

I Want My CPA to Have Business Sense

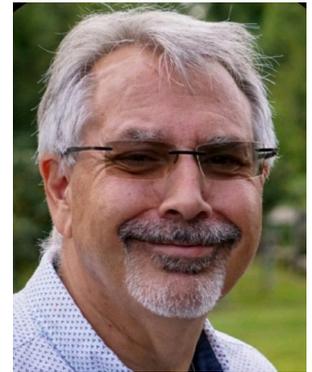
By Rene J. Zarate, CPA•ABV

Rivero, Gordimer & Company (RGCO) has had the good fortune of operating for close to 40 years. Much of that fortune is attributable to long-standing client relationships, some who continue to work with us into successive generations. Since those client relationships are so vital to all of us, we believe it may be helpful for other business owners to learn what has drawn one client to hire us and stay on after many years and changes in their businesses.

William "Bill" Casale has been a client and friend to RGCO for over 20 years. We have assisted him with assurance, tax, and advisory services for both domestic and international companies. His comments below are excerpts from a recent interview. We agree that the comments and criteria are not only valuable for selecting a CPA firm, but that they can also be adapted to fit any relationship you might have with a professional provider (e.g., medical, legal, financial). Here were some of the major takeaways from Bill:

The pace of change is on an upward trajectory. Throw in technological advances, economic upheaval, political turmoil, and a pandemic for good measure, and the partners you select to help you navigate this terrain become even more important. Choosing the right partners has a huge impact on your survival ability. Beyond the basic values of honesty, integrity, and technical competence, what else should you be looking for in your CPA?

I want my CPA to view things from my perspective. I want my CPA to have business sense. Technical expertise is fine, but common sense and the ability to incorporate the knowledge in a practical, useable way is key. Standing in the shoes of the client and incorporating their expertise while understanding my business environment and challenges is extremely important.



I want my CPA to be accessible and connected. I need a CPA who is available when I need them and has varied expertise and specialties under roof depending on my needs (e.g., tax, audit, buying or selling a business, strategic planning). I also want them to be connected and confident enough to refer me to other professionals if needed. If they don't have an answer, I want them to know where to find one.

I want my CPA to be my coach. Since they have varied experience across a large spectrum of businesses (e.g., manufacturing, service based, nonprofit), they have exposure to how these businesses operate and how to meet their challenges. As a result, they are in a unique position to recommend best practices that may be applied in a different manner in my industry, perhaps providing an edge that my competitors do not have.

I need my CPA to be proactive, communicating changes to laws and regulations. I want them to not only give me the latest information but also explain how it may affect my business and suggest changes I can make.

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I want my CPA to have a stellar reputation, experience in the market, and be leaders with roots in the community. This is important for several reasons including cross referring opportunities, strengthening our relationship as we share vendor and business referrals promoting our mutual success.

I want a CPA who has the capacity to meet client deadlines, can grow as my business grows, and recruits to strengthen their bench. They need to be comfortable dealing with complicated corporate structures and with multiple affiliated businesses, including international entities.

Bill's expectations may seem like a tall order, but if you consider what is at stake—your financial and business success—you want a relationship that is viewed as a partnership rather than vendor/client. The ability to meet the client's expectations frequently rely on the CPA's willingness to collaborate with other professionals, whether internal colleagues or outside subject matter experts. Over time, most of us learn that the breadth of expertise needed by clients is beyond one person's capacity. A smattering of humility may be our greatest learned attribute.

We are grateful for our clients' confidence in us over the years. If you would like more information about how we can apply our expertise to your business or situation, contact us at 813-875-7774.

About the Author:

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