

2023 ACC Top 10 30-Somethings: Jessica Lehman

Interviews and Profiles



The ACC Top 10 30-Somethings awards recognize in-house counsel between the ages of 30 and 39 for their innovation, approach to challenges, well-rounded perspectives, contributions to the in-house community, and pro bono and volunteer work.



When it comes to legal roles within corporations, the title of government contracts counsel stands out as a specialization. Jessica Lehman sheds light on how she stumbled upon this niche field and has

since crafted innovative solutions, such as drafting policies allowing Verizon's public sector organization to navigate business issues that naturally arise when vendors are engaged to support Verizon's federal prime contracts. Jessica's policies have been used throughout the public sector organization, helping Verizon minimize risk while maintaining contractual compliance and providing essential services to the US federal government.



Jessica Lehman receives her 2023 ACC Top 10-30 Somethings award.

Compliance with federal and agency-level regulations, especially the Federal Acquisition Regulation (the FAR) and supply chain management regulations, poses significant challenges. "There are a lot of administrative requirements when working with or selling to the federal government," Jessica explains. Nevertheless, she thrives on overcoming obstacles and ensuring Verizon provides compliant solutions to their government customers. Jessica's team implemented an effective contract management system that tracks contract lifecycle status and communicates to account managers, allowing her team to handle high contract volume effectively. "My takeaway is that you can't get sloppy about leaving notes in the record — each file tells the history of the deal," she says.

Within the legal landscape, relationships play a crucial role in professional growth. Jessica highlights the significance of mentorship at Verizon, mentioning the accessibility of vice presidents and other mentors. "I view them as mentors, and they've given me amazing directives and guidance on substantive legal practice and on career development," she shares.

Her career took a significant turn when she obtained her Virginia law license and transitioned to an in-house legal role at a government contractor. This was the beginning of her specialization in federal procurement and government contracting. She found purpose in working with the federal government, emphasizing the importance of mission readiness and the impact of public sector work.

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Jessica then took on various in-house legal roles of increasing seniority at larger government contractors, allowing her to hone her expertise in federal procurement before finally landing at Verizon. Once at Verizon, she led an initiative to create a federal subcontract negotiation strategy playbook for her newly formed legal team. This effort equipped her with knowledge that became instrumental in successful negotiations with other Fortune 100 companies engaged to perform as suppliers and subcontractors to Verizon under Verizon's prime contracts with the Government, leading Verizon through multiple high-dollar contract negotiations. Her exceptional work contributed to her team winning an "All In" award.

As a successful professional and mother of three small children, Jessica juggles the demands of parenthood and a thriving career. She manages the demands of both roles without compromising her ambition or responsibilities. Since she first became a working mother five years ago, Jessica has often had to find inventive solutions to "doing it all," including setting up cribs in her office, or engaging in deal negotiations while wearing a sleeping baby in a carrier. Jessica recalls recently taking an overtired child on a car ride; her toddler son finally fell asleep with ease, and she was able to catch up on some critical webinar trainings via Bluetooth.

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Despite the challenges, Jessica also expresses gratitude for the support she has received as a working mother. She mentions her close relationships with other working mothers at Verizon who understand the intricacies of balancing career and parenthood.

Verizon's pro bono program offers attorneys like Jessica the opportunity to contribute to a higher purpose. Jessica emphasizes the rewards of giving back and reflects on her experience mentoring often underserved high school students at Justice High School in Falls Church, Virginia, through the Street Law program. "The best part for me was that I had some young women ask me questions about what they need to do to one day go to law school," she recalls.

An aspiring legal subject matter analyst, Jessica has recently had two publications released. She authored an expert analysis published by Law360 analyzing a Department of Defense procurement issue. She also recently published a personal interview with Verizon's Chief Litigation Counsel for the Virginia State Bar Corporate Counsel Newsletter. She hopes to continue developing her list of publications and has a few new pieces in the works.

Jessica Lehman's acceptance speech for ACC's 2023 Top 10 30-Somethings.

Jessica's journey as a government contracts counsel at Verizon showcases the fulfilling experiences that can be found within specialized legal roles. Furthermore, Jessica's experience sheds light on the dedication and resilience required to pursue a successful career while being a mother. An inspiration to other working parents, Jessica stresses the importance of finding a balance and being

unapologetic about being both professionals and caregivers.

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