

Pannone named 2014 top attorney by Best Lawyers

PBN Q&A
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Gary R. Pannone, founder and managing partner of Pannone Lopes Devereaux & West LLC, was recently named 2014 Lawyer of the Year in the metropolitan area of Providence by Best Lawyers. Pannone has more than 30 years of experience in his field. Currently, he specializes in the areas of business formations, corporate restructuring, mergers, acquisitions and corporate compliance. His practice also includes the representation of nonprofit organizations. He has served as town solicitor and special counsel to several municipalities. He holds a J.D. from Suffolk Law School and a B.S. in finance and accounting from the University of Notre Dame.

PBN: How did your experience as a former town solicitor early in your career strengthen your expertise?

Pannone: I found that their legal needs were very similar to that of a large corporation. This experience required me to become conversant in a multitude of substantive areas of law, including corporate, real estate, zoning, administrative law and public finance. It was a tremendous opportunity that accelerated my learning curve as a negotiator. I gained practical experience in applying substantive law to fact patterns that I later confronted in my private practice when counseling closely held business owners or boards of directors.

PBN: You've found that clients appreciate a lawyer's willingness to act like a strategic partner. Why?

Pannone: As a young lawyer, one is specifically concerned with having a comprehensive understanding of black-letter law. Early in my career, I learned that clients sincerely appreciated

my interest in understanding their challenges and my desire to act as a strategic partner in addition to providing legal advice. I find that this approach to problem solving is much more meaningful to clients than simply telling them what they could or could not do within the parameters of the law. Having the ability to develop a strategy to negotiate a contract, transaction or settlement is much more valuable than simply knowing the law. Otherwise, an attorney's services may be considered only as a line-item cost.

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PBN: In what ways have you changed your approach with clients and managing your firm after 30 years of experience working with corporations, nonprofits and on civil cases?

Pannone: Maturing as a lawyer has allowed me to become more patient. As I look back after more than 30 years in the practice of law, I have learned that listening is more important than speaking. I have also learned that being a team player and strategic partner for clients as opposed to a hired expert has made a significant difference in developing business relationships and strategic alliances in the profession. •