

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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ABOUT DEBORAH AND THE NILSON LAW GROUP, PLLC

Deborah Ann Nilson is the founding partner of The Nilson Law Group, PLLC, a New York law firm focused on helping foreign companies establish, acquire, and operate American subsidiaries. Deborah has extensive experience in transnational corporate ventures, including corporate governance, contracts, mergers and acquisitions, employment law, and intellectual property matters. Deborah holds a B.S. in Finance from Syracuse University and a Juris Doctor from New York Law School. She is admitted to the New York State Bar (1985) and is also admitted to practice in multiple U.S. federal courts, including the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Nilson Law Group, PLLC is a New York-based law firm focused on representing foreign companies doing business in the United States. Almost all the firm's clients are foreign entities with a U.S. presence, and the majority are French-speaking companies. The firm regularly conducts its work in both French and English, and the entire office is fluent in French, communicating in both languages daily.

The firm advises clients on the full lifecycle of U.S. operations, including entity formation, corporate governance, mergers and acquisitions, commercial contracts, employment matters, certain regulatory compliance, and intellectual property matters. The firm's particular strength lies in representing cross-border clients. Most of the firm's clients are small and medium-sized companies, although the firm also represents U.S. subsidiaries of several large French multinational groups.

I founded The Nilson Law Group in 2006. Prior to founding the firm, I co-founded in 1989 the law firm Rozan & Nilson, the predecessor to Nilson Law, which focused on substantially the same practice areas. I have practiced law for more than 40 years, advising international clients on U.S. legal and business matters throughout my career.

Including myself, the firm currently consists of seven lawyers: a soon-to-be non-equity partner and five associates, supported by two paralegals, a Director of Operations, and two administrative professionals.

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TELL ME MORE!

I'm fairly certain I mentioned this at the 2024 WOL Holiday Lunch in New York, but it's still something I feel very proud of. In 2025, I was selected by Business France to serve as the U.S. "business lawyer" for two separate road shows across France for French companies. Business France is the French government's national agency responsible for supporting the international development of the French economy.

For each road show, I participated (in French, of course) on panel discussions in three different cities, where I spoke and answered questions about investing in the United States. I also led a 30-minute master class in French during the Paris leg of each road show, focused on creating a U.S. entity - covering the when, why, how, and where of U.S. market entry.

From time to time, I'm still a bit amazed that we found ourselves in that room. But it was the result of many years of effort and relationship-building to get our small firm on Business France's radar. I'm especially proud of this recognition given the level of competition, including many large "big-law" firms with established French desks that have filled this role in the past.

WOL AND DEBORAH ANN NILSON

If I could offer advice to WOL members, one piece would be to pursue the necessary expertise to best manage your firm. Years ago, I began thinking seriously about succession planning and invested in coaching and several classes offered by a law firm coaching company. Through that process, I gained not only guidance on succession planning, but also valuable law practice management tips - from the coaches themselves and from other lawyers in the program. That experience was extremely helpful and well worth the investment.

I would also recommend that, before spending money on marketing, you clearly identify your target audience. Early on, I spent too much time and money on marketing efforts that looked good on paper but were not sufficiently targeted to the clients I wanted to reach.

Another key lesson is that referral sources are often even more important than clients. A single strong referral source can generate multiple clients year after year. It's essential to think intentionally about how to develop new referral sources and how to nurture and maintain the referral relationships you already have.

Finally, you never stop learning - or improving - your law firm. Through WOL, I have gained so many practical tips, including through informal lunches and conversations with other WOL lawyers. I highly recommend attending the Symposium and the various WOL events throughout the year, and taking the time to get to know the members.