

# the last word

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We sat down with David Hellmuth, named one of the **Top Most Powerful Business Leaders in Minnesota** in 2018 and he shared some business insight.

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## **Last business risk I took**

A Big Idea. Nine years ago, we decided to build our own building as the headquarters for our rapidly growing law firm. We located a suitable building site, hired an architect, acquired the land, and obtained bids for the construction of our very own building. Three of my partners and I each invested approximately \$400,000.00 into the project. This was the biggest risk that we have ever taken with our business. The good news is that the building quickly became a landmark in the Southwest suburbs, resulting in great public exposure and strong name recognition for our law firm. We have become somewhat of a household name in Twin Cities (and National) legal circles and have continued to grow and expand our law practice.

## **Last business obstacle I overcame**

Over the years, we have faced stiff competition from downtown law firms. There is a general misconception that you have to be downtown to be a preeminent and powerful law firm. We have found this not to be the case. We have grown and expanded rapidly. We generally win most of our RFPs and have a very high client retention rate. We have been able to recruit top notch legal talent, including the top graduates of major law schools. We are winning our cases, including large national cases and conflicts. Our suburban location is convenient for our clients and we have found that our reduced commuting time has made us extremely productive. Frankly, we feel that our suburban location is a huge advantage.

As evidence of our success, Chad Johnson and I were both just named to the Minnesota 500, a list of the **"Most Powerful Business Leaders in the State of Minnesota."** Only 24 lawyers were named to the list and our firm is the only law firm with two lawyers making the list.

## **Best business advice I ever received**

As a young lawyer, my mentor, James Atkinson III, regularly reminded that "honesty is always the best policy...especially for lawyers." Many lawyers simply do not provide an honest assessment of their client's case or transaction. When this happens, clients lose confidence and trust in their legal counsel and ultimately they may suffer from a worse result. Always be honest with your clients.

## **My greatest business mentor was/is**

James Atkinson III, who practiced law in Minneapolis for many years, initially hired me as a law clerk and then, as an associate lawyer. Before starting Hellmuth & Johnson, I learned a lot from Jim. He was an excellent lawyer, great person and great communicator.

## **Last book I read**

*Unbroken*, by Laura Hillenbrand. This is an incredible true story of survival and salvation during the Pacific conflict in WWII. The book is about the life of Lieutenant, Louis Zamperini, who crashed into the Pacific Ocean and was captured by the enemy. His story of survival is incredible.

## **Our brand's only-ness looks something like this...**

Our tagline is "On your side. At your side." To enhance on that I would say we endeavor to be the firm that is always has our clients best interest at heart. All firm's should strive to do that, but we also see it as a partnership. We do our best work when there is a partnership and trust between each of our attorneys and their clients. We want to understand clients' long-term and short term goals so we can provide them with not only the best service for their current matter, but for the stuff that can come in the future so they can be ahead of the game. This will allow them to put all their focus into what matters most to them and what they do best.

