



Vance

Corridors

Winter 2005

Steven Jager: Legal Eagle in Construction Law

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The Vance Corporation



Jager Law Office

ATTORNEY STEVEN JAGER PRIDES HIS FIRM, JAGER LAW, LOCATED ON THE 11TH FLOOR OF THE PLAZA 600 BUILDING, ON FUSING CREATIVE THINKING WITH DEEP LEGAL PERSPECTIVE.

Case in point was a claim Steven resolved. Recently, a prominent attorney homeowner discovered mold growing in his home due to a small construction issue and called a local mold removal company.



Construction Litigators Practice Creativity



(l to r): Marianna Valasek-Clark and Jamie Kirk in the lobby.

Expecting a quick fix, the homeowner was surprised when the company suggested that he and his family move out for three months while the mold was eradicated. He was suspicious when the company showed up in toxic suits to meticulously clean his house, to the extent of wiping down every page of every book. And he was downright angry when the company sent him a bill for \$400,000.

To cover the cost, the homeowner sued Steven's client, the contractor whose work was implicated, for the full amount. Steven is known in Seattle for his business litigation expertise and experience, especially in the architectural, engineering and construction fields, and he chose to defend the contractor.

“Clearly the mold company thought that it would be paid by an insurance company so the sky was the limit,” Steven says. “But we knew the precedent on similar toxicity problems in Washington, and we thought out of the box to solve the problem.” Although adversaries, Steven saw the common interest of the homeowner who was being fleeced and the contractor who wanted to make good on his work.

Instead of steering the issue toward litigation and additional cost, Steven’s client agreed to hold the homeowner harmless for the bill plus reimburse the modest construction costs. Then he sent the mold company a letter outlining his knowledge of the problem along with a realistic \$7,500 fee for its clean up effort.

“The mold company didn’t even cash the check,” Steven says with relish. “It just disappeared.”

Building a Practice

Steven launched Jager Law in December 2004 after 22 years working for another local firm. “I left my former firm at 5:00 PM and started my own at 5:01 PM. Now I think of myself as one part lawyer, one part entrepreneur,” he says.

To that list Steven may want to add a third title: chef. This is because he compares opening Jager Law to preparing the perfect Thanksgiving dinner. “With the meal, you’ve got 10 different recipes with 10 different preparations and all must be on the table at the same moment. With this office, it was 10 different vendors – including the space planner, build-out contractor, network technology expert, and marketing and design firm – that we had to precisely coordinate to open our doors as planned,” he says.

When choosing vendors, Steven made a point to select only small business owners like him. “It’s one of the wisest things I’ve done with this transition. These companies



Steven and his legal team; (l to r) Jamie Kirk, Marianna Valasek-Clark, Marnie Silver, David Betz and Selena Robertson.

know firsthand what it is like to set up and run a business,” he says. When his broker recommended The Vance Corporation for its familial business mentality, Steven knew it was an excellent choice. “Vance is attentive; they treat me right,” he says.

Settling for the Best

Today, Steven and his associates, David Betz, Marianna Valasek-Clark and Marnie Bergman, along with three paralegals and two legal assistants, offer expertise in general litigation and liability, with an emphasis on construction issues, complex litigation and product liability defense. With the construction boom a few years back Steven notes that he is now seeing a spike in claims related to construction issues. “Nothing man made is perfect, yet we live in a society that expects perfection. Lawsuits are the unfortunate outcome,” he says.

Steven provides strategic direction on every case Jager Law takes on, which currently numbers more than 50, and totals

in excess of 1,000 through the years. He also personally takes key depositions and negotiates settlements. Sometimes those settlements can save his clients hundreds of thousands of dollars, as well as reputation and time. Recently, for example, Steven helped a large construction firm settle a \$1.7 million claim against it for only \$225,000, thanks to some quick thinking and detailed work from his whole team.

“The plaintiff actually asked our client to bow out of the case after we leveraged a number of creative legal angles,” Steven says. He describes how Jager Law allocated out costs, discovered design issues that were not the responsibility of the construction company, and shrunk the recovery the plaintiff was likely to get.

“We left other companies in the claim headed to arbitration,” Steven adds, shaking his head in disbelief. “But my client can get back to business.”



ZAAZ

W

HEN CONVERSE SOUGHT WAYS TO ENHANCE ITS BRAND, THE SHOE MAKER

TURNED TO ZAAZ (PRONOUNCED ZAWZ) TO HELP ITS YOUTHFUL AUDIENCE CONNECT VIA CONVERSE GALLERY, AN INTERACTIVE SECTION OF CONVERSE'S WEB SITE ON WHICH VISITORS CAN SUBMIT SHORT FILMS



Ryan Clukey reports on site performance to a client.

FOR OTHER PEOPLE TO VIEW.

Similarly, Starbucks called on ZAAZ to aid in designing the Hear Music web offering and in-store kiosks, which allow people to create, personalize

and label their own compilation CD. And National Geographic asked ZAAZ to assist in bringing 100 years of archived film to the web for people to use for educational projects, documentaries and commercials.



ZAAZ Puts Zing into Web Sites

In all three cases, ZAAZ helped these companies make the online channel more profitable. ZAAZ is a full service interactive agency that specializes in brand strategy, creative direction, content implementation, database development, site hosting and customer behavior analysis.

Powerful Web Presence

"An effective Internet presence is now the hub of marketing efforts at many companies," says Shane Atchison, CEO of ZAAZ, which is located on the 5th floor of the Times Square Building. He cites clients such as Tazo Teas, which uses its web site to help acquire and retain customers by

telling stories about its tea products. Other ZAAZ clients use their web sites to cut costs, such as Washington Mutual, which leverages its site to reduce banking costs by enabling customers to make transactions and pay bills online.

Whatever the purpose of a site, ZAAZ's value proposition is around performance. "We work with our clients to establish goals around a web channel. Then our web analytics group tracks customer behavior and provides ongoing analysis to clients," Shane says. This information can help drive site strategy, or design and editorial changes.



ZAAZ co-founders Shane Atchison, Julius Brown and David Brede.

Shane, along with partners and co-founders David Brede and Julius Brown, started ZAAZ in 1999. He says that the company has grown not only in size – now 50 employees between Seattle and Portland – but also in sophistication of the work that it does. “We are now working with some of the world’s most powerful brands to evolve their web presence,” he says.

Not surprisingly, ZAAZ was featured in *Seattle Magazine* earlier this year as one of Seattle’s best places to work. The company attracts a diverse team of computer scien-



Marina McDonagh and Dexter Butts-Peters hang out in the interaction space.

tists, information architects, brand specialists, design experts and more.

Zoomy Space

According to Shane, these left- and right-brain thinkers thrive in ZAAZ’s office environment, which exudes the fun factor. Jeans are omnipresent.

Pop tunes play in the background. The company’s space in the Times Square Building echoes this fun-loving theme – from the grape crushed velvet couch in the lobby to the 25-foot boomerang-shaped bar in the “interaction” space, a flexible part of the

office that ZAAZ uses for company meetings, client presentations...and for letting down its professional guard on a Friday afternoon.

But that is where the dot-com comparison ends. After all, ZAAZ is still delivering high-end work to its clients long after other web development companies have faded into memory. And ZAAZ is actively expanding its client base. “Sixty-five percent of our revenue now comes from companies outside of the Northwest, as far away as Europe and India,” Shane says.

He adds that the space is important to the company because it reinforces the ZAAZ brand and boosts employee morale. “When our clients see it, they say we’ve grown up,” Shane says. Speaking of a boost, Shane credits The Vance Corporation with a level of professionalism he has not experienced with past landlords. “What might be considered special treatment in other buildings is standard procedure with Vance,” Shane says.



Vance Evolves to Improve Tenant Service

At THE VANCE CORPORATION, WE CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR

WAYS TO PROVIDE A HIGH LEVEL OF SERVICE TO OUR TENANTS.

As proof of this commitment, we are pleased to share a number of positive role and operational changes. These changes will help our entire team focus more fully on meeting the diverse needs of our tenants and allow us to reach out more effectively to prospective tenants.

Back row (l to r): Mark Houtchens, Neal Whitney, Sulaiman Muied, Trent Vroman
Middle row (l to r): Paul Favro, Andrea Hinzman, Jim Falconer, Rene Rudon, Bill Gavin
Front row (l to r): Colette Jobs, Autumn Lambert, Teresa Studebaker, Debbie Hunt, Dana Bollinger



Dana Bollinger, vice president at Vance, is refocusing her role on leasing, both to existing tenants and new prospects. She will continue to work on marketing and strategic planning for Vance's properties. Dana also will continue her high involvement with Vance tenants and tenant services.

Operationally, The Vance Corporation transferred Paul Favro, formerly working as chief engineer, into property management working as a senior property manager. Paul knows Vance's buildings inside and out and is a natural to oversee property maintenance, construction management and building operations for Vance's properties. He will work directly with Andrea Hinzman, who is assigned to the Plaza 600, Times Square and Roffe buildings, and with Autumn Lambert, who handles the Tower, 6th and Olive garage and Lloyd buildings, to make sure that Vance responds quickly to tenant requests.

To fill Paul's role, Vance hired Neal Whitney as chief engineer. Vance also recently hired Debbie Hunt to fill the role of office manager. (See sidebar)

Along with these changes, our other core team members continue to keep tenant service their highest priority. Longtime Vance employee Bill Gavin is handling special projects and keeping our buildings looking sharp by painting many of the tenant common areas, such as elevator lobbies. And our accounting team, comprised of Teresa Studebaker and Collette Jobs, is providing ongoing value to our tenants with their diligent handling of tenant billing statements and leasing information.

As always, we welcome your suggestions and questions on any aspect of Vance's service. Feel free to contact us at 206/623-8030. We look forward to continuing to serve you.

Sincerely,
The Vance Team

Welcome to:

Neal Whitney, chief engineer

Neal Whitney joined Vance in July as chief engineer, with primary responsibility for keeping the mechanical aspects of the Vance buildings, such as the heating and cooling systems, operating smoothly. Neal oversees and works side-by-side with his staff of five. "We focus on preventative maintenance, repairs and keeping the properties functional and comfortable for tenants," he says.

Neal brings extensive building maintenance experience to his role. He previously worked for four years as lead engineer at Benaroya Company. Before that, he served for several years as engineering assistant manager for Pro Sports Club.

Providing superior customer service is Neal's primary goal at Vance. "I want our tenants to have confidence in the whole engineering team," Neal says. He reflects on how Vance makes it easier to reach this goal by providing a great place to work. "These are dedicated people here; they really care about others," he says.

After hours and on weekends, Neal describes himself first as a family man, and second as an outdoorsman. Mountain biking, snowboarding and hunting are on his list of favorite pastimes. Now Neal has added a new garage hobby: air-cooled Volkswagens. "I guess I just couldn't get enough tinkering with things at work," he jokes.



Debbie Hunt, office manager

As office manager, Debbie's goal is to help resolve tenant issues quickly and accurately, while ensuring that every interaction she has with tenants is as pleasant as possible. One of Debbie's responsibilities is to be the first point of contact for tenants when she answers the main Vance phone line. "I quickly get the right person on the line to take care of our tenants or I find a way to do it myself," she says.

Debbie's responsibilities also include scheduling conference rooms, creating work orders on maintenance issues, coordinating meetings and performing Vance office administrative duties. "In all cases, I hope to develop a strong business relationship with our tenants – to let them know they can depend on me," she says. Debbie joined The Vance Corporation in October.

Debbie previously worked as an assistant manager and figure skating coordinator at an ice arena in Greenville, North Carolina – the first ice arena to open in the city in 30 years. She started the skating program, coached private and group lessons, helped hire and train the coaching staff and ran the arena office. "I love to skate and try to squeeze in an occasional skating session with my busy family schedule," Debbie says. Although her husband Paul does not skate, she is hoping her daughter Alexis will take it up recreationally. Debbie also stays in shape with yoga, Pilates and Tae Bo.

Living closer to extended family was the impetus for Debbie and her family's recent move to Seattle. "Family is everything to me," she says. Her father, sister, aunt, uncle and two cousins all live in Washington.

Debbie adds that working downtown is a real treat because she loves the city. She rides the train to and from work, noting that the view of Mt. Rainer on the ride home is the perfect ending to a busy day.



Coffee the Best Way



ACCORDING TO MARIO GELMINI, OWNER OF CAFFÈ SENSO UNICO ON OLIVE WAY IN THE TOWER BUILDING, THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO EXPERIENCE COFFEE. SLOWLY. "YOU SIP IT, LINGER AT THE COFFEE BAR, TALK WITH THE BARISTA. IT'S THE ITALIAN WAY."

In October, Mario opened Caffè Senso Unico, which means *one way*, to replace the Torrefazione Italia that closed in September. Moving into the location was like completing a circle for Mario. "I came to the US from Italy 20 years ago, and I was the first employee at Torrefazione Italia in Pioneer Square." He actually opened the Olive Way store in 1989 and continued working at the coffee company in various management positions until he left in 2004 as the brand director.

Regulars at Caffè Senso Unico will have a chance to chat directly with Mario as he dons an apron and gets back to his first love—pulling a shot of espresso. "I want to know my customers by name, what they like to drink, what they like to do," he says.



Mario Gelmini, owner

He adds that in Italy, coffee is about quality, not quantity. "You don't get a bucket of coffee to go," he says. Along with solos and doppios, however, Caffè Senso Unico will offer lattes, cappuccinos and the like to satisfy his customers' preferences. To round out the menu, he will stock San Pellegrino mineral water, panini from DeLaurenti's in the Pike Place Market and panettone, the traditional Italian cake, sourced direct from Italy.

All of these items will be served in or on authentic Italian ceramics—another Italian tradition. Mario plans to display ceramics and other Italian-made products, such as glassware from Milan, for sale during the year.

As for the quality experience, Mario believes that The Vance Corporation shares his commitment. "Vance had its tenants' best interests in mind when it advertised that the space would

be available. They hoped to find a local company to move in and it's a pleasure to be the one," he says.

After a hearty *ciao*, Mario extends an invitation for people to stop by the coffee shop anytime. "But if you can, plan to stay a few extra minutes to savor a cup," he says.



Pumpkin Contest Winners

Plaza 600: Jeff Wu, National Associates
Weight guessed: 25 lbs. 5 oz. Actual weight: 25 lbs. 3 oz.

Tower: Becky Kim, Tower Deli
Weight guessed: 23 lbs. 13 oz. Actual weight: 23 lbs. 11 oz.

Lloyd: Henry Walters, Ben Trogden Architects
Weight guessed: 19 lbs. 6 oz. Actual weight: 19 lbs. 5 oz.

Times Square: Dave Foster, M.I.D.
Weight guessed: 22 lbs. 8 oz. Actual weight: 22 lbs. 8 oz.

Roffe: Jennifer Ledrick, Methodologie
Weight guessed: 25 lbs. 3 oz. Actual weight: 25 lbs. 0 oz.

Commuting Options

Are you looking for alternative commuting options now that the downtown Seattle transit tunnel is closed until no later than September 2007?

With more buses on the road, consider taking transit into downtown, when possible. For alternatives to using single occupancy vehicles, contact the Urban Mobility Group, a partnership between the City of Seattle, King County Metro and Downtown Seattle Association. For more information, visit www.urbanmobilitygroup.com