

A Message from Our Managing Partner

As Founder and Managing Partner of The *CommLaw* Group and [The Compliance Group](#), I have always paid close attention to the competitive realities of our profession, not just here in the U.S., but globally. It is my core belief that operating our organization in a competitive manner is critically important to our long-term success and survival; operating competitively is just as important as making certain our professionals consistently deliver high-quality, high-value services to our clients. After all, what good is it to offer top notch services if no one can afford them? Over the past several years, during which the global economy nearly collapsed, it became clear to me that companies would no longer be willing or able to conduct business in the future as they have in the past. Excessive, unpredictable and unconstrained outside counsel costs, which had become the norm in the legal profession, simply would not be tolerated any longer. It was obvious; change was needed.

In 2005, years before the Great Recession, I set off to create the unique, Full Spectrum professional services business model that today is comprised of The *CommLaw* Group and The *Compliance* Group family. Our goal was to introduce an effective, affordable, full-service professional services organization whose experienced, down-to-Earth, business savvy professionals become partners with our diverse base of clients, thus ensuring our clients remain aware of risks, achieve compliance, but without losing their competitive footing. Our one-of-a-kind business model, and the proprietary processes we've implemented, create exceptional value for our clients by ensuring that the *Right Professionals* are put to work on the *Right Projects* and for the *Right Prices*.

Since embarking on our mission to create a different, better law firm experience for our clients, a great many of the distinctive characteristics clients will find at our professional services organization have since been affirmed (see "[10 Things I'd Do Differently as a Law Firm CEO](#)"). The following outlines my thought processes, my decisions, and my actions, all of which have led to the innovative firms that I am proud to introduce – The *CommLaw* Group and [The Compliance Group](#).

A Professional Services Organization Engineered for Today's Economic Reality: Delivering the Full Spectrum of Professional Services to Telecom Providers in the New Economy

The economic reality emerging from the "Great Recession" is forcing industries across the United States to closely examine their cost structures and 'business as usual' practices. Perhaps no industry segment is more familiar with this struggle than the telecommunications industry, having experienced two collapsing bubbles in the

span of under a decade. The self-examination process includes taking a hard look at *how* businesses are using outside counsel and *who* they use to provide professional services.

Skilled attorneys will always be in demand, yet skill alone is no longer the only factor in selecting an attorney or law firm (or even a consulting services firm). In the new economic reality of a post-recession world, professional services firms must have richly talented professionals who also understand how each discrete matter fits within their clients' overall business objectives, unique budgetary constraints and distinct personalities. In other words, a professional service firm's *attitude* towards its clients and their issues is as vital as the skills of its individual professionals.

Unfortunately, attitude is often overlooked because it is difficult to measure, particularly at the outset of an engagement. Clients want to know that their attorneys will devote their energies to positively managing the clients' legal matters, without throwing endless resources at minor issues. To balance these objectives, firms must have the right attitude to recognize and discuss with the client how best to tackle each unique issue, considering the costs, risks, and potential benefits of that matter in context with the business's overall objectives.

Having the right attitude is especially important in today's business environment because the recent economic disruptions have brought about declining revenues and budget cuts in almost every industry. Unlike previous cycles, however, this time companies' law department budgets were not spared the deep cuts and intense drive for greater efficiency and effectiveness. The economic demands placed on businesses have, of course, rippled out to affect their suppliers and professional partners, including their law firms.

- Our rates, flexible billing arrangements, and compensation systems are structured, top to bottom, to promote stability and accommodate growth.
- We work hard to avoid sticker shock through proactive and candid communications with our clients and by ensuring our clients' objectives are properly aligned with their budgetary expectations, and vice versa, prior to embarking on projects.
- In a world in which "customer service" is considered a relic, we turn back the clock by pushing our attorneys and consulting professionals to continually expand and deepen not only their professional services skills, but their client servicing skills, as well.
- We wield the power of technology to create efficiencies for us and savings for our clients by:
 - ▶ *Using proprietary databases to track and maintain compliance with regulatory and corporate reporting obligations at the FCC and government agencies throughout the country.*
 - ▶ *Providing updates on legal issues through insightful Client Advisories and offering advance notifications and reminders of regulatory deadlines through timely Regulatory Alerts.*

- ▶ *Creating a revolutionary, web-based FCC licensing service out of the belief that no telecommunications business, no matter how small, should be denied access to basic compliance services at affordable rates.*

Our commitment to fulfilling the demand for skilled, yet affordable professional services is embodied in the very structure of our business model.

Regulated businesses are no longer willing to pay higher-priced lawyers and overpaid paralegals to tend to their basic licensing and compliance needs. Yet, at the same time, businesses in the rapidly converging telecom field can ill afford the adverse consequences of entrusting these needs to consulting “shops” which lack awareness and sensitivity to the risks of operating in an environment fraught with uncertainties, ambiguities and enormous gray areas. The consequences are simply too great.

Lean too conservatively and you risk becoming non-competitive; take too many liberties and you will be exposed to the regulators’ ire. In our recently published law review article, [*The Misadventures and Mis-Administration of the Universal Service Fund: A Study in the Importance of the Administrative Procedure Act to Government Rulemaking*](#), we detail the costly consequences which have befallen many service providers throughout this era of uncertain regulations and overzealous regulators. Our unrivaled depth of knowledge, experience and ability to team legal, consulting and administrative professionals into a seamless unit helps you achieve the appropriate balance between risk and reward.

We provide our clients with the optimal solution through a sliding scale of service levels, subject matter-appropriate rate structures, and shared client-centric relationships between the consulting professionals of [*The Compliance Group*](#) and The *CommLaw* Group’s attorneys. Our innovative, one-of-a-kind business model allows us to direct work to the appropriate division and the appropriate professional within each division to capture the correct experience and rate structure for each distinctive client matter; all the while preserving efficient access to skilled legal professionals who not only understand the nuances of the company and the industry segment in which it operates, but also appreciate its risk tolerance and appetite for competitive advantage.

Our fundamental practice philosophy is to view Compliance as Opportunity. This unique philosophy and the business processes born from it allow us to identify and implement the most efficient and appropriate means to achieve your desired level of regulatory compliance, while simultaneously maximizing opportunity and minimizing the costs associated with achieving a multitude of interrelated, and seemingly contradictory, goals.

It would be naïve to neglect any mention of specific fees and billing alternatives. A National Law Journal survey of 2012 law firm billing rates noted that the median among the highest partner billing rates reported at each firm is \$775 an hour, while the

median low partner rate is \$405. For associates, the median high stands at \$510 and the low at \$235. The average associate rate is \$370. [Read more.](#)

By comparison, our law firm's average rates for partners and associates are \$400 and \$275, respectively; our consulting professionals are even lower, averaging just \$200 per hour. What makes our firm truly unique is that we are agile enough to be extremely flexible about alternative billing arrangements, such as flat fees, monthly retainers, and blended rates where circumstances make such arrangements appropriate.

On behalf of my colleagues, I urge you to spend time getting to know us by exploring our websites, I invite you to subscribe to our free [Client Advisories](#) and, more than anything, contact us and ask questions the next time a need arises. After all, it can't hurt to explore your options. You might even find something that forever changes the way you think about lawyers, professional services firms, and how both can fit together to help your company achieve its desired compliance profile while still achieving profitability in the new economy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or are interested in learning more about all the ways we can help you turn compliance into opportunity.

Cordially yours,

Jonathan S. Marashlian, Esq.

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