

# SMALL Business Times

## Zeppos & Associates

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**E**van Zeppos doesn't want his public relations firm to be the biggest in southeastern Wisconsin. He simply wants it to be the best.

His strategy for achieving that goal is two-fold. He is a discerning employer who seeks to hire the smartest people — in some cases people who are smarter than he is. Once smart people are in place, he insists that they focus on what the firm does best.



PAUL GAERTNER

**THE "A" TEAM** Evan Zeppos (center) believes in hiring bright people and treating them well. His team includes Brenna Kriviskey-Sadler (left), Kris Naidl (right) and Eric Truesdale (seated).

"We try hard not to be all things to all people," Zeppos said. "We take on what we know we do well, and that's bread and butter PR. We're not an advertising firm. That's not in our realm."

The firm's services include media relations, special events planning, government affairs, strategic planning, community relations and crisis communications. In the fast-paced world of public relations, firms must be able to act quickly to respond to clients' needs. Focusing on specific services gives Zeppos & Associates an edge, Zeppos said.

A unique service the firm offers is the ability to monitor and

record television, radio and Internet news coverage of a client. Media can be monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. When a client knows what the coverage is, the client can anticipate future coverage, reach out to media when events occur and quickly communicate with employees about coverage, Zeppos said.

"Try to get a tape from a TV broadcast by contacting the station. It will take at least three weeks. This is almost immediate," he said of his firm's tape-providing service.

Because the public relations business is so fast-paced, it is essential for firms to hire employees who can take on various projects at any moment and help other employees juggle while juggling their own tasks, Zeppos said. In his opinion, the success of a PR operation lies in the strength of its employee team.

"We would not perform at our level without our team members," Zeppos said. "Our people are very driven by exceeding customers' expectations. I can leave here for a day and not have to worry about this place."

To cultivate loyalty, business owners must show their employees that they have faith in them. That means giving employees a sense of authority and power within the business and letting them know they have a say in how the company operates, he said.

"I think everyone is an all-star here, and that's what allows us to be the best," Zeppos said. "Me, I'm just the owner. I work for them."

### Zeppos & Associates

**LOCATION:** 400 E. Mason St., Milwaukee

**YEAR ESTABLISHED:** 1994

**TYPE OF BUSINESS:** Public relations firm

**MAIN PRODUCTS/SERVICES:** Strategic counsel, media relations, publicity, crisis communications

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 16

**BUSINESS WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Focus on being the best, not the biggest. Surround yourself with the smartest people you can, and if you're lucky you'll find some people who are smarter than you in some areas."



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