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**ST. LOUIS LAW**  
CORPORATE LAW

# From Startup to Succession

Affinity Law Group, LLC offers comprehensive, holistic legal and corporate counsel for every stage of the business life cycle.

**B**usinesses are dynamic, vital entities born of great ideas and nurtured by the creativity and passion of their owners and employees. As they grow, change, and merge with other companies, and as owners ready them for sale or succession, they require not only leading-edge legal counsel but savvy business guidance.

St. Louis-based Affinity Law Group, LLC is a business law firm committed to serving privately held businesses, their owners, and their executives from startup to succession.

Kathleen Bilderback and Bradley Crandall, along with partners Bob Guest and Ira Potter, were attorneys at another firm when they joined forces to found Affinity in 2007. The four had new ideas about better ways to help clients' businesses grow. "We didn't just want transactional, 'one-and-done' interactions with our clients," explains Crandall. "We wanted to forge long-term relationships with them that would endure throughout the life cycle of their businesses."

The new approach has proven to be extraordinarily successful. "The sooner we are brought in, the better," adds Crandall. "As our clients get to know and trust us, and as we develop a granular understanding of every aspect of their business, we see better ways to advise them."

## Radical Accessibility

Affinity's new paradigm extends to its alternative billing arrangements. In addition to traditional per-hour rates, flat fees, and retainers, Affinity clients may choose to pay a flexible monthly fee that gives them access to all of the firm's attorneys. "After six months, we adjust the fee, depending on how much the client has

used our services," says Bilderback. "We have a strong team with diverse specialties, providing the same services of good in-house counsel but more affordably." Those include corporate law services for businesses such as executive benefits, financial restructuring, and tax and estate planning, among others.

"Our clients aren't just getting legal advice," explains Bilderback. "They're getting business advice, too."

For Bilderback and Crandall, this work is more than just a job; it's a chance to help people with some of the biggest decisions in their lives. "Mergers and acquisitions are among the most important and exciting experiences business owners will ever go through," says

Crandall, who specializes in mergers and acquisitions including analyzing and implementing sophisticated financing options that make growth possible.

In addition to constructing executive benefit plans that help companies obtain and retain key executives, Bilderback says she loves untangling the familial complexities of succession planning. "Handing off a business to the next generation can be filled with strong emotions," she says.

"We started this firm from scratch and understand the complex legal and business issues our clients face," Bilderback continues. "There's nothing we love more than watching companies grow and thrive."

