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AT WORK

IT ALL ADDS UP WITH PAYROLL BUSINESS

REDONDO BEACH: Man quit the limelight for a career in sales. He eventually went out on his own to start a firm.

By Muhammed El-Hasan, Staff Writer

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While attending San Diego State University for a few years, Stephen Goldstein dreamed of a career in music or film.

He wrote songs and played guitar for a rock band called Small World. Goldstein also enrolled in telecommunications and film classes.

But life took him in a different direction. "Sales is the refuge of all failed entertainers," Goldstein said recently with a smile.

He sold copiers, dictating machines and long-distance service.

Then Goldstein took a job-processing payroll. He worked his way up to sales and management positions in the payroll industry.

In 2004, with 20 years of experience under his belt, the certified payroll professional started his own company called Payroll Management Solutions.

Last week, the 50-year-old Redondo Beach resident celebrated the three-year anniversary of his home-based, one-man company.

What does your job entail?

I'm the sales guy. I build the business. I own the clients. I partner with three other companies that have employees. The payroll process is done by these partners' payroll staffs. I stay close to the client to make sure they're satisfied. Every one of my clients has my cell phone number and can call me any time. I'm not just some salesman. I'm the owner of the company. So I can't afford to let a customer be unhappy. I touch base with the client, especially in the beginning and ask, "Has everything gone smoothly?"

How do you find new clients?

Mostly through referrals and network activities.

Which is easier, drumming up business or processing payroll?

It depends on your skills set. With me, it's drumming up business.

Are there different types of payroll?

There's a whole industry of payroll for the entertainment industry because there's residuals involved. We don't do the entertainment industry. Aside from that, all payroll is pretty much the same, except for the state and federal taxes as well as the local taxes.

What type of clients do you have?

Dentists, restaurants, manufacturers, cleaning services, insurance agents, attorneys.

What does payroll processing involve?

Payroll involves determining what to pay the employee and what to deduct from the check. Most importantly, what to deduct for taxes. We assume the liability for timely and accurate tax deposits and quarterly and annual filings. So it's like an insurance policy (for the client). We provide the W-2s and 1099s.

What do you charge?

For the most part, a \$20 base fee and \$1.65 per check. That's the same if a guy makes \$5 an hour or \$500,000 a year.

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What's a typical day for you?

Mostly I'm returning calls, visiting networking meetings, and meeting with clients and potential clients.

Payroll Management Solutions:

Call 310-491-3467 or visit

www.PayrollManagementSolutions.com

What's the best part of your job?

The range of people I get to meet. Everybody has a payroll. I'll never forget when I was working at another company and I called on a skid row flophouse in the morning, and in the evening I called on a Melrose Avenue art gallery. I've got everything from bakeries to porno shops.

What's the worst part of your job?

There's a lot that can go wrong in payroll, and I live in constant fear of the payroll being done wrong.

What can go wrong?

An employee who doesn't get paid, a direct deposit that does not hit. It doesn't happen very often. I can't promise there will never be a mistake, but I promise to respond as fast as possible. If the payroll is late and it takes me to deliver the payroll, I'll do it.

Do you still write songs?

Not as much as I used to. I doodle.

Do you ever write songs about payroll processing?

No, but maybe some day I'll write "The Ballad of the Payroll Guy."

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