



### **Women Owned Law Member Spotlight Questionnaire**

**Tell us about your firm including: history, specialization, and years in business.**

I have been a lawyer for over twenty years. Ten years ago, I did something that I never imagined I would do – I opened up my own law firm. Six years ago, I added a partner, and together we co-founded Serpe Ryan LLP. Our firm focuses on defending individuals and corporations against any civil or criminal investigation or litigation by any government agency. I was an Assistant U.S. Attorney, and my business partner is a former enforcement lawyer with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Those experiences have been invaluable to us in helping our clients anticipate and effectively defend against government enforcement actions against them. In addition, we also handle a wide variety of civil litigations and have tried numerous cases in federal and state courts, as well as in administrative and private arbitrations.

**What's an interesting fact about you or your firm most people don't know?**

My law partner and I met through a mutual friend on a Friday morning for breakfast, and by the following Monday morning, we had decided to form a partnership. We thrive on that leap of faith that we made six years ago, and we know that anyone who joins our firm is similarly taking the leap with us. The trust and confidence that we have in each other and in our firm has been the building blocks for a dynamic and thriving law practice.

**What's a favorite moment of your career so far?**

We defeated the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in a high-profile insider trading case that was covered by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. My partner and I tried the case against a vast team of government lawyers on the SEC's home court – their administrative law court with their own administrative law judge. It was a David & Goliath moment when we beat the odds and won the case for a client who was a true gem.

**What challenge are you most proud of overcoming?**

When you are just starting out as a lawyer, no one tells you that you may be responsible for bringing in business of your own. But this is a fact, whether you are with a big or a small firm. Business development is hard work. This past fall, we were very proud to celebrate our 5 year anniversary, and to throw a party where we were able to thank the many colleagues and friends who have helped us build our law firm.

**Tell us about your morning ritual.**

I wake up at 6:30 every morning to coffee that I set to brew the night before, and spend the first half hour of my day making lunches for my two daughters. As they get ready for school, I'm often multi-tasking – making beds, and making breakfast while checking my firm's calendar to see what is on my plate that day. I try to exercise a few times a week before I make it into my office. Both my law partner and I religiously devour classes like Soul Cycle, SLT, and Orangetheory and have found that the energy and confidence that stems from regular exercise provides the strong foundation needed for meeting the challenges of running your own business. Finally, unless I'm running to Court, the morning routine would not be complete without a call to my 82 year-old Italian mother – she raised three children while working from home as a seamstress – she is amazing at multi-tasking, and the strongest woman that I know!

**What advice would you offer new business owners?**

People may think paper is out dated, but there is nothing more memorable than receiving a hand written personal note. Send an announcement when you begin your business, and then send a creative mailing once a year around the holidays.

**What do you wish you had known before starting your own business?**

It takes a great deal of work to hire employees, but the hardest part is spending the time and energy to make sure that your employees are happy and grow with the business. It's also important to find reliable part-time help or consultants. Having a great book-keeper and reliable IT support can make a big difference.

**How can you help other WOL members improve their business?**

I am always happy to field a phone call or email with questions about starting your own law firm. Networking is invaluable, whether it leads to business development or serves as education - we can all learn from each other.

**How has your WOL membership been of value to you and your career?**

Any opportunity to network with a diverse group of women lawyers or entrepreneurs is priceless.

**Guilty Pleasure: What can you not live without?**

The combination of red wine and chocolate will always be a guilty pleasure for me.

**Nominate Someone!**

WOL turns the spotlight on members to highlight how they are making a difference and how they have benefited from WOL membership. It offers an opportunity for you to share your story with colleagues, inspire future entrepreneurs, and strengthen awareness of the profession and association.

Member Spotlight appears regularly on <https://www.womenownedlaw.org/>. To nominate another member email: [CoachDena@gmail.com](mailto:CoachDena@gmail.com)