



## **Laurie Lee Success Story, The Legal Department, Web3 training**

*By Lorrie DeFrank*

A business attorney for nearly 20 years, and owner of her own innovative law firm for seven years, Laurie Lee has had significant success in helping clients protect their businesses. When she was invited to participate in Jacksonville Women’s Business Center’s (JWBC) pilot program introducing cryptocurrency concepts early this year, she was skeptical and somewhat uninterested. JWBC persisted, she agreed, and now she’s all in.

Owner of The Legal Department for Service Professionals, Lee had already taken JWBC’s Financial Matters course, which covers the basics of managing finances. She wasn’t sure how the new program that focuses on training business

owners and entrepreneurs through Web3, commonly known as the third generation of the internet, would help her or her clients.

“I see these levels—the personal computer, the iPhone and Web3,” Lee said, simplifying a complex progression. “Level 3 is so drastically different.”

Yet, she quickly became fascinated and dove into the class.

She concedes to not understanding exactly how Web3 hosts decentralized apps that run on blockchain technology, but she accepts that it has been around long enough to have been vetted and reliable.

“The class started with cryptocurrencies, which is just one part of Web3, because cryptocurrencies are established and there are thousands of them,” she said.

She explained that JAX Chamber Chief Innovation Officer, Carlton Robinson, gave participants test net cryptocurrencies that emulates the pricing activity of live digital assets.

“Imagine there is this world behind a curtain and as you start pulling it open you realize this whole thing had been going on all this time and you had no idea it was there. You start looking around and it goes deeper and deeper and it’s still spinning, still creating things. Where is it going next?” Lee said. “I fully believe that the value of cryptocurrency isn’t going away as an exchange, but I feel there are other uses for it that also bolster its existence.”

She is already implementing practices she learned from the course in her business.

“As a law firm and a small business ourselves, what does this mean for us?” pondered Lee, noting that many big businesses are accepting cryptocurrency as payments. “I am trying to figure out how to modify that for the small business model.”

The other side includes how to help her clients through Web3, she said. “Before taking the class, we started getting clients who were involved in some ways with cryptocurrency. To be able to help them we

had to educate ourselves. Now being more aware of what is behind that curtain gives us a better perspective.”

Lee had been working in business law for a big firm in downtown Jacksonville before deciding she wanted to work explicitly with small businesses and do things the progressive law firms were doing around the country. With considerable help from the Small Business Development Center at the University of North Florida, she took about six months to put together a business plan, hire a coach and eventually give her notice. Her firm is flat fee based and serves service-based small businesses. Originally called Elevate Business Law, it was rebranded as The Legal Department for Service Professionals to better identify with a focus on exchange of information and relationship building in 2019, the same year she was named North Florida Woman Owned Business of the Year by the SBA.

Lee called starting her own business the biggest risk she ever took.

“I had been a business attorney for 12 years and never owned a business, but I counseled hundreds of businesses. Being a business owner is totally different from being a business attorney,” Lee said. “Looking back seven years later and having that experience and perspective, I see the whole picture now and am much better able to help our clients.”

During her early years as a business owner Lee took advantage of JAX Chamber’s training programs. In spring 2017, she was a member of Cohort 6 of JAX Bridges, a business enhancement program of the Entrepreneurial Growth Division. In addition to Financial Matters, she took JWBC’s Marketing Matters course and now teaches Legal Matters, which she created.

“The JWBC is amazing. As a participant and presenter, I get to see all the different types of women’s businesses that are in there. They help people from a one-woman show to a 30-year-old business with multiple employees. Every one of those women is trying to learn more to improve her business,” she said. “The thing that impresses me most about JWBC is that they are always looking to be innovative and anticipating what’s next. They’ve become a good point of contact for knowing the latest development in business. It’s a really great place for small businesses especially with the Women’s Business Center pushing ahead.”

The Venture Services Web3 Program is now being offered by the JWBC. More information can be found by signing up for updates under ‘Find a Program’ on [www.jaxwbc.com](http://www.jaxwbc.com).

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