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Tax Issues

Few professionals know state and local taxes (SALT) as well as Andrew Johnson. Not the 17th President of the United States, of course, but the Texas CPA who specializes in helping business clients stay compliant with state and local taxes throughout the country.

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Jan. 28, 2013

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Few professionals know state and local taxes (SALT) as well as Andrew Johnson. Not the 17th President of the United States, of course, but the Texas CPA who specializes in helping business clients stay compliant with state and local taxes throughout the country. Did I mention that he's also a rancher?

Andrew and fellow CPA Jerry Peisner founded Dallas-based Peisner Johnson & Company, LLP (www.PeisnerJohnson.com) in 1992. Both had worked in the SALT subpractice at Arthur Anderson, which Jerry led. What some may see as uncommon, the firm doesn't offer individual or business income tax preparation, planning,

write-up, financial audits or other traditional accounting services. Instead, they

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“Nexus can be an unknown factor for many business owners and managers, and state and local laws are rigorous enough that failing to comply with those laws can easily bankrupt a business,” he said. “Businesses often have nexus in more places than they think, and the biggest tragedy is when they later face an audit for failing to collect and remit the taxes they should have collected from customers. That’s money that the customers probably would have willingly paid, but now the business owner may be faced with it coming out of their own pockets, with additional penalties.”

Businesses and their management can also face more severe penalties. As Andrew wrote in a recent blog post, as states look to collect failing revenue, more and more of them are cracking down with criminal penalties. One Florida restaurant owner even faces up to 30 years in prison if convicted of the felonies he has been charged with.

That’s why the firm’s core offerings include getting companies registered where they’re required to do so, helping them set up a system to collect the necessary sales taxes, and providing sales tax return compliance. The practice also represents clients during audits.

The firm started with a pretty big first client, doing sales tax work for Dr Pepper/Seven Up, Inc, before it was acquired by later parent companies. Since then , the practice has grown to serve hundreds of business clients, and has a staff of nearly 25. This makes Peisner Johnshon the largest CPA practice that limits their client services to state and local taxes. They process thousands of returns every month and have clients in a broad range of industries, including contracting, healthcare, manufacturing, property management, entertainment, transportation and others.

Over the past 20 years, both of the firm’s partners have recognized the integral role that technology plays in both the success of their practice, and in that of their clients. As a result, the firm scored a 375 on *CPA Practice Advisor’s Productivity Survey*

(www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/productivity). The survey is a free online tool that

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Since his practice doesn't compete on tax and accounting work, one of Andrew's growing specialties is consulting to other accounting firms to help them further develop their knowledge of the issues. They also partner with firms to provide SALT compliance and state audit defense for their clients, and Andrew speaks at numerous conferences and webinars.

He says he always knew that he wanted to run his own business. "I never would have guessed it would be this, because I didn't know about it. Still, it's what I love, and 10 yrs from now I know I'll still be providing services to other businesses. I may not know exactly what those services will be right now, but I'll figure out what clients need and I'll provide it."

Originally from Somerville, New Jersey, Andrew's interest in business and accounting started when he met a consultant who helped a friend reduce taxes on their farm. He decided then, that some day he'd live on a farm and be a tax consultant. So, when he attended BYU, he made accounting his major and followed it up with a Masters in Tax.

"I remember thinking that helping businesses legally reduce their taxes was interesting and I could see myself doing it. Unfortunately, colleges don't really spend time teaching sales and local tax, mostly only federal. So, it really is an area that you learn once you are in practice."

Most of the staff are hired during or shortly after college, such as Jason Parr, who is now a principal after being with the firm for 18 years. The firm may be a family tradition in the making. Recent hires include Jerry Peisner's son; Dan, and Andrew's oldest son will also be joining the practice after graduation next May.

A CPA with a Side of Beef

After college, Andrew and his wife Diane moved to the Dallas area to start their

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The ranch, which was also licensed as a dairy for awhile, is very much a business venture – not a “hobby”. Andrew says, however, that it’s also valuable from an educational perspective. “Ranching is a lifestyle and it keeps the whole family busy, from building fences and learning about business, and the facts of life are very evident.” The family is also involved with their church, the Boy Scouts and the local school district’s booster club.

It’s pretty clear that between managing the firm and the ranch, and with a large family, that Andrew and Diane have their hands full. They wouldn’t want it any other way.

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