



16 August 2007

Career Opportunity – Professional Associate / Personal Assistant / Solutionist

Background

The Solutionist Group includes Dispute Solutions P/L and Family Business Strategies P/L. It's currently a one-man show that works in alliance with friends and associates at need to provide innovative and highly professional consulting and facilitation services in the following areas:

- Commercial dispute resolution – arbitration, mediation and facilitation.
- Complaint and conflict management system design.
- Facilitation of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Public Practice Program.
- Family business mediation, facilitation and advice.
- Personal development programs: problem solving, communication, negotiation, facilitation and mediation. Executive coaching and mentoring.
- Professional practices - management advice and meeting facilitation.
- Strategic planning and problem solving.
- Forensic accounting – mainly business valuations for family law disputes (I'm trying to reduce my activities in this area).

Current clients include family businesses, from <\$1M turnover to >\$1Bn turnover, in Victoria, NSW, SA and Tasmania; the Institute of Chartered Accountants and a changing collection of private businesses and legal and accounting practices.

Future Expectations

My professional passion and main area of focus for the next 10 years lies with the Solutionist adviser concept, particularly in the fast-developing field of family business consulting and services. I am quite well established in this area and have almost completed work on a book on the subject. I want the book completed and published within 12 months and believe it will help to produce some overseas engagements. One of the major responsibilities of my new associate will be helping me to get this book finished and published.

I currently work with a loose network of specialist consultants I can call on at need. I want to build the business into a solid professional practice, with an office of around 6 dedicated family business Solutionists based in Melbourne, and mirror offices in other states. Most Solutionists will be experienced facilitators and/or mediators with legal, accounting, management consulting or business backgrounds. We may also need an organisational / behavioural / psychology expert, but this needs more thought.

Position Description

I'm looking for a talented and capable associate to: (a) help me to grow the business by driving various marketing initiatives and, (b) make me more effective and efficient by dealing with the **detailed** professional and administrative work (including accounts) that I don't handle too well.

Initially, the role will focus on personal assistance and practice management as we professionalise the operations of the business together - and service the clients! Once our physical facilities and operational processes are better set up, the role should morph into that of professional associate, working with clients to learn the trade - with a view to becoming either a highly effective assistant, or becoming a self-sufficient Solutionist in your own right.

Key Skills and Attributes Required

- Great people skills – you'll need terrific people and communication skills to deal with the clients and the work ... and to manage me effectively.
- Excellent writing and verbal skills – both for reasoning and communication. I need someone who can write their own copy from my directions AND generate really good materials on their own initiative. Note that I'm exceedingly anal when it comes to the quality of professional spelling, writing and presentations generally.
- Flexible thinking and great problem solving skills – must be able to think strategically to see "big picture" issues, opportunities and implications, while being good at handling and managing the fine details.
- Strong management and good teambuilding skills – able to organise a small professional office, and its consultants, so they all operate together efficiently and effectively. Help to keep everybody's stress under control.
- Good computer skills; capacity and willingness to develop new skills. In addition to having good skills in traditional word processing, and the ability to use them to transcribe a limited amount of audio dictation, you will need to be able to put together and/or tidy up PowerPoint presentations, create modest page layouts for marketing and advertising copy, establish and maintain a basic contact management database and update our websites directly through web authoring software. None of this will be at particularly high levels, and training assistance will be provided as required.
- Dedication, stamina and optimism – working with family businesses is often challenging and draining. You have to believe in yourself, in the worthwhile nature of what we do, and in the likelihood that we will develop good solutions, no matter how hopeless the situation may look.

Key Experience Required

The role requires the sort of maturity, resilience and capacity for independent thought that only develops through life and work experience. I want to be able to delegate responsibility for many of the tasks that I'm either not doing well, or not doing at all at present, and this will require the ability to deal with a surprising amount of variety for such a small practice. Being able to find or develop solutions, rather than having to be given them, is crucial to this role, although I will be around to help, most of the time, if you get stuck.

Work Location and Hours

I operate out of a pleasant professional office in South Melbourne, although I'm seldom there. It's the office of one of my accountant clients and we have a good relationship. I work from home when I don't need to go into the office, but more time is spent at clients' premises. There is a comfortable, fully kitted out work space available to us in South Melbourne, although we'll probably move into our own premises within a year, if all goes according to plan. This may be in the Eastern suburbs, rather than in town.

I'm pretty flexible about work hours and location – so long as what needs to be done is done in good time, and is done well. A lot of the work can therefore be handled from home, through phone and internet links. There may be times when the pressure is on to complete work or meet deadlines, and this will demand some flexibility. It's wise to assume that hours will not be standard 9.00-5.00.

Initially, I'm thinking the job will need around 20-30 hours / week, although it could easily be full-time from the start. It can become full-time at any time, by agreement.

A notebook computer will be provided and any other gear you need (within reason) will be supplied as required (eg: printer, dedicated mobile phone etc).

Pay and Conditions

To be agreed once the job and time commitments are determined. Initially, conditions will be more generous than pay, although I'll want you to feel that you're receiving what you're worth. Commercial success will bring direct monetary rewards through bonuses as, if everything works out, I want us both to want to stay together for a decent period of time.

More Information

Please call me on my mobile for more information and take a look at www.solutionist.com.au.



Jan Keppel