



**Andy Wilber, owner of Kolache Factory Omaha/Wilber Enterprises, at the 84th Street location.**

## **Four weeks in, firms guide clients, others making tough decisions**

**by Michelle Leach**

*Editor's note: This article is part of a series sharing first-hand experiences from local organizations on how their respective industries are adapting to COVID-19.*

Almost a month to the day that COVID-19 was declared a national emergency, a restaurant owner, employment attorney and wealth management leader weigh in on how they're supporting internal teams and

external customers/clients.

"We own two locations in Omaha; however, due to the impact of the pandemic, we elected to close our Maple Street location temporarily in order to consolidate resources," said Andy Wilber of Wilber Enterprises, which owns the Kolache Factory stores. "Of course, we aren't keeping the same level of inventory each day either."

While some Maple Street  
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employees were "rerouted," to its 84th Street store's online order, drive-through and delivery services. Wilber said they had to lay off a "significant number" of staff.

"It was an awful decision to have to make," Wilber said. "But, in order to keep going, it had to be done."

With sales dropping by more than 68% since the crisis started, Wilber said they're taking it "day by day."

"Now, more than ever, small local businesses need your support," he said. "We don't have the deep reserves that many big companies have to withstand a sustained downturn. Without community support, some of your favorite local spots could go away."

The franchise launched Fueling the Frontline (free kolaches and coffee for health care workers) and Adopt-a-Hero on the Frontlines (individuals or organizations can place a delivery order to the frontline hero, such as paramedic, of their choice).

In early March, Jackson Lewis began receiving questions from companies about how to manage losses and minimize employee impacts with greater frequency, according to Attorney at Law Chad Richter.

"Over the past two weeks, President Trump signed into law several key pieces of legislation that impacts businesses, including providing paid sick leave and paid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, as well as a significant stimulus



Richter



West

package to aid both businesses and their employees during this difficult time," he said. "There are many federal and state laws that impact business decisions during these difficult times, including notice obligations prior to a layoff or furlough, compensating employees correctly, and ensuring they are complying with the very new mandatory paid leave provisions under recent legislation."

Jackson Lewis staff is leveraging We-

bX or Zoom to consult with workmates and is providing proactive counseling to ensure clients avoid time-consuming and costly litigation across its 950-plus statewide attorneys and 62 offices.

"It is vital that small businesses understand the nuances of the federal stimulus package to ensure they are taking advantage of the various opportunities to assist their businesses," Richter said, including: "Trying to obtain forgivable loans, understanding how to obtain tax credits and, based on these resources, make the best decision for the long-term success of their business."

Managing Partner Paul West has been surprised by the number of people (not current clients) who've informed Carson Wealth that their existing adviser hasn't reached out to them.

"I think we will see consolidation with advisers leaving business who did not handle clients' concerns appropriately during this crisis," he said.

Additionally, West said "recency bias" is in full effect.

"Because information flows so quickly right now, people are thinking much too short term," he said. "The most successful will be those who stick to a long-term plan."

Internally, Carson Wealth instituted its business continuity plan the day the national emergency was declared (March 13).

"This meant that we had remote workstations and accessibility for our 200-plus stakeholders," West said. "Many of our clients have been using our client portal that already had video technology integrated; however, due to the fact that we work with money, we've had to adopt remote check deposit and other features to make sure we can keep our service standards at the same level."

Coming out of this crisis, West foresees more openness to video-based meetings.

"Also, those that didn't work with trusted professionals and tried to navigate these waters on their own, will come to realize how important partnering with professionals will really be for their family and their financial goals," he said.

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