

Business consultant means business

BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH | Contributor February 12, 2013

WINNETKA — Deborah McGowan is a Winnetka-based psychotherapist whose practice is dedicated to three areas: adolescents and young adults, adults interested in growth and development and marriage counseling. It's a career McGowan calls "the best in the world."

"What I love about it so much is that I get to form deep connections with so many people, and in my entire career, I have almost never met anyone I didn't love and truly want to help," she said.

There is one part of her business that McGowan said she can't stand: the back office tasks and paperwork. That's why she reached out for help, and contacted business consultant, Karen Sabin Gitles, founder of the Winnetka-based company, The Entrepreneur's Back Office.



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The Entrepreneur's Back Office
847-254-3975
kgitles@gmail.com

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"Creative people should be doing what they love to do and what they're passionate about," said Gitles, who worked in corporate finance for 20 years at both Continental Bank and Quaker Oats, "I come in and analyze their business and do the repetitive tasks to free them from that responsibility so that they can do what they do best and what they love to do, and so they can make more money."

Gitles, who lives in Winnetka with her family, got into the business several years ago when she started working with her parents, helping them manage their household, assets and finances. She said that by simply organizing things and going through their paperwork, she found a lot of money her folks didn't know they had.

"It's all about listening, taking notes and then analyzing," said Gitles, "Clients ask me, 'How can I improve profitability? What should my hourly rate be? How can I work less?' I'm a person's gut check. I'm logical and analytical. I tell stories behind the numbers."

The Entrepreneur's Back Office isn't an accounting firm, and Gitles doesn't do taxes. Instead she gets clients ready for their accountant, and calls herself a facilitator, a resource, and an advocate.

McGowan said Gitles helps her with billing, taxes, the organization of finances, and the details of running her home.

"I'm so busy working, and I don't want to do the paperwork, and Karen keeps track of things and does those horrifying, boring details for me," McGowan said.

"I don't have colleagues that I can run scenarios by, because I have a niche business," said Marla Levie, owner of her Glenview-based marketing firm, Focus on Aging. "Karen is taking the time to learn my business, and I'm using her as a sounding board. She's helping me figure out where I should put more of my energy."

Gitles charges between \$75-100 per hour for her services. She said she finds a lot of times, once clients feel comfortable with her and get to know her, she can help with their "big ideas," find out what their vision is and help them get there.

"I come in as Mary Poppins," Gitles said, "I'm like her. She gets what needs to be done and then she leaves when it's over."

"She keeps me on track with my goals, and she does it with grace, charm and humor," McGowan said.

"I'm efficient," said Levie, "But what she's trying to do is make me less stressed and give me more time to do my job, and take away the busy work."