



Susan Hwang's Journey at Sul Lee

SERVING PEOPLE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Note: Our newsletter cover article will spotlight a team member every month. For this latest edition, we're thrilled to share a few words from our operations manager, Susan Hwang.

Hi! I am Susan Hwang, the operations manager at Sul Lee Law Firm. I've been with Sul Lee for over seven years, and I love my work here. But if someone had told me years ago that I'd be working at a law firm, I never would have believed them.

I spent my childhood years in Seoul, South Korea, and moved to Dallas when I was 15. Coming to the U.S. at that age was exciting but also a little overwhelming. You're already going through so many changes in your teens. Adding a new language and culture to the mix was a lot to deal with. Even though the first couple of years were a bit difficult, the experience helped me understand that everyone comes from a different place in life. I learned to be open-minded and open-hearted, which helps me immensely today in my life and work.

Before joining Sul Lee, I studied hospitality at the University of North Texas and built my career in restaurants and luxury hotels. Interestingly, hospitality wasn't my original path—I initially dreamed of becoming an artist. However, I quickly realized that pursuing art as career made it difficult to support myself financially. Hospitality offered me a different kind of fulfillment: I loved working with people and creating meaningful experiences for them. Still, the demanding hours eventually took a toll, leaving little room for my personal life and family. I realized I needed a better balance, one where I could grow professionally without sacrificing what matters most.

That's when a friend introduced me to Sul Lee Law Firm. At the time, it was a much smaller office, just five of us, and I stepped in as the office manager. While legal work was a new world compared to hospitality, I quickly realized the core value was the same: serving people. It's about genuinely caring, understanding what others are going through, and paying close attention to the small details that can profoundly shape a client's experience. Ultimately, client care is about making people feel seen, heard, and supported—even when the outcome isn't exactly what they hoped for.



As operations manager, I wear many other hats as well. In addition to working with clients, I support the team in whatever way I can. I think of myself as a “floater,” but there are days when it feels like I'm more of a firefighter. One day, I might be focused on HR work, and the next, I'm fixing someone's laptop. I've even joked that my nickname should be “Susan, my laptop isn't working.” All kidding aside, though, the variety of things that come across my desk is what I love most about my job. No day is the same, but my role is to ensure everyone at the firm — clients, staff, and attorneys — has what they need.

Outside of work, I love exploring cafes, not only for the food but also for the details. I love seeing how different places present the food and serve customers. I'm always looking for different spots to try and enjoy recommending my favorites to friends and clients. I also value my quiet time. I have a lot of interactions during the workweek, so I look to my weekends as a time to reset.

I didn't set out to be on the path I'm on at Sul Lee Law Firm, but I'm grateful I took it. Every day, I have the opportunity to learn, grow, and work alongside incredible people. I'm excited to see where this journey will lead next.

Susan Hwang

WHEN AI ART CROSSES THE LINE

How Close Is Too Close?

Earlier this year, OpenAI introduced a feature in ChatGPT that lets users create images in the style of the prominent animation company Studio Ghibli. The dreamy visuals quickly went viral, and social media filled with people's everyday photos turned into images that could have been mistaken for scenes from films like "My Neighbor Totoro" and "Spirited Away." It's a fun feature, but many artists and copyright experts see the potential pitfalls it creates.

WHERE COPYRIGHT BEGINS AND ENDS

Copyright law in the U.S. protects actual creative work, like a specific drawing, logo, or character, but broad artistic styles are another story. That means you can't own something like "soft backgrounds with glowing sunsets," even if you're known for using them. However, if an image looks too much like a scene from a well-known film or too close to a recognizable character, you could end up in murky territory.

Public confusion is another issue. If viewers think a specific company, such as Studio Ghibli, is behind a generated image, the company could argue there's a trademark infringement. Although no formal complaints regarding Ghibli-style AI images have been made, it's starting serious discussions worldwide.

TREADING CAREFULLY

If you're using AI-made visuals in your marketing or branding, it's worth asking how they might appear to your audience. Even when the intention is playful or respectful, some designs can be misread, especially if they echo the look of a well-known brand or studio. This becomes even more important when those images appear in ads, social posts, or other public-facing materials.

To play it safe, aim for imagery that feels fresh and clearly your own. Instead of mimicking a specific style, draw broader inspiration. If a design feels like it might cross a line or raise eyebrows, it's smart to pause and ask someone who understands intellectual property before moving forward.

NEED GUIDANCE?

At Sul Lee Law Firm, we regularly work with creators, agencies, and entrepreneurs working through these kinds of questions. If you'd like help sorting through what's okay to use or what might get you in trouble down the line, we're here to help. Our team can also help protect your intellectual property rights.



Dominate Your Domain

SMART TACTICS FOR SMALL- BUSINESS TRIUMPH

"Success" as a small business means different things to different people, but everyone knows failure when they see it.

Regardless of the product or service you're attempting to sell, consistent growth in any market depends on your business's willingness to embrace proven tactics. If you feel your budding enterprise is running in place — or worse, running on fumes — here are three basic pointers to help you reevaluate your mission and avoid missed opportunities.

YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING, BUT YOUR EMPLOYEES MIGHT.

Every business with a staff requires a managerial hierarchy to ensure everything operates smoothly. Still, not everyone at the top of the pyramid may know the business as well as those working in the trenches every day. Suppose you're an owner/manager prone to taking a my-way-or-the-highway approach to employee engagement. In that case, you may be setting up your operation for ruin by not welcoming feedback — and even criticism — from your workforce. Consider reevaluating your business culture to allow for a more participative environment across all segments of your team. One way to accomplish this goal is to host regular meetings where staff members are encouraged to present new ideas or voice concerns.

A manager may have an idea for a more streamlined production process, or you may have data-entry personnel with thoughts on reducing redundant steps. Many businesses survey their customers, and following a similar path in-house will encourage greater buy-in and may alert you to issues influencing employee turnover and other operational concerns.

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Trade Shifts and Tariffs

KEEPING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS PROFITABLE

Tariffs are shifting again, and this time, small businesses might feel the pinch first. If your company brings in parts or materials from abroad, you've probably noticed costs creeping up — and if you haven't, you will soon.

A Quick Look at the Changes

Recent trade policy updates have raised taxes on many imported goods. Metals, electronics components, and other essentials now cost more to cross the border. For businesses that rely on steady supplies, that adds pressure. Unlike bigger companies, smaller teams often don't have room to negotiate major price breaks or absorb the increase without making cuts elsewhere.

In some cases, finding new sources becomes necessary. However, switching suppliers midstream can mean slower deliveries or changes in quality. If your costs increase, you're left with a choice: raise prices or take the hit. Neither is ideal. Customers may hesitate if pricing shifts

too fast, but absorbing the extra cost will quietly drain margins over time.

Ways to Soften the impact

This isn't a problem with one solution, but there are ways to make the pressure more manageable. Look into whether other suppliers — local or outside the affected countries — might offer the same materials. If you've been working with the same vendor for a while, now might be a good time to discuss rates or long-term plans.

It's also worth looking inward. Some businesses have been able to soften the blow by adjusting how they manage inventory or trimming extra steps in production. These shifts don't fix everything, but they can help buy time and breathing room. And when it comes to customers, honesty matters. If prices need to shift, let people know in plain terms. Most people appreciate a heads-up more than a surprise.

Small businesses already wear many hats, and sudden tariff hikes don't make things



easier. But with a few strategic pivots, keeping operations on track is possible. Understanding the legal and financial implications is also crucial, and the right guidance can make all the difference.

At Sul Lee Law Firm, we work with businesses across multiple industries to help them manage contract changes, supplier relationships, and trade-related risks. Reach out online or call our office at (469) 715-4558 to see how we can help your business.

WORD SEARCH



Beer
Family
Leo
Lunchbox

Mustard
Peridot
Poppy
Sisters

Twins
Vacation
Watermelon
Zucchini

Spinach, Feta, and Egg Stuffed Peppers

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large bell peppers, any color
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tbsp reduced-fat milk
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 cups chopped spinach
- 1/3 cup crumbled feta cheese

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.
2. Halve peppers lengthwise; remove and discard seeds.
3. Place peppers cut-side up in an 8-inch-square microwave-safe dish. Microwave on high 2 1/2–3 minutes until tender; pat dry and sprinkle with salt.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, and black pepper.
5. To a medium skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil, then add onion and cook, stirring, for about 2 minutes until softened and beginning to brown.
6. Add spinach and cook, stirring 1–2 minutes more until spinach is wilted.
7. Divide spinach mixture evenly among pepper halves. Sprinkle with feta, and top with egg mixture.
8. Bake 30–35 minutes until filling is set.

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GIVE YOUR COMPETITORS SOME BUSINESS (REALLY).

Do you want to better understand how your chief competitors earn and retain their customers? Become one of their customers yourself. See how they market their products or services to you, consider the strength of their customer service skills (or lack thereof), and identify any key strengths they have over your current model. If you own a Mexican restaurant, there's nothing wrong with going to the one down the street to sample their enchiladas. You can also research your competitors by reviewing



their websites, online customer reviews, and social media content. If your business focuses on trade-specific areas, such as technology or manufacturing, gain a leading edge by staying updated on trade publications and other industry-specific news sources that analyze consumer trends and their potential impact on you and your competitors in your field.

TRAIN, TRAIN, TRAIN.

If you're concerned about training an employee because they might take the knowledge you've paid for and leave for a competitor, imagine how bad it will be if you don't train them and they stay. Investing in ongoing employee training — especially with in-house mentorship and leadership-building programs — helps your workforce stay productive and innovative. From role-specific certification to technical webinars to presentations by guest speakers, the opportunities for better educating small-business employees are endless. They could serve as a strong incentive to attract and retain new staff over the competition.

While the strategies mentioned herein aren't groundbreaking, they are powerful and among the most overlooked in the push for business survival and profitability. Implementing one or all of them will help keep your market position strong while you focus on what matters most: your customers.