



Deborah Hrbek

Founder, [Hrbek Kunstler LLC](#)

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

Founded in 2002, the firm has long specialized in entertainment law and small business law. In recent years we have expanded our business regulatory practice - representing entrepreneurs venturing into the cannabis businesses, and serving art galleries and dealers grappling with anti-money laundering compliance issues in the fine art industry. Our focus is on independent businesses - independent publishers, record labels, film/TV producers, photographers, artist management agencies, cannabis growers, processors and distributors, and individual players throughout the media, cannabis and fine art industries.

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

We have acted as media counsel for WikiLeaks since 2015 and together with two national security journalists, my partner and I recently commenced litigation against Mike Pompeo and the CIA in SDNY in connection with our visits to Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

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

Joining forces in April 2022 with my longtime mentor and friend, Margaret Ratner Kunstler - widow of civil rights lawyer William M. Kunstler. It's an honor - not to mention fun - to have a partner and to be building something big together.

What challenge are you most proud of overcoming?

Always a bit of a show-off, I was alarmed to find that I had stage fright when it came to public speaking. For years I would turn down speaking opportunities - I was just too frightened of doing a terrible job and being embarrassed. With increasing practice and the confidence of middle age, I have finally become comfortable with it, and I have appeared live at press conferences and on podcasts in recent years with very little anxiety. Phew!

Tell us about a recent professional accomplishment of yours.

I launched my art sales regulatory compliance practice, really thinking about this component of my practice as a business, not just a service - building technology to provide value - adding to our legal work in this area, developing a targeted marketing campaign, and doing a better job of managing staff to keep them focused and incentivized.

Tell us about a recent personal accomplishment of yours.

I finally bought my dream home - a beautiful penthouse apartment in Astoria. I just love it and I am never leaving. They will have to take me out in a wooden box.

What advice would you offer new business owners?

Keep your overhead as low as possible, and remember everything is cyclical - no matter how good or how bad any given month is from a revenue standpoint, it's never static. As an entrepreneur you can always find creative ways to provide services that are needed so that you can keep the lights on. Trust in your own resourcefulness and keep plugging away - it will pay off.

How can you help other Women Owned Law members improve their businesses?

I can invite them to my parties! We are lucky enough to have offices on the 22nd Floor with wraparound terraces and we throw fun events regularly - sometimes big parties with live music, sometime small roundtables to discuss legal issues such as new local cannabis regulations, or how to conduct due diligence as an art industry professional. Large or small, there's always plenty of wine and fun and potential for connecting with other attendees.

Has Women Owned Law been of value to you and your career?

Absolutely. The monthly meetings are a great opportunity to talk to smart, like-minded career women grappling with the same types of issues I find myself concerned with. It's a relief to know you're not alone out there and with a bit of brain storming, there's a solution to any business problem.

About Women Owned Law

Women Owned Law is a ground-breaking group created to connect and advance women legal entrepreneurs. WOL supports its members and other women entrepreneurs in the law in their business endeavors at every point in the business lifecycle. We advocate on behalf of women legal entrepreneurs and have been instrumental in raising the profile of women entrepreneurs in the law.

For additional information about Women Owned Law visit <http://www.womenownedlaw.org>