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MEREDITH LECONEY

Founder and Managing Attorney
Lapis Legal Group LLC



Website: <https://lapis-legal.com/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/meredithleconey/>

Company LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/lapislegal/>

ABOUT MEREDITH LECONEY AND LAPIS LEGAL GROUP LLC

Meredith LeConey is the Founder and Managing Attorney of Lapis Legal Group LLC, a boutique law firm built on in-house experience and exclusively for life sciences. She spent almost 15 years as a senior and executive-level in-house counsel at GlaxoSmithKline and Jazz Pharmaceuticals before founding Lapis Legal in 2023. At Jazz, she built and led the company's first North America Commercial Legal function and its first Global R&D Legal function. She has supported more than a dozen product and indication launches across oncology, hematology, neuroscience, rare disease, gene therapy, and more. Her practice focuses on the legal and compliance challenges at the center of life sciences commercialization: clinical trials, drug safety and pharmacovigilance, launch readiness, healthcare fraud and abuse, FDA and FTC promotional and advertising compliance, compliance program design and implementation, and corporate governance. She lives just outside of Philadelphia, in Southern New Jersey, with her husband and their teenage son.

TELL ME MORE!

I founded Lapis Legal in 2023 after almost 15 years in senior and executive-level in-house legal roles at GSK and Jazz Pharmaceuticals. The firm serves pharmaceutical, biopharma, biotech, medtech, and medical device companies, and the innovators and technology partners that work alongside them.

Lapis Legal was founded to fill what I saw as a gap in the market when I was in-house. One of my long-term clients told me a couple of years ago that I "have the secret sauce" for working with the business. That was a moment that meant so much to me. Working with Lapis Legal should feel different. It is different. So many companies need the kind of legal counsel that only comes from having actually sat inside a commercial life sciences organization, in rooms where you see firsthand what's at stake. Not just advising from the outside.

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That's what Lapis Legal is built on. I meet clients where they are, which sometimes changes during the life of our engagement. Engagements often start with a specific project, but I'm proud to say typically lead to long-term engagements because of how we show up and bring value. Our services include fractional general counsel for life sciences companies that aren't ready for a full-time hire, embedded legal support for in-house teams that are excellent but stretched, launch surge support for companies approaching commercialization, and project-based counsel for discrete matters. The common thread is that I've been the one making decisions, assessing risk, and advising the business on the inside, so I don't advise from the outside looking in. That changes the kind of counsel my clients get.

Something most people don't know is that my son Austin named the company when we were sitting at breakfast on vacation. I was struggling to find a name that had meaning that wasn't already trademarked. He said, "You should call it Lapis, mom, like the stone!" He'd been learning about gemstones and the meaning often associated with certain stones, and lapis lazuli has represented wisdom, clarity, and sound judgment for thousands of years. Those qualities are exactly what this firm was built to deliver. Lapis stuck and it wasn't trademarked. Now it is.

The other thing most people don't know is that my family led an annual back-to-school backpack drive for many years. Over the life of the drive, we collected nearly 25,000 backpacks for students heading back to school. It started as a small project and became one of the things I'm proudest of. My son was at the heart of it from the beginning. Building a firm that does meaningful work is important to me, but building a life that includes service outside of work is just as central to who I am.

I am so proud of meeting the challenge of leaving in-house to bet on myself, with nothing but deep experience in an area of the law, an extensive network and good reputation in an industry I'm passionate about, and a bright idea. This didn't compute for so many people, but I'm an entrepreneur at heart and come from a long line of them (including my grandfather, dad, and siblings).

I had spent almost 15 years building a career inside two major pharmaceutical companies. I had a fancy title, a team, and an earned seat at the table. I knew how to operate in that world. And walking away from all of it to start a firm from zero required a completely different kind of confidence than the kind I'd built over two decades of practice. But a saying I'm known for is "all the best things are on the other side of our fears." I walked the talk and bet on myself.

The legal work itself was never the hard part. I knew I could do the work. I love the work, the industry, its mission, and my clients. The hard part was learning to be a business owner. Building infrastructure and systems. Fine-tuning my market and services. My husband left his career to work for me, so the financial decisions I make don't just affect a corporate budget. They affect my family. I had to learn to market myself and my practice, which no one teaches you in law school or in-house (but I have learned a lot about marketing from my wonderful clients). I also had to learn to sit with the uncertainty of not knowing whether people would want the thing I built or keep wanting it. Fortunately, they did and still do.

What I'm proudest of is that I did it anyway, despite every reason not to. I'm also proud that people in my network supported me immediately. The firm I'm building reflects the kind of lawyer I actually want to be, doing the kind of work I want to do, not just the kind of role and work that happened to be available. Lapis Legal is scaling now. I have a team. Our impact is growing. And here we are, with the moment I'm proudest of being the one where I decided the incredible career I'd built wasn't the ceiling. I'm also proud that my son is watching his mom and seeing firsthand that women are builders, leaders, mentors, and philanthropists.

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WOL AND MEREDITH LECONEY

I would advise new business owners to learn the difference between being excellent at your craft and being a CEO. They are not the same skill set, and the second one will not come naturally just because you're great at the first.

I spent years delivering excellent legal work to my clients and assuming that would be enough to build a business. It's necessary, but it's not sufficient. To do it well, you also have to build infrastructure, manage people, make financial decisions, develop business, and sit in the discomfort of spending your time on work to build and sustain your business that no client is paying you for. It also means hiring people who are better at certain things than you, or who enjoy doing things you don't. One of the best books I read early on in this business was "Buy Back Your Time" by Dan Martell. It changed the way I approach leading my firm and shaped how I think about the value of my time.

The other thing I'd say: find people who are further along and learn from them. Not from a distance. Up close. Ask the questions you're embarrassed to ask. The women of Women Owned Law who have built what you're trying to build are always willing to share what they've learned. Take them up on it.

I'm glad to be a resource for any WOL member who is in the throes of building or scaling a firm. The transition from solo practitioner to firm owner with a team, systems, and infrastructure is real, and I'm in the middle of it right now. I don't have all the answers, but I'm always willing to share what I've learned and what I'm still figuring out. I'm also a fantastic hype woman and will make you believe you are capable of anything – because I believe you are. And if anyone in your network ever needs life sciences legal or compliance counsel, I'm always happy to take the call.

WOL has given me mentorship from women who are further along in their journeys and who have been generous enough to share what they've learned along the way. I've formed relationships with women who will tell me pointedly when they think I'm making a mistake, not sugarcoated. I can't tell you how valuable that is. Being part of Women Owned Law has helped me see what is possible. It has also broadened my network of subject matter experts I can call on when a client I or need expertise outside my area. And, more than anything, it's helped me lean into being a CEO and not just a lawyer delivering excellent work to her clients. That shift in identity has been one of the most important parts of building this firm, and WOL has been part of making it happen.