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# NEW BUSINESS MINNESOTA

October 2012



Photography by Patrick Clancy

## Special Report

## Resource Heroes

New Entrepreneurs Often Need the Resources of Key Business Professionals to Succeed. New Business Minnesota Brings You Three Stories About **Resource Heroes** You Should Know and How They Helped Clients Reach Their Goals: Softech Solutions, JW Employment Law Center and BizzyWeb.

# Resource Heroes

Nobody  
Succeeds in Business  
Alone, Especially Not New  
Businesses. They Often Rely on  
Professionals with Specific Skills or  
Services They Need to Launch and  
Grow Their Enterprises. They Turn  
to Their **Resource Heroes:**  
Business Professionals Who Have  
Made a Significant Difference In  
the Success of Their Clients.  
Here We Present Three Such  
Examples.

## RESOURCE HERO



Attorney Jessica White, president of JW Employment Law Center (Left) and Erin Wambach, president of In the Pink Cleaning Professionals LLC.

## JW Employment Law Center

### Increasing Profits for a Small Business by Improving Its HR Processes and Documentation Businesses

#### New Business Minnesota

It's not often entrepreneurs credit their recent success to their employee handbook. Erin Wambach, president of In the Pink Cleaning Professionals, was at a meeting of her networking group when she heard a short presentation about business HR practices. That's when she realized her employee handbook needed a lot of work.

The speaker that day was attorney Jessica White, president of JW Employment Law Center. The two talked afterwards, beginning a very successful business relationship that has thoroughly transformed In the Pink Cleaning from boosting employee morale to improving the bottom line.

The two had their first meeting at JW Employment Law Center

in Bloomington. "Initially, Erin just wanted more structure and order," recalls Jessica. "I explained my packages and laid out ideas for a plan. At the time, she didn't have the money and decided to deal with it at a later time."

But Erin called back a few weeks later with an urgent problem. An employee who was on maternity leave was threatening a lawsuit unless she was given a raise when she returned to work. Then the employee's husband began phoning in threats until Erin had the number blocked. The situation was getting ugly.

Call in the lawyer. Jessica reviewed the facts and quickly determined that In the Pink Cleaning was on solid ground and had no liability.

"After that episode, Erin and I discussed how the entire problem could have been managed better so that it never got to the disruptive

# JW Employment Law Center *Continued from Previous Page*

level it did. All it takes is to have the right policies and procedures in place,” says Jessica.

JW Employment Law Center was just what she needed, says Erin. The firm’s combination of experience in corporate human resources and employment law was the one-stop-shop that she wanted.

During the four hour meeting they started with the handbook and then branched into other parts of the business.

The original handbook wasn’t in line with Minnesota law. For example, theft can be an issue in the house cleaning business, so it seemed logical to have a policy requiring employees to take polygraphs on demand in the handbook. Erin didn’t know that Minnesota law prohibits that.

The handbook Jessica soon drafted was clear, concise and easy to understand. The impact from that process has been remarkable. “I never imagined it would become such an important part of how we do things,” says Erin.

One of the most significant results has been reduced turnover. At the time, In the Pink Cleaning had 12 employees, cleaning mostly homes and some offices.

Once they started implementing policies with clear expectations along with a discipline system, it really started turning things around. It used to be half the staff would turn over every nine months. Now it’s 18 months, twice the industry average. And that has led to fewer unemployment claims.

“When employees know they have to follow the rules, they toe the line. You have employees behaving better. And they are much happier within that structure,” says Erin. “We do orientation with new staff and review the handbook page by page on their very first day of work, just like Jessica trained us to. There are no surprises or excuses for not knowing the policies,” says Erin.

They now they have a clear policy for sick days – four in a six-month period can be grounds for termination. A sick day strains the other workers who have to do the extra work, causing resentment.

“That is pretty much gone now because they know not to do it,” Erin says. “The other employees are much happier. Now everybody respects the company and the environment. Everybody is happier and it’s just been exponential.”

Next on the HR list was improving the overall employment processes.

The cleaning industry has a high risk of being audited by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (CIS) because it is statistically likely to have undocumented workers. By law, every employee must have an I9 Employment Eligibility Verification form on file.

Jessica says she has never come across a company whose I9s were done correctly. A CIS audit looks at every I9 error as a separate fine. It doesn’t take long to get \$10,000 in fines. Common mistakes include putting the I9 with the employee’s personnel file (keep them separate), not checking a box on their legal status, signing on the

wrong line, not dating it or not making copies of identification documents.

Jessica not only taught Erin how to correctly fill out I9s, she showed her to spot fake documents. And she stressed that it is not solely a minority issue. Caucasians from Canada and the U.S. also use fake IDs and need to be checked.

When they started to review employee compensation, Erin was surprised that she hadn’t been paying employees correctly. Jessica told her that in addition to paying per house cleaned, travel time between homes should be included, but at a lower hourly rate.

“My payroll expenses went up, but I also got an increase in efficiency and productivity along with happier employees,” says Erin. Cleaners actually got to the next job so much faster that an additional house could be added to the shift. “That changed how we scheduled clients. We no longer let clients pick and choose when we clean. We now schedule a home for when we are in the area.”

All the changes JW Employment Law Center brought to the operation have made a huge impact.

“Erin – along with every company I’ve worked with – didn’t understand how the workers’ comp and unemployment insurance systems work,” says Jessica. “If she fired someone, they almost always got unemployment. By documenting problems as they happen, she has reduced the number of claims, which reduces insurance costs. And there have been no workers’ comp or unemployment claims since.”

Erin says she is no longer in a constant state of looking for workers. “I’m able to work on a marketing plan, sell more, do home consultations and be in the office more. It’s huge. The time I’ve gotten back I’m putting back into my business.”

She even had time to negotiate and complete the purchase of a competitor. “No way could I have done that before,” she says.

Looking back, Erin says she should have called JW Employment Law Center sooner. “I had been hesitant to talk to an HR attorney because that’s who you call when you’re in trouble. It turns out that preventative action is the correct approach. I never thought the preventative approach would actually lower attorney bills.

“Now, I can’t figure out how we got through the first 12 years of business without Jessica’s help,” says Erin. “We’ve actually made enough revenue to update all our equipment across the board, which we had wanted to do for a few years. That is a direct result of working with Jessica.”

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*Jessica White is the owner of JW Employment Law Center, which works as an outsourced HR Director and Employment Attorney for small businesses in areas such as policies and procedures, employee relations, and legal compliance. She can be reached at: (952) 657-5417 or [jessica@jwemploymentlawcenter.com](mailto:jessica@jwemploymentlawcenter.com) [www.jwemploymentlawcenter.com](http://www.jwemploymentlawcenter.com)*

## Call To Action

Call for a free consultation on creating an employee manual that protects both you and your employees....and takes pressure off your bottom line.  
(952) 657-5417.

*Erin Wambach is president and owner of In the Pink Cleaning Professionals LLC, which provides quality, dependable cleaning services for homes and offices in the Twin Cities area. Erin can be reached at (612) 987-1620 or [info@inthepinkcleaning.com](mailto:info@inthepinkcleaning.com) [www.inthepinkcleaning.com](http://www.inthepinkcleaning.com)*

## RESOURCE HERO



Dave Meyer, president of BizzyWeb, and Randy Smith, president of Randy's Electric.

## BizzyWeb

### Creating an Integrated Web and Social Media Solution to Replace a Company's Weak Web Design

#### New Business Minnesota

Randy Smith, owner of Randy's Electric, knew his company's website needed work. And he wasn't the only one. Every day he would get calls from designers telling him he should fire his "web guy." He was getting more bad calls than good ones and knew it was time to make a change.

Fortunately, Randy was in a Business Network International (BNI) group with Dave Meyer, president of BizzyWeb, a leading web and social media developer in the Twin Cities. After one of Dave's web and social media presentations, the two sat down to talk about his problem.

Randy's web site was a mess and not getting any better. His old web guy was always working on something. It was a few hundred dollars a month for updating and doing Google adwords. In return, Randy had to point out misspelled words and other mistakes and he

couldn't find his company on a Google search until page four.

"It was clear to me the guy was trying, but didn't know his stuff," Randy says. "Just talking to Dave for a few minutes it became clear he was the expert I needed. I made the change."

Randy wanted a logical process that would drive more leads to his business by integrating his web site with Facebook, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and other social media.

Going through the web site with a critical eye, Dave says it was easy to see why Randy was so frustrated.

"He had a website he couldn't update, it didn't look great and didn't get him the business results he was looking for," says Dave.

The web site had been created in a tool that made updating difficult and wasn't SEO friendly. Randy didn't have access to it. He was paying a regular monthly fee to have it managed and nothing was happening because there was no plan.

Before Dave had his BizzyWeb team start designing, he worked with Randy on a strategic planning process, which laid out market-

# BizzyWeb *Continued from Previous Page*

ing goals, what prospects the site was trying to attract, the quality of the leads that were going to be generated and how to best present his unique business model.

Randy's Electric is focused on providing quality, reliable electrical services for homeowners. His unique selling proposition is a customer-service-intense experience where the job gets done right the first time and in one trip. They do standard electrical repairs for homeowners such as installing a ceiling fan, updating outlets, adding wall switches, fixing flickering lights, etc.

Randy has electricians who are also heavily trained in customer service and safety. "Most contractors are concerned with permits and code," Randy says. "We are concerned with the safety of those who are sleeping in the house."

Dave started by indentifying what Randy's Electric does better than anyone else and what that means to their best clients. Then BizzyWeb identified the tools to use to reach that audience at the moment they were making the decision to use Randy's service.

"We look at strategy first and solution second," says Dave. "We identified exactly what Randy wanted to do rather than spend time chasing the next shiny object."

The first task, rather urgently, was to solve a Facebook crisis. Randy had mistakenly set up a personal profile for his company and he was "friending" people – a violation of Facebook rules. BizzyWeb created a company page and transitioned most of the contacts to the new page.

"I thought I was supposed to be friending everybody," says Randy. "I just didn't know. I'm an electrician." Within a few weeks, Facebook shut down the profile, but luckily most of the contacts were saved with a proper Facebook presence created by BizzyWeb.

Randy's target audience is not price shoppers or tire kickers who want a free consultation. They are people who want it done right the first time, appreciate value and peace of mind, and who don't mind hiring professionals to take care of problems.

That information was used to create keywords that are woven into the context of every page to drive search results and put Randy's Electric in the top result or at least on the first page.

The next phase was to create a web site that automatically updated Randy's Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and blog so that whenever he updated his web site, his messages were seamlessly integrated with his social media accounts.

The key to effective social media is keeping content fresh. Dave says busy business owners don't have time to make blog posts, which is why he created his Buzz Builders Program. BizzyWeb has trained

journalists on staff who interview Randy once a week and generate blog posts that are unique to him.

"To be effective, it has to come from the owner's voice," says Dave. "The key thing we do is provide content our customer's ideal clients are searching for, when they need it, and where they hang out online."

BizzyWeb writes Randy's advice on topics such as how to know if an outlet needs replacing, how to protect your family by updating smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, what the right Energy Star approved appliances are and how to protect your house with surge protectors.

The next phase was revamping how Randy used Google ads. "We wanted to reduce his costs while getting in 30 to 40 percent more leads," says Dave.

Randy's Google campaigns hadn't been driving results. In fact, they were wasting money: He was paying for clicks on his name, and useless search results. He was showing up under "electric motor repair" and other services he doesn't offer.

Besides paying for wasted clicks, Randy was getting phone calls for services he doesn't provide. By using negative keywords, Dave made sure the Google clicks he received were meaningful.

"I don't know what he did, but it rocks the world. I show up really strong," says Randy.

Now Randy's Electric's site is continually updated, fully optimized for search engines and social media. "We built it to be gorgeous and interactive. It's purpose-built to get the results they need," says Dave. "There is always a call to action to drive interaction, encourage community and build trust with his prospects and encourage them to do business with him."

Says Randy: "My website is the best electrical web site I've ever seen. I love working with Dave. He can explain it so you understand it. He spells out in a written agreement what he will do and what we can expect. And he lives up to it."

Most importantly, Randy is getting results. "That's my favorite part of working with Dave. I get trackable results, not warm feelings. Before, I didn't have access to the information and it was all vague. Now I have a weekly Google Analytics report and see how it's going. Phone calls are up. And it's the right kind of phone calls."

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*Dave Meyer, president and owner of BizzyWeb, creates WordPress-powered, SEO-optimized websites that cross-publish to social media with a single click, saving businesses time and money. Dave frequently speaks on social media topics, and was the 2012 chair of the Gold Quill Awards program for the International Association of Business Communicators. He can be reached at (612) 424-9990 or sales@bizzyweb.com, facebook.com/bizzyweb, or twitter.com/bizzyweb.*

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## Call To Action

To learn more about how to "Generate Buzz Without Getting Stung," check out BizzyWeb's FREE weekly Buzz Builders webinar Wednesdays at noon. Register at [bizzyweb.com/bb](http://bizzyweb.com/bb)

## RESOURCE HEROES



Jill Gibson Blyth, president of Softech Solutions LLC, and Bernie Schwab, president of Spruce Valley Payroll and Services.

## Softech Solutions LLC

### Bringing Structure, Increase Marketing Opportunities and Improved Customer Service to a Growing Payroll Company

#### New Business Minnesota

This is how business relationships work. Jill Gibson Blyth and Bernie Schwab have been part of the same networking chapter for years. Each has heard the other's presentations multiple times. And they turn to each other when they need help.

Three years ago Jill's company, Softech Solutions, was adding employees and needed payroll; she turned to Bernie's company, Spruce Valley Payroll and Services.

And this year, Spruce Valley was growing so much that Bernie needed a better way to manage his customer and sales contacts. He called on Jill for help.

At the heart of Bernie's problem was lack of a Customer Relations Management (CRM) tool. "I was using spreadsheets and Outlook. It worked when we were small," says Bernie. "I had met thousands of people over the years and I didn't have a comprehen-

sive way of tracking who they were, when we met, what was the last contact, or what was the context.

"I have walked into networking meetings and had people give me a hug. I didn't know who they were. They had to introduce themselves to me," says Bernie.

Softech Solutions specializes in integrating Sage ACT!, a leading contact management software, with the sales process of businesses she consults with. Many companies today have tons of isolated data that are used in one part of the business, but not in another.

Jill looks for ways to make data productive, to drive sales, create targeted marketing programs and keep the sales funnel full.

The first step was for Jill to meet with Bernie and talk about how he operated, the steps in his current sales process, how he follows up on leads and how he interacts with clients.

Bernie's needs were pretty straightforward," she says. "He was extremely busy and he needed to keep it all going forward without

# Softech Solutions LLC *Continued from Previous Page*

it taking up all his time.”

In addition to selling payroll services, the company, naturally, has to deliver those services. That brings Bernie’s partner, Terry Johnson, into the picture. Her biggest challenge is managing customer service and the complex calendar of payroll schedules for hundreds of companies.

“We are totally relationship based,” says Bernie. “I want to know customers and prospects by first names. I want to be able to understand what is happening on the production side so I can make sure those relationships are in good order. And because we are heavy into referrals, I need to track who needs an accountant, banker or other services”

Working with Softech Solutions was just what Bernie needed. “My background was IT for 20 years, serving Fortune 1000 businesses, and I understand data issues, accessibility, integration and business process tools,” Bernie says.

“Jill also comes from a background of process-driven software and she understands marketing. She is not your typical tech weenie.”

More common, he says, are tech people who only understand the technology part. They don’t get the business process and how marketing works.

“Marketing, social media, sales, branding, extending your reach to your targeted community; Jill understands all those facets. It increases her credibility in the marketplace,” says Bernie.

By focusing on process so heavily, Jill says the applications she recommends will almost pick themselves.

As a master networker, Bernie collects mountains of business cards. Bernie needed to harness that raw data and add to it meaningful information, schedule calls, follow up meetings, track history and notes on encounters.

“With good information in your database, you can call a contact and say, ‘Three months ago you told me to call after the event,’” says Jill. “When you make calls like that it kind of blows their minds. We want to know where leads and potential customers come from. How are they marketed to?”

To accomplish that, she designed a Sage ACT! database with custom fields to support how Bernie does business. She also integrated Outlook with Sage ACT! so his emails are tracked along with other customer contact events.

The solution she is designing for Spruce Valley will be done in phases to ensure that each component is used and mastered before bringing in the next one.

“I present a complete vision so they can see what I’m trying to do,” says Jill. “There are always benefits for what I do, but there will also be the impact of a learning curve. Too much too fast can be overwhelming. There is a lot of change, so I take a managed approach. I want them to master phase one and get training. Phase two will be added when it no longer feels like the new system.”

## Call To Action

“Like” Softech Solutions LLC on Facebook and learn about upcoming promotions, software discounts, webinars, and events!

The success rate on adoption is much higher when it goes at the client’s speed. She has seen many companies spend a fortune building a complex system only to introduce it to users with a mere two hours of training.

Phase one for Bernie was to get Sage ACT! fully integrated with Outlook and start using it right away. It’s set up so that he can begin syncing with his smartphone when he is ready. She also set up mini dashboards to track his sales results so he can see, overall, where he is in the sales process.

An important next step will be helping Terry manage the payroll production calendar. The Spruce Valley team has looked at various calendar programs, but they lacked the flexibility Terry needed. They were considering hiring a programmer to build a program from scratch. Very expensive. Then they talked to Jill.

“For Terry, I recommended Lotus Notes to help her stay on top of deadlines,” says Jill. Lotus is great for adding exceptions and rules. If payroll is on a Sunday or holiday, it automatically rolls it over to the day before or after based on the rules you set up.

Bernie says Jill is the first one to come up with a calendar solution. “We’ve been looking for a year on our own. This will work”

The game changer in the process will be bringing a marketing structure into the process. Social media will be integrated into the process so Bernie can interact with clients through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and with email.

Sage ACT! will be used for email campaigns that can be scheduled in advance to share payroll-related content, promote special events and send out other information that is appropriate to them.

“I’ll be able to see if the email has been read and how they responded,” says Bernie. “Sage ACT! can track it all so that I can send follow-up emails only to those who opened the initial email so I don’t overuse the privilege. But if I have something I need to say, I can get it to the right person.”

By the time it’s over, Softech Solutions will have set up a comprehensive system, ultimately integrating with QuickBooks, so that Spruce Valley will achieve its goals of improved marketing and service to its clients.

Before they began working together, Bernie and Jill were friends with many shared clients. “Now,” says Bernie, “she is a trusted advisor.”

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*Jill Blyth, President/CEO of Softech Solutions, offers business process analysis, customized contact management software and marketing solutions. She has more than 25 years experience in data analysis and design, is a Platinum Certified Sage ACT! Consultant, and appointed to the Business Partner Advisory Council for Sage ACT! software. She can be reached at (612) 309-5709 or jill@softechsolutionsllc.com.*

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