

Get to Know RIW Attorney Michelle De Oliveira

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Michelle recently joined the firm as a shareholder in the **Employment Law Group**, bringing extensive experience advising employers on a wide range of workplace matters. Her practice includes wage and hour compliance, hiring practices, employee discipline and terminations, leaves of absence, discrimination and harassment allegations, reasonable accommodation requests, and other complex personnel-related issues.

Why did you become a lawyer?

Growing up, I always knew I wanted to either become a lawyer or a psychiatrist. I've always been passionate about problem-solving and helping others navigate complex situations, and I felt I could make a meaningful impact in either field. After earning my bachelor's degree, I joined a Boston law firm as a paralegal to explore the legal profession before deciding on my post-graduate path. There, it became abundantly clear: I was a natural and I fell in love with the idea of becoming a lawyer.

Tell us about your career path.

I spent roughly four and a half years working as a paralegal before going to law school. During law school, I had coops at the U.S. Attorney General's Office's Public Corruption Division, the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, a law firm, and with Federal District Court Judge George A. O'Toole Jr. Shortly after taking the bar exam, I was invited to return to the law firm where I had worked before law school—and I went back for approximately one year, until I received a call letting me know that an associate position was open at an employment law boutique that I had done an independent study and a coop while I was in law school. I jumped at the opportunity and joined the firm, practicing exclusively plaintiff-side employment law. Since then, I've worked at several firms and focused my practice on employment law—a field I'm truly passionate about.

Tell us about your practice.

I am a problem solver. On the employment front, I represent businesses in all facets of employment-related matters. Whether it is litigation, pre-litigation, management trainings, or risk management and counseling, I partner closely with my clients to ensure that their goals are met in a practical way. As to the risk management and counseling aspect of my practice, I work hand-in-hand with my business clients to help them proactively identify and address legal risk and exposure. Whether it is guiding a client through an employee's reasonable accommodation request, a leave of absence, pre-employment screening results, or a termination decision, among other things, I am there to counsel my clients and advise them regarding the best approach to protect the business. Additionally, I collaborate

PROFESSIONALS

Michelle De Oliveira

PRACTICES

Employment Law

with clients on developing workplace policies and practices—and this goes far beyond simply handing over a handbook. For me, it is of paramount importance to take the time to understand each client’s unique business structure, operations, teams, and priorities. From there, we create policies that balance three essential pillars: legal requirements, best practices, and what’s important to the business. Occasionally, I will represent individuals in employment-related matters as well. Additionally, my practice extends to commercial litigation and business disputes.

What do you love most about what you do?

The overall impact and importance of the work that I do. Businesses rely on their employees, and employees rely on their employers to provide for themselves and their families. This in turn means that if businesses proactively take steps to protect themselves from legal exposure, these steps inevitably shape a positive workplace culture. Having exclusively represented individuals in employment matters early in my career has given me a unique perspective when practicing management-side employment law, allowing me to understand both sides of the equation. I have a strong sense of what businesses aim to achieve, while also being attuned to the concerns that employees are often laser-focused on—and this dual insight has proven to be a significant advantage for me.

Why did you choose the firm?

RIW is a brand. It is a first class, reputable firm that prides itself on being at the cutting edge of what it means to be a law practice. For me, that does it. Well, almost. What truly sealed it, though, was the incredible team and the wealth of talent within the firm. I am now working with prominent leaders in the legal profession, and that is invaluable. I settle for nothing less than delivering exceptional work at all times—and having the opportunity to do so in a collegial work environment with an incredible team is invaluable.

Tell us a fun or surprising fact about you.

For years, I sang in a church choir; and I am passionate about interior design.

What do you do in your free time?

I have been blessed with an amazing spouse and two incredible children. Most of my free time is spent with them, and we enjoy spending time and creating memories as a family at the Cape.

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