

The People Business

An Interview with Frank Salzano and Arthur D. Ettinger of Salzano Ettinger Lampert & Wilson LLP (SELW)

EDITORS' NOTE Frank Salzano's legal practice focuses primarily on the entertainment and sports industry, representing clients in connection with both transactional and civil litigation matters. Prior to going into private practice, Salzano was one of the founding members of Dewey & LeBoeuf, LLP's Entertainment, Media, and Sports Practice Group, which was founded in 2007. Salzano has successfully negotiated contracts for and handled civil litigation matters on behalf of iconic talent, and has counseled start-up production and media companies. He is also a certified NFL contract advisor. Prior to joining Dewey & LeBoeuf, Salzano was an associate with a boutique entertainment law firm where he handled a wide variety of transactional and litigation matters ranging from contractual matters to copyright and trademark for various entertainment clients. Before joining the boutique firm, he was a litigation associate at the international law firm of Jones Day where he represented Fortune 500 corporate clients in commercial transactions, intellectual property and securities matters. Over the past decade, he has amassed a strong network of accomplished individuals in the entertainment, media, and sports industries. He has close relationships with numerous executives, talent managers, agents, artists, and wealth managers as well as attorneys that practice in the sports and entertainment field. Salzano earned a BA degree from the College of New Jersey and his JD from Boston University School of Law.

With 25 years of experience, Arthur Ettinger is widely known as one of the most effective divorce and family law practitioners in the New York metropolitan area. Ettinger advises clients in all aspects of matrimonial and family law, including complex financial and custody issues. He is also a certified MLB agent, advising players in contract negotiations and representing athletes in various legal matters. Prior to forming SELW with his long-time friends and colleagues, Ettinger was the Chair of the Matrimonial and Family Law Department of Greenspoon Marder's New York office. Ettinger is the author of the Lexis/Nexis practice guide titled, New York Matrimonial Actions. He has consistently been recognized as a leading family law attorney by his peers in Best Lawyers in America and



Frank Salzano



Arthur D. Ettinger

Super Lawyers and has been recognized as a "Trailblazer" in family law by The National Law Journal. Realizing that there was a lack of content for individuals either going through or contemplating divorce, in 2020 Ettinger launched the podcast titled "Close To The Vest," focused on relationship and divorce related issues. Ettinger earned a BA degree from the University of Vermont and his JD from New York Law School.

FIRM BRIEF Salzano Ettinger Lampert & Wilson LLP (selwlaw.com) is a dynamic, full-service boutique law firm that represents individuals and companies in a wide array of legal services ranging from transactional matters, civil disputes, family law issues, as well as defending select individuals in criminal matters. The intersection of these practice areas is born out of the diverse legal needs of the firm's clients which is comprised almost entirely of high-net-worth individuals including entertainers, entrepreneurs, celebrities, and athletes – as well as the companies owned by these clients. Individuals, especially those in the public arena, have an opportunity to commercialize their intellectual property and core businesses, but also need to vigorously protect their personal and business interests. This requires savvy legal counsel who can navigate the courtroom as well as the boardroom. The firm's lawyers have successfully done so with decades of combined legal experience.

Will you provide an overview of Salzano Ettinger Lampert & Wilson and highlight the firm's practice areas?

Salzano: While we certainly do not pretend to be able to service every legal

requirement a client may encounter, the following practice areas cover a lot of our clients' legal needs:

Sports and Entertainment: SELW routinely represents individual talent (musicians, actors, media personalities, and social influencers), content creators (writers, authors, directors, and producers) and athletes in connection with their careers. This includes negotiating talent agreements, licenses in connection with the content, and deals with the athlete's club or team.

Matrimonial and Family Law: Our Matrimonial & Family Law Group has extensive experience representing individuals in high-net-worth matrimonial and family law matters, including divorce, property distribution, child custody, spousal and child support, and matrimonial agreements including, but not limited to, pre-nuptial agreements, post-nuptial agreements, cohabitation and domestic partnership agreements, and comprehensive settlement agreements.

Civil Litigation/Alternative Dispute Resolution: The firm is adept in assisting clients in all facets of civil litigation and alternative dispute resolution which means we routinely find ourselves in state and federal court, mediation and arbitration. Our core areas of focus are on commercial disputes, intellectual property issues (infringements of copyright and trademarks), as well as torts such as defamation cases and other forms of torts such as fraud and misrepresentation.

Criminal Defense: SELW handles select criminal matters that may arise in either the state or federal court systems. The firm's representations often begin at an early stage when a client is a target or person of interest right through trials, and appeals when necessary.

Corporate & Finance: SELW's clientele varies from investors, creators, entrepreneurs, executives, and financial institutions. Representation of said individuals can vary from loan agreements to mergers and acquisitions to corporate restructuring and governance.

Intellectual Property: The firm's clients demand that their intellectual property (trademarks, copyrights) are not only protected, but also commercialized at the highest level. The firm works closely with clients from the early stages of evaluation, formation and registration right to enforcement and licensing phases.

How do you describe SELW's culture and values?

Salzano: Our culture and values are straightforward – client's interests before your own. Be a zealous advocate, but also counsel the client when appropriate. Lastly, ensure that there is “value-add” in our representation, i.e. the fees incurred are outweighed by the level of service given. In short, overperform.

Ettinger: SELW's culture is simple. Not only do we cater to our clients, but we cater to our team that services those clients. We strive to provide top-notch legal service, while also striking a healthy work/life balance. While we have a brand new, state-of-the-art office in the Bryant Park area of Manhattan, our lawyers, many of which are spread out throughout the country, are not required to be in the office every day. Many firms are now mandating that employees return to the traditional in-person five-day work week. We believe that this cookie-cutter approach is outdated. In this post-COVID era, we acknowledge that our team of lawyers can often be more efficient and productive working in a hybrid setting. A significant part of our practice is representing individuals and families, which requires pivoting and readjusting strategies when appropriate. SELW appreciates and understands that this type of thinking holds true for our team, as well as the clients we represent.

AT SELW, we also place a strong emphasis on giving back to the community through both charitable endeavors and regularly providing pro bono representation. We also greatly value supporting our junior attorneys, encouraging them to build their professional networks by accepting smaller matters so they can gain hands-on experience and confidence as they continue to develop and grow.

What has made the firm so successful at building long-lasting client relationships and client loyalty?

Ettinger: There are many factors that determine and help to build client loyalty. We take pride in being in the “people business.” Building a long-lasting and genuine relationship with our clients takes priority over our fees. The lawyers at SELW also understand that helping our clients is not a 9 to 5 job. The reality is problems arise at all hours and on weekends and holidays. The lawyers at SELW are all reachable by cell any time of day. This level of service does not get lost on our clientele. And certainly, our success at achieving positive outcomes has helped us build long-term relationships with our clients.

How critical has it been for Salzano Ettinger Lampert & Wilson to build its team, and will you highlight the talent at the firm?

Salzano: Our partnership is truly only as good as our supporting team. Every SELW team member brings unique qualities and strengths to the firm. Here are some examples:

Jason Lampert has over a decade of experience working on high profile and highly publicized civil and criminal matters; Samuel Wilson is a partner of the firm and oversees SEWL's transactional practice group; BriAnne Copp is a highly seasoned litigator who taps into her experience from Big Law in a wide range of substantive areas of law, including commercial litigation, contract, bankruptcy and partnership disputes, to best serve our clients; Nicky Rooz has a unique and multi-faceted perspective and approach to her practice, having first clerked for a New York Supreme Court Judge prior to entering private practice as a litigator focusing exclusively on family and matrimonial law matters; Diane Steiner is of counsel in the Matrimonial & Family Law practice group at SELW, where she handles all aspects of family law, including custody, paternity, divorce, separation, and litigation, as well as drafting pre- and post-marital agreements; Brooke Weinberg is a transactional lawyer who practices at the intersection of entertainment law with a focus on music and the arts, and corporate law; Brady Williamson's areas of practice are wide-ranging, typically focusing on the specific needs of the firm's sports and entertainment clients; Efthimos Parasidis is an experienced litigator and legal consultant who works closely with entrepreneurs and start-up companies with a focus on corporate and intellectual property matters; Asanka Parthiraja has a decade of legal experience focused primarily on complex corporate transactions.

Will you discuss SELW's commitment to pro bono work?

Salzano: Our commitment to pro bono is a centerpiece to the firm's initiatives. All of the lawyers at SELW have committed substantial time to pro bono representation. The entertainment team regularly volunteers its time to assist in matters ranging from “starving” artists that need legal protection before they experience commercial success, to overturning wrongful convictions. Each partner is committed to giving back in some way.

Ettinger: Throughout my legal career, I have always been committed to providing pro bono services to those without access to the services and protections that attorneys provide because they are unable to afford legal representation. This is no different at SELW. Each and every member of our family law group regularly gives time to the profession as volunteer pro bono attorneys. As a volunteer family law attorney for the Women's Bar Association, I am often appointed as pro bono counsel by judges in New York to represent indigent litigants in custody and divorce matters. In addition to being Counsel at SELW, Diane Steiner is a volunteer attorney for Sanctuary For Families, assisting domestic violence victims in family law related matters. In addition to providing pro bono counsel, Nicky Rooz also regularly serves as appointed “18b” counsel in domestic disputes in Family Court, providing free legal services to families, including

children. She was recognized for her pro bono work by the New York Unified Court System Office for Justice Initiatives in 2020.

What has made the relationship between the partners at the firm work so well?

Salzano: I think the most compelling factor is that we would all be friends even if we were not law partners.

Ettinger: This is easy. We like what we do, and we like each other. We have all worked at bigger shops and have seen how other firms operate. We've all learned what works and what doesn't. Building on that, we respect one another. We may not agree on every single issue, yet we value each other's opinions and appreciate that everyone brings a different perspective to the table. In the end, for a firm to succeed, egos need to be pushed aside and the lawyers need to prioritize the firm as a whole. The partners at SELW all share that same vision.

Did you know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own firm?

Salzano: Each law partner is different in terms of what drives their entrepreneurial spirit – for me, as cliché as it is, it has always been about the journey. Building your own firm comes with a lot of ups and downs, but it truly is a journey that can go as far and as high as you decide to take it. That excites me.

Ettinger: I have never envisioned simply working for someone else my entire career. While I had great experiences as an “employee” within a firm, my desire has always been to build a successful firm with people I enjoy working with. What we do is not easy. It can be very stressful, especially as a family law attorney representing individuals in some of their most difficult moments. However, the true reward for me is not only achieving great results, but also providing high quality representation alongside people I care about and consider family.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in a career in law?

Salzano: Simple. Build relationships as soon as you can. The practice of law is very much a microcosm for life – who you know is as important, if not more, than what you know. Also, follow your passion. Do and practice what you enjoy – don't chase money, it will come to you if you focus on your passion.

Ettinger: First, I would say that there is no right answer. Be open-minded. The path to success looks different for everyone. Also, it is okay if you are not quite sure what type of law you want to practice. Diversify yourself in law school with some classes that you may think you would otherwise not take. You may surprise yourself and find a new passion. Volunteer in a firm that has a few different practice areas to allow you to get a taste of different areas of law. Don't be afraid to ask questions or think outside the box. Be creative, and don't expect to learn everything in law school. Lastly, always be prepared. ●