



# Michele Giovanni Moss

Orlando, Florida



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## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Michele Giovanni Moss:*

For Michele Giovanni Moss, Owner of Johnson Moss L.L.C. and U.S. Air Force veteran, becoming a lawyer wasn't always her goal. In fact, as she pointed out, the law kind of found her. Moss shared the story behind her entrepreneurial journey and how, in her case, being mediocre proved to be a good thing.

"I did my undergrad at The United States Air Force Academy," she said. "I started out as a Computer Science major. It was 1991 and, even though I wasn't exceptional at programming, I was excited about it. Nevertheless, what took my classmates 10 lines of code took me 50. I remember thinking, 'I can graduate with this major and be mediocre or find something I'm really good at and work to be the best'. I made a decision to figure out what that thing was. At the time, I was enrolled in

a legal studies course. I really enjoyed it. My 'ah-ha' moment came when one of my professors said some really nice things about me and encouraged me to pursue law. I made the decision to switch my major to Legal Studies, The Air Force Academy's version of pre-law."

Upon graduating from The Air Force Academy, Moss became an active-duty commissioned officer. She spent five years serving her country and rose to the position of Captain. While fulfilling her duty to serve, Moss applied and was accepted to The University of Notre Dame Law School.

Her first summer internship was with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington D.C. She spent the summer between her second and third year in Tampa, working for the firm that would eventually offer her a position. After graduating law school in 2003, Moss went to work for Fowler White Boggs Banker P.A. In 2008, Fowler White Boggs Banker P.A. split into two firms: Banker Lopez Gassler P.A. and Fowler White Boggs. Fowler White Boggs is now Buchanan, Ingersoll & Rooney. Moss left with the group of attorneys that formed Banker Lopez Gassler P.A. She made partner in 2010 at Banker Lopez Gassler P.A. and moved to their Orlando office. Moss explained that decision and what came next.

"At the time, they were trying to grow the Orlando office and the partner there wanted someone in Orlando to help him with his practice," she said. "The other two attorneys were doing workers compensation, so I made the move to support our litigation practice in that office. After I had been in the Orlando office about three years, the partner I came to Orlando to help ended up medically retiring and, with the way things were going with that office, they were looking at how to cut costs. Eventually, they decided to let myself and a paralegal go. When it happened, I was partially expecting it. I figured I would get a job at

another firm, but my husband is the one who encouraged me to start my own firm. I shared my concern about not knowing how to run a business and he simply said, 'You'll figure it out'. After talking to some other colleagues that went out on their own, I made the decision to do it. It all worked out because I really wanted to pursue my intellectual property practice anyways. Looking back, it was the best decision I've ever made. Being laid off got me out of my comfort zone. It was the change I needed."

Moss' firm primarily focuses on Intellectual Property (IP), Computer and Internet law. She files applications to register trademarks and copyrights, defends her clients if they are accused of trademark or copyright infringement, helps her clients protect their IP by filing infringement lawsuits on their behalf, works on trade secret misappropriation cases, advises clients about their online business presence including email marketing and educates them on what laws apply to data collected on websites and how to properly conduct business in the digital world. Moss loves the fact that she gets to choose her cases and that her current clients, unlike those of the past, actually enjoy hearing from her. They're usually not being sued. They're starting new businesses or creating new products or services, so they're happy to hear from her and full of optimism.

Most of Moss' clients are small businesses and startups. She represents content creators, artists, coders, musicians, photographers and other creative types that are just getting started. Most of her clients are in Central Florida, but some are in South Florida and other states. Moss prides herself on ethically representing her clients, being their advocate and always acting in their best interests.

As Moss shared, regardless of location or type of business, there are certain misconceptions pertaining to IP she likes to make clear with her clients. "The top one has to do with business names versus domain names versus registered trademarks," she said. "Just because you get a business name on Sunbiz doesn't mean that business name is not infringing on a federally registered trademark. A business name is not the same as a registered trademark. I suggest to all my startup clients that before they register a business name on Sunbiz, it is a good idea to allow me to do a search of the business name they want to use on the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office website. I can search a database that contains all registered trademarks in addition to pending trademark applications. It's worth the couple hundred bucks. The last thing a new business owner wants is to receive a cease and desist letter telling the business owner to cease using their business name because it is identical or confusingly similar to a federally registered trademark."

Looking ahead, Moss would like to grow her firm to a point where she can bring on permanent staff and additional attorneys. She's happy with her specialty and shared that by focusing on the IP niche, she's made some incredible referral sources that have ultimately led to more business.

What advice does Moss have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "You really need to make sure you're in a business you love and that you love every part of it," she said. "I love everything about IP. To me it's fun and interesting. Also, it's important to know that in the beginning, you will do everything in your business. Don't be afraid of the work. Learn to love the grind. Your hard work will pay off."

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