

Four Lessons from Ghostbusters and Unusual Halloween Laws

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As you get ready to go trick-or-treating on Halloween, I wanted to share with you some strange laws on the books while also discussing how *Ghostbusters* may be the all-time greatest film for anyone interested in starting a new business. For instance, real estate sellers in Florida are generally not obligated to disclose paranormal activity like ghosts such as what was depicted in *Poltergeist* or *Amityville Horror*. But sellers are required to disclose the existence of creepy crawling bugs like termites that could

frighten us all on Halloween. If Camp Crystal Lake from *Friday the 13th* fame were located in Florida, the sellers of that property would not have to disclose the murder that occurred on their property since murder/suicide or death are not required to be disclosed when selling property in Florida.

You may be tempted to call Ghostbusters on Halloween if you see a ghost. And *Ghostbusters* represents one of the best movies in American cinema about the need of adequate legal planning when starting a business.

First, crazy ideas can be highly profitable. Chasing ghosts may have sounded like a crazy idea, but as we saw in the movie, there was an immediate need in the market for ghostbusting services. Consequently, Peter Venkman (Bill Murray) and his team started a very profitable niche business. Companies like Microsoft, Nike and even failed companies like Blockbuster all illustrate the power of how an innovative idea, or solution to a problem, can transform the market place. Starting a business with a sound legal foundation is often one of the biggest differences between a failed business and a successful one.

Second, all small businesses need capital, especially start-ups. This is illustrated very well in one scene in *Ghostbusters* when we see Dan Akroyd's character talking about how he just took out a third mortgage on his home with an excessive interest rate. So when starting a new business make sure you have enough money in the bank to help things run smoothly on a

“rainy day.” And if you do need to take out a mortgage, or loan, then make sure to consult with an attorney to assess your obligations.

Third, *Ghostbusters* illustrates the importance of hiring a good team. There is always lots of angst whenever a small business decides to hire additional personnel. *Ghostbusters* may have been a very different movie/business if they had hired a different receptionist or opted not to hire a fourth team member. But when bringing on additional team members it is always vital to assess whether they should sign **non-compete/non-solicitation** agreements and to ensure compliance with all local and federal employment laws.

Which leads us to the fourth lesson learned from *Ghostbusters*. Follow the law! The real villain of *Ghostbusters* wasn't Gozer. It was the EPA. The EPA threatened to shut down the Ghostbusters. And when they finally did shut them down, mass chaos ensued. If Ghostbusters **had a lawyer** then perhaps they could have avoided being shut down, or minimized the impact to the community as a result of being shut down.

With all of that said, please have a safe and enjoyable Halloween.