to find opportunities



Lisa Kevalhuna and Kenneth Silver at Hertz Schram PC. | BILL COWGER

even in bad economic times, and in our business such times can present opportunities such as foreclosures that we can make money on," Hayman said.

While one of the intents is to provide the community with additional business resources, Silver said, Hertz Schram hopes to generate additional revenue from this venture and adds that to earn back the amount of money invested in the combined Deal Gateway efforts would take the addition of "a couple of good clients."

"Certainly we recognize and would expect that we would realize additional business and add some clients, but for now we're just trying to spread the word and get exposure," Silver said.

The focus on networking is a key feature for businesses, Hayman said. If The Deal Network can secure additional speakers that provide practical business information and advice, he will continue being

involved with its events.

"We all have to be flexible to the changing business climate, and the more access we have to information and business professionals that have access to corporate deals, finance and capital, the better off we are," Hayman said.

If that happens, The Deal Gateway could be expanded to include larger, more frequent seminars and events, a highly structured Deal Incubator topic list and a revenue-generating Web site for business professionals throughout Oakland County and across Southeastern Michigan.

"I can envision The Deal Gateway as being an entity that operates and grows all by itself," Silver said. "Perhaps instead of 50 attendees to one of our major events, we might get 250 people, and the Web site will become its own local brand."

Visitors can see The Deal Gateway at www.thedealgateway.com or by calling Hertz Schram P.C. at 248-335-5000. ■

Deal Gateway

TheDealGateway.com Web site features a variety of resources for business professionals. It includes:

- An area devoted to free legal advice
- Related blogs
- A calendar detailing events and seminars sponsored by The Deal Gateway
- An anonymous message board where site visitors can collaborate and brainstorm with one another without revealing their identity
- Direct links to other related publications.