

Interview with Paola Zaragoza Cardenales

Hello Paola, thank you for agreeing to give us an interview. So, let's begin with the first question.

Could you tell us about your educational experience?

Well, my BBA (bachelor's in business) and JD were from the University of Puerto Rico and my LLM was from UC Berkeley Law. Then I studied at the Maurer Law School where I graduated in 2022 and obtained my SJD degree.

Let's speak about your family. Are they also lawyers?

No. Both of them became accidental entrepreneurs, who work as certified public accountants. So, it will be accurate to say that I am the first lawyer in my family and the second doctorate.

It is interesting to know: Why did you decide to be a lawyer?

You know, I dreamt of becoming a lawyer from an early age. Even as a child, I was known for being reasonable, always engaging in arguments, expressing my opinions, and debating various topics. My mom can testify that I would often pick fights. For instance, I would watch something on the news and spend hours arguing about what I saw. So, it came as no surprise to my parents when I chose the legal path for myself.

What inspired you to start a legal business? Was it your parents, your studies at Maurer or something else?

To start with, I had the example of my parents in front of me. I always understood that conducting a business is not easy but at the same time not impossible. Also, my studies at Maurer helped me as well. Doing dissertation for my SJD, I conducted a series of interviews with small businesses owners in Puerto Rico. I quickly realized that there is a big gap in the legal industry of Puerto Rico when it comes to intellectual property and small businesses. As an owner of a small business, you have 2 options: either go to the university pro-bono clinic or hire a big law firm that charges \$300 an hour. Thus, I began to understand spheres and subjects where my legal services could be demanded.

Let's speak about your law firm. What is its name? In what sphere does it specialize? How many lawyers work under your brand?

The name of the firm is Zaragoza Cardenales LLC. I registered it in my homeland, Puerto Rico. My firm specializes in IP and business. I give consultations and conduct IP prosecution. I also handle forensic auditing. I like IP, it's very interesting and fun. We have just begun and now the firm is small. However, we have plans for development and aim to expand our services to the US and European legal market.

Could you share one or several lowlights and highlights that you faced while creating and starting a law firm?

One of the highlights was gaining a big budget client within one month of creation – it was a lucky chance, and I didn't miss it.

A low light has been that the economy is bad, and work has been slow.

Is it difficult to find new clients? What's your advertisement strategy?

Well, sometimes I got clients in most unexpected places. For instance, one day I was going to the hair salon and shared with the hair stylist that I needed a new haircut to film a series of educational TikTok videos about intellectual property. It turned out that the hair stylist was the owner of the salon and he needed to register a trademark. Thus, now he is a client of my law firm. Besides such random situations, I do the systematic work looking for new clients - giving classes, going to networking events and joining associations, I also advertise through google ads and social media.

How can fellow alums support or collaborate with your law firm's initiatives, if any?

Fellow alums are always welcome at [Zaragoza Cardenales LLC](#). You can volunteer and get amazing experience in IP law. Besides, you can always become a client!!

What advice can you give for law students who dream about opening their own law business in the future?

Take your time to plan it and think outside the box, and it's good to turn off the attorney's mind once in a while.

But why is it necessary to turn the attorney's mind off?

While doing this you can put yourself in other people's shoes and understand that this is better for your progress not to be the overthinker about limitations and risks and concentrate on organization and logistics of the necessary process. Let me give you an example, when I started to do my social media accounts, I started during law school and a lot of people made fun of me, they didn't understand why a lawyer needs an account on Instagram, TikTok or Facebook. I was listening to them and thinking - it will make sense 5 years from now. Today I have 3,000 followers on TikTok, 4,000 on Instagram and 5,000 on Facebook and with the help of my social media I am doing my teaching activities and am able to acquire clients and build my network.

Thank you for your time, Paola. And on behalf of Maurer Global Forum, we wish good luck to you and your newborn legal firm

Thank you!