



Elaine Fitch

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

KCNF was started in 1975 by June Kalijarvi. We specialize in all aspects of employment law with specific expertise in federal sector employment law – security clearances, whistleblowers, discrimination and retaliation, wage and hour -- primarily representing employees.

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

We have always been a majority woman-owned firm with a majority of women attorneys and employees.

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

Last year, several of the associates in my office nominated me, and I was selected, for the Harvard Business Review's Women at Work Podcast (<https://hbr.org/podcast/2021/10/leaders-to-learn-from>). The episode was titled "Leaders to Learn From," and the reasons the attorneys gave for nominating me confirmed that you can run a successful, supportive, and compassionate law firm. I was truly honored.

What challenge are you most proud of overcoming?

I had a disappointing start to my legal career. I was idealistic and set my sights on a prestigious position in two specific non-profits. Neither materialized, and I found myself in a job that was not what I had envisioned. However, I had amazing bosses (all male), who taught me to become an excellent lawyer, and gave me unbelievable opportunities (I argued in the Ninth Circuit in my second year of practice). Each opportunity led to another unexpected path in life until eventually, I found my way to DC and KCNF, where I now own and run the firm. I would never have envisioned this as my career path, but I am proud that I persevered and accepted the challenges when they presented themselves.

Tell us about a recent professional accomplishment of yours?

My partner, Mary Kuntz, and I with significant assistance from associates Elisabeth Baker-Pham and Aaron Herreras Szot (the four of us comprise the security clearance practice in the firm) completed the fifth edition of *Security Clearance Law and Procedure*. It is the seminal treatise on security clearance law and takes a significant amount of work to update. I was thrilled when it was published in early 2022.

Tell us about a recent personal accomplishment of yours?

I have become a good tennis player! A friend and I started playing before COVID, and we took lessons a few times. During COVID we managed to play outside despite the weather (though we discovered we could not play below 40 degrees because the temperature impacted the balls). I absolutely love playing.

What advice would you offer new business owners?

You must learn to be a jack of all trades: accountant, business development, marketing, HR. Even if you choose to outsource those tasks you like the least, you still must know enough about them to provide oversight. Do not forget to bill your clients. You must do this monthly and make it a habit. Always find time for business development. There are many aspects to business development, but the most important are the relationships you develop over the years, which will sustain you emotionally and economically.

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

I have met amazing women through Women Owned Law that have provided me insight and guidance in running my own business! WOL opened me up to the idea of working with a coach. I was skeptical until I had my first 15-minute session with Ivy Slater at the WOL conference three years ago. She completely changed my perspective!

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>