

**George Grellas & Associates**  
20400 Stevens Creek Blvd. Suite 280 Cupertino, CA 95014  
408-255-6310 [www.grellas.com](http://www.grellas.com)

Small Business Owners

Most law firms that handle startup businesses do not handle the work of small business owners – even if they continue to represent traditional businesses, these might consist solely of larger, established ones who are used to paying lawyers at high rates.

Our firm prides itself on having its roots – dating back to the mid-1980s – firmly connected to the small business community. The genesis of our firm lay in the belief that small business owners need the services of specialized yet approachable business lawyers who, on the one hand, are not part of the mega-firms that always operate in teams of expensive specialists broken down by multiple departments and who, on the other, are not general practitioners who might try to squeeze their business affairs between their personal injury, divorce, and other matters having nothing to do with business. We started our firm with the express purpose of serving such small business needs and we have never departed from that purpose even as we developed a specialty niche in Silicon Valley representing a particular type of small business owner – the early-stage startup company.

The traditional small business owner has many legal needs. You might need to get your corporation or LLC formed. Or to have your contractual arrangements made between company founders. Or to plan the capitalization of your company, whether through capital contributions or loans made by founders. Or to have your lease reviewed. Or your employment agreements prepared. Or your distribution contracts drafted. Or have any of myriad types of contracts reviewed and analyzed. Or just have some very routine thing done such as an update to your corporate minutes.

You may also be thinking about buying a small business and about how to protect yourself in that process. Or about the possibility of selling your business. Or perhaps of negotiating with an investor who wants to take a stake in your business. Or of rewarding a key employee with a minority equity stake in your business.

You may be considering special buy-sell arrangements among the principals of your business. Or having one co-owner buy out the interest of another.

You may be considering getting one or more trademarks or service marks for your business.

Sometimes you simply need to dissolve your business. Or split off a portion of it to another party.

At times, you will hit a bump in the road and get into a scrape with a customer, employee, shareholder, or contracting party who asserts a claim against your business. Sometimes, you will want to assert legal claims against others, often based on a contract you feel has

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been breached. You may get into a dispute with a co-owner of your business and need to understand how to protect your interests.

The needs can vary widely, from major to minor.

Our firm handles the whole range of such representations and is experienced and skilled in doing so. There are some things we do not do. Even for business clients, we do not handle purely non-commercial matters such as personal injury, divorce, criminal, bankruptcy, or the like. We do not do patent work. We do not do wills or estate planning. Rather than spread ourselves out, we choose to stay focused in the areas relevant to the business and commercial needs of our clients.

We pride ourselves in being practical in our focus even while striving always to maintain a high quality of legal services. That means our approach is the opposite of the “deal-killing” type of business lawyer who emphasizes mountains of paper as ends in themselves or who is forever chasing down that last remote risk without regard to the practicalities of a business deal. Our substantial experience in handling business lawsuits and disputes further reinforces this process of striving to meet the practical aims of the client. While lawsuits and disputes are certainly not in themselves “practical,” a lawyer’s deep knowledge of how they work gives that lawyer a much more balanced judgment in differentiating among different types and levels of risk while doing deals. Any client who has wound up spending a pretty penny on ultra-fine points of a contract having no real bearing on the deal being negotiated will immediately recognize what this means.

We are also experienced. This means that clients using our services will not be paying for the education of green lawyers who use their matters to learn for the first time how to do things.

We are also competitively priced for the needs of small business owners. Unlike the mega-firms, we do not routinely operate in teams, as each lawyer is capable of handling most matters independently or with minimal supervision. Our rates are also competitive for small business owners, and we also offer monthly retainer arrangements by which clients can optionally pay a modest recurring monthly charge in lieu of hourly-based for the handling of routine legal matters.

Above all, our representations and our billing arrangements in this area are flexible. We realize that some small business owners are not interested in establishing long-term relationships but instead want what amounts to one-time advice. We realize that still other small business owners may want to take a “do-it-yourself” approach to company formation or to the filing of trademarks or to various other matters and simply want a lawyer to come in and do a double-check for them. We realize that not every contract or lease absolutely must have a comprehensive review but that some small business owners simply want a basic (and less costly) review aimed at catching only glaring problems. Still other small business owners do want more comprehensive services, right down to having their corporate lawyer become an important contributor to key strategic decisions

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for the company and therefore become integrally associated with many of its key aspects. Because of this wide variety of arrangements, some clients will want to pay only for an initial consultation. Others will want to pay hourly-based fees for only a one-time project or for an occasional service. Still others may prefer fixed-fee arrangements for projects that lend themselves to such billing. Or a monthly retainer arrangement to gain the likely benefit of somewhat reduced average hourly fees for their routine and recurring work. In this area, one size does not fit all, and it works to the client's benefit to have these options. For over two decades, through such flexible arrangements, we have prided ourselves on being well-positioned to meet the needs of a wide range of small business owners.

From this type of foundation over almost a quarter century in Silicon Valley, it was natural, that we would develop a particular specialty handling the affairs of early-stage startup companies. This specialty, however, has not caused us to abandon the broader base of clients that we have always served. Because of this, small business owners are always welcomed at our firm, for matters both large and small.