



In the News

Bill Munck – The Coach

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(Sept. 25, 2018; Texas Lawbook) – Growing up on Long Island, [Bill Munck](#) dreamed of being a police officer just like his father. His dad had other ideas.

“The old man told me that he would break both of my knees with a baseball bat if I tried to become a cop, and I believed him,” Munck says. “So, I decided, if I couldn’t be a cop, I would be a prosecutor and that’s when being a lawyer first came to mind.”

Four decades later, Munck is a prosecutor ... of patents and trademarks, not criminals.

Munck, 54, is widely recognized as one of the leading intellectual property lawyers in Texas. During the past 20 years, he built a six-attorney Dallas boutique into a 65-lawyer firm that is one of the largest IP groups in Texas.

Munck Wilson Mandala now boasts satellite offices in Austin and Marshall, and possibly another one soon in Miami. The firm lists several prominent corporations as clients, including Honeywell, Raytheon and Southwest Airlines. Last year, Munck engineered what was essentially an acquisition of a competitor law firm, Howison & Arnott.

At a time when the business law market is hyper-competitive and small-to-mid-sized firms are struggling for survival and are constantly being raided by out-of-state law firms opening shops in Texas, Munck Wilson is growing and achieving record revenues and profits.

“Every year for the past three years, we have seen revenues increase by at least 10 percent,” Munck says. “We have a great team of lawyers working for some great clients.”

Affable, gregarious and considered a straight shooter, Munck combines his passion for technology and law with hard work and a decision to be intensely client-focused.

“I recognized at the start that to build a great law firm, the client must be the hub,” he says. “I knew there was a lot of competition, so I decided that we must compete on the basis of our expertise if we were going to win over clients.”

Clients say they appreciate Munck’s approach.

“Bill is the epitome of the American dream and success story,” says Stuart Fitts, co-founder and managing partner of West Dallas Investments and Trinity Groves and frequent client of Munck Wilson. “He has worked hard and built a great law firm.

“Bill started out as our IP lawyer, but he is now our in-house counsel and consigliere,” says Fitts, who notes that Munck coached his son’s middle school lacrosse team. “Bill and the firm help us with acquisitions, fund formations, the formation of subsidiaries and helped us with our partnership with Roger Staubach. Bill helps us look at the bigger picture.”

Munck possesses two leadership characteristics that seem to escape most successful lawyers: he approaches the business of law strategically and he is an effective manager of people.

“Bill is very clear, very direct and very honest with the team,” says Munck Wilson Chief Operating Officer Ted Ainsworth. “Bill had a vision for the direction of the firm and he’s stuck with it.

“At the same time, Bill is consensus-oriented,” says Ainsworth, who has been the firm’s top non-lawyer executive for 17 years. “No doubt, Bill is the firm’s leader for sure. He has a strong personality. But he runs the firm like a coach. He wants everyone to be better as a team because that helps clients the most and it helps the firm as a whole.”

Colleagues and clients alike say Munck’s personality and professional success can be traced to his roots.

“If you talk with Bill more than 15 minutes, you know he is the son of a New York cop and a fighter,” says Crane Co. General Counsel Anthony D’lorio. “I come from a law enforcement family and we trade a lot of stories.

“But Bill has an innate sense at sizing people up,” D’lorio says. “He has a big personality, but when I’ve been in a tight situation, Bill is always right there with me fighting. He’s a tough advocate.”

Munck was born and raised on Long Island in the Bellmore hamlet, which is about four miles from Jones Beach State Park. His parents’ neighbors were mostly firefighters, police officer, bartenders or worked as airline mechanics. His father was a Nassau County patrolman and his mother was an office manager. He was an only child.

“My parents were strict and there was absolutely no room for nonsense,” he says. “Our house was a no-bullshit environment.

“We didn’t have much money, but we were happy,” he says.

Munck’s father retired from the police force after 21 years of service and started a towing service.

“Dad cut deals with the high-end car dealers by running a very nice, clean truck and he did well,” he says. “My dad missed out on getting an education because of the Depression, but he knew it was all about the high quality of service. This was my first taste of business and I learned from it.”

Munck, who was the first person in his family to go to college, received his bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering and mathematics from Hofstra University in 1987 and a master’s degree in computer science two years later. He worked for a company designing software systems for industrial laboratories.

“I was really good at it, but it was not my calling and I knew it,” he says.

In 1989, he went back to school at Hofstra – this time to law school, where he graduated with highest honors after only two years.

Dallas corporate law firm Winstead hired Munck in 1992 as an associate in its IP section. Two days after he started, partners called Munck into a conference room for a client matter. One of the Winstead partners, Randy Roberts, represented the Hard Rock Café.

“On the telephone with us was Dan Aykroyd and Judy Belushi, John Belushi’s widow,” Munck says. “They had this idea for a new restaurant called the House of Blues. For a first year lawyer to get brought into a meeting like this and to get to do all the trademark work on it was pretty special.”

Munck resigned from Winstead in 1994 when his father died and he moved back to Long Island for a few years to help take care of his mother.

In 1997, Munck returned to Dallas to work at Novakov, Davidson & Flynn. Three years later, the firm restructured and became Novakav, Davis & Munck.

“We were in offices in downtown Dallas and we put a map of DFW on the wall and we put pins where our clients were located and we put different pins where our lawyers and staff lived,” Munck says. “The Galleria was right in the center. So, that’s where we decided to move our offices.”

In 2001, the firm made Munck its managing partner and he promptly hired Ted Ainsworth as its first chief financial officer.

“Bill was my son’s soccer coach and he views his position as managing partner much the same way he coaches a team – he wants everyone doing their best and going in the same direction,” Ainsworth says. “If there are disputes among the

lawyers at the firm, he doesn't want people talking behind other's backs. So, he gets everyone in a conference room to talk it out and solve the problem."

Ainsworth and others say Munck is a huge family man has been an avid supporter of charities that focus on diabetes after his sons were diagnosed with the illness during infancy. He has served on the board of directors of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Munck's zealous support of his children brought him national attention four years ago when he sued Dallas Lacrosse Academy for an alleged shakedown scheme. The lawsuit claimed that coaches for DLA declined to play Munck's son in games because he was not a paying member of DLA.

DLA and certain media outlets portrayed Munck as an overprotective father filing a frivolous lawsuit. Those media outlets failed to provide coverage months later when the case actually ended in a settlement agreement that included a permanent injunction against DLA signed by a federal judge.

The style has proved successful for Munck.

"Bill is aggressive, eager, willing to work hard and does what it takes to get the job done," says John Maxin, chief intellectual capital counsel at Solera Holdings. "Bill is accessible 24 hours a day seven days a week. I send him a text in the middle of the night and he responds almost immediately.

"I have put many legal projects out for a bid to many law firms, but I almost always know that Bill is going to be awarded the project based on the quality of his work and his price points," says Maxin, who previously served as vice president at Goldman Sachs managing its IP portfolio. "Bill does not hesitate to tell a client when they are going down a wrong path.

"But Bill is still a down to earth guy," Maxin says. "I've seen Bill enjoy a hot dog at Costco just as much as a steak at Nick and Sam's."

Munck Wilson has scored some huge successes during the past year.

The firm won a \$10 million patent infringement verdict last August for its client iLife Technologies against gaming giant Nintendo. Lawyers for the firm showed that Nintendo infringed iLife's patented motion detection technology in its Wii gaming system.

In June, Munck Wilson made patent history when a patent it handled for Raytheon on laser detection technology was issued patent number 10,000,000 by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

"The best days are those when we score a big win for a client or help a client figure out a solution to a problem," Munck says. "Those are good days."

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