



Robert Johnson

Of Counsel

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Robert Johnson is of counsel in the Corporate & Business and Cannabis practice groups at Greenspoon Marder LLP. Robert is a “lawpreneur”, meaning he is an accomplished attorney and a serial entrepreneur. With over 28 years of global legal, corporate, franchise, and crisis management experience, he advises small and mid-sized companies, specifically social enterprises, start-ups, and minority and women-owned businesses, to help them scale and gain access to capital. As a seasoned corporate attorney, Mr. Johnson has substantial experience advising social impact investors, venture philanthropists, and private equity firms. Additionally, he is a licensed business broker and a certified franchise consultant. Robert also has vast knowledge in minority franchise development and franchise development of emerging brands.

Before joining Greenspoon Marder, Mr. Johnson served as a Partner in the Chicago office of Taylor English Duma, advising clients with his extensive knowledge in corporate law, M&A, and litigation. He is one of the country's leading advisors on minority franchising and served as the Franchise Relations Officer and Ombudsman for McDonald's Corporation's Central Division. Mr. Johnson was responsible for being an advocate for the McDonald's System and providing leadership to strengthen the relationship between McDonald's and its Owner/Operators. He was also responsible for resolving conflicts between the Company and its Owner/Operators and represented all of the Black McDonald's Owner Operators.

Prior to assuming the role as Franchise Relations Officer, Mr. Johnson was an intrapreneur responsible for the management of McDonald's \$55 Million a year Worker's Compensation program for all of the domestic corporately owned restaurants. He created the department in 2006 and implemented programs that saved the corporation over \$60 million dollars.

As part of his social impact practice, Mr. Johnson also has a special emphasis on addressing social equity and social justice issues. He regularly consults and provides training and thought leadership to fortune 500 clients on matters of diversity, equity and inclusion. Mr. Johnson has particular expertise and travels the country to address diversity issues related to the advancement of African American employees and executives and to teach Black Career Development and Intercultural Learning. He is passionate about closing the racial wealth gap, social equity issues and community economic development, and has used his years of experience as a serial entrepreneur, community advocate, lawyer and corporate executive to positively transform organizations, communities and individuals.

Mr. Johnson is the Chief Economic Inclusion Officer and General Counsel for the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago. The YWCA is a 140-year-old social enterprise. In this capacity, he is responsible for the management of the organization's Economic Empowerment Institute. The Economic Empowerment Institute includes the Financial Inclusion Institute, the Innovation and Technology Institute, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), StreetWise and the Workforce Development Institute.

Mr. Johnson further fuels his passion for entrepreneurship as the founder and Managing Partner of the Solomon Group LLC. The Solomon Group is a global social enterprise management consulting firm that provides expertise in the areas of community economic development, business management, franchise consulting and venture capital for minority and

women entrepreneurs.

Mr. Johnson also serves on the Co-Chair of Gromentum Labs, a social equity cannabis accelerator that provides opportunities to assist minorities in entering the cannabis industry, and is a member do the Cook County Cannabis Commission. He has been an active advocate for social equity applicants and works tirelessly to promote wealth creation in underserved communities. He has also developed a social enterprise economic model called the Social Determinants of Wealth to address the lack of investment in underserved communities and to promote community economic development.

Mr. Johnson received his Juris Doctorate for the University of Illinois College of law and dual Bachelor of Science degrees in Economics and Business Administration, and Sociology and Anthropology from Knox College.

Bar Admissions

- Illinois

Education

- J.D., University of Illinois College, 1993
- B.A., Economics, Business Administration, Sociology, Anthropology, Knox College, 1990

Practice Areas

- Corporate
- Cannabis
- Franchise Law

Professional and Community Involvement

- Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois, Board of Directors
- The Common Ground Foundation, Board Member
- James R. Jordan Foundation, Board Member
- Legal Prep Academy, Board Member
- National Urban League's Black Executive Exchange Program, Former Executive Advisory Board
- Gromentum Labs, Executive Co-Chair
- My Block My Hood My City, Board Member

Speaking Engagements

- Speaker, "Growing Use of ADR in Cannabis Disputes," Chicago Bar Association Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee Event, April 7, 2022
- Speaker, "Preparing Your Family For The Liquidity Event," Smart Business Dealmakers Conference, October 14, 2021
- Speaker, "How Do You Build Generational Wealth?" WGN Radio, September 2, 2021
- Speaker, "Building Diversity, Equity & Inclusion into Your Technology & Your Business," Tech Alpharetta, June 9, 2021
- Speaker, "How to Successfully Pitch for Business," Massachusetts Black Bar Association, 2015
- Speaker, "The Power of the African American Consumer," Wyndham Hotel Group, 2015
- Commencement Keynote Speaker, "Delta Mu Delta Business Honor Society, Chicago State University," 2015
- Speaker, "Executive Branding For Lawyers," Perkins Coie, Diverse Partners Law Firm Partners Retreat, 2015
- Speaker, "Success Strategies for Executives of Color," Alpha Kappa Alpha National Convention, 2014
- Speaker, "How to Successfully Pitch for Business," Minority Corporate Counsel Association, 2014
- Speaker, "Developing Your Leadership Brand," American Heart Association, 2013

Recognitions

- Franchise Times, "Legal Eagle," 2023
- *Crain's Chicago Business*, "Notable Leaders in Community Development," 2022
- Top 100 Black Lawyers in America, 2018
- Top Litigation Counsel, First Chair Award, 2012
- Chicago Business Leader of Color, 2009
- Risk & Insurance Risk Innovator Award, 2009
- Top Litigation Counsel, First Chair Award, 2012
- Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO), Legacy Diversity Award, 2008
- The National Eagle Leadership Institute Eagle Award, 2006
- McDonald's Corporation, Shining Light Award, 2003
- YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Black & Hispanic Achievers Award, 2002
- Bloom Trail High School Hall of Fame for Distinguished Accomplishments in the Field of Law

In the News

- Featured, "Greenspoon Marder Nabs Ex-Locke Lord Cannabis Law Attys" *Law360*, July 7, 2021

Publications

- Author, "What To Do About Chronic Black Joblessness" *Crain's Chicago Business*, May 13, 2022

News

- Greenspoon Marder Attorney Robert Johnson Selected to *Crain's Chicago Business*' Notable Leaders in Community Development for 2022
- Greenspoon Marder Attorney Robert Johnson Featured Speaker at 2021 Black Wealth Summit
- Greenspoon Marder Expands Cannabis Law Practice in the Midwest and Names New Cannabis Group Chair

Videos

- Cannabis Quick Hits: Social Equity in the Cannabis Space