



Dawn M. Johnson

Partner | Co-Group Leader, Franchise Industry

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St. Louis - 314.516.2678

Dawn thrives on being responsive to, and getting to know, her clients and their businesses so she can help them find the best and most practical business solution when faced with legal disputes. Her exceptional client service was recognized when she was awarded the 2024 Client Choice Award winner for franchise in Missouri, and she was also named Franchise Lawyer of the Year for Missouri for two consecutive years.

As Co-Group Leader of the UB Greensfelder's Franchise & Distribution Industry, Dawn heads a team of litigation and transactional attorneys who represent clients nationally and internationally, from start-ups to some of the largest and most recognized brands. Dawn's practice focuses on all aspects of the franchise relationship, including termination and non-renewal, claims under state and federal relationship laws such as disclosure and fraud claims, and other claims that are common in these relationship disputes, such as breach of contract, fraud, tortious interference, deceptive trade practices, unlawful pricing, trademark infringement, unfair competition, violation of restrictive covenants, and indemnification claims.

She represents franchisors in state and federal courts across the country, and in mediation and arbitration as franchisors increasingly use alternative dispute resolution methods. Dawn's practice includes other distribution models, including those with industry-specific laws, such as downstream petroleum marketing. Her deep experience in franchising and distribution also allows her to serve as background counsel on certain matters, providing a second opinion for businesses dealing with complex legal issues.

In addition to her work on behalf of franchisors and distributors, Dawn handles a range of general business disputes.

Dawn has significant appellate experience. She has argued before the Missouri Supreme Court and the Missouri Court of Appeals, Eastern and Western Districts, the Illinois Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. Her appellate practice allows her to use her extensive professional writing background.

Before attending law school, Dawn was an award-winning reporter for the *Herald & Review* daily newspaper in Decatur, Illinois. After law school, she continued her writing experience as a law clerk to U.S. Magistrate Judge David D. Noce in the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri from 1993 to 1997. Dawn's journalism degree and prior

Practices & Industries

- Franchising & Distribution Industry
- Distribution
- Established & Growing Franchisors
- Franchising Regulatory Compliance & Exemptions
- Start-Up Franchisors
- Energy Industry
- Bankruptcy & Creditors' Rights
- Bankruptcy & Insolvency Litigation
- Electronic Information Management
- Litigation & Dispute Resolution
- Regulatory & Antitrust Law
- Appellate Litigation
- Energy Litigation
- Franchising & Distribution
- Energy
- Convenience Retailing
- Oil & Gas
- Renewables

career in journalism have served as a solid foundation for her legal career. Outside of work, she is a fitness enthusiast, and she enjoys weight lifting, running, and Pilates.

Education

- Washington University School of Law (J.D., 1993)
- Eastern Illinois University (B.A., *magna cum laude*, 1983)

Bar Admissions

- Missouri
- Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Central District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Wisconsin
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit

Professional Affiliations

- International Franchise Association (*Certified Franchise Executive, 2019-present*)
- American Bar Association, Section of Litigation; Forum on Franchising
- *The Franchise Lawyer* (Associate Editor, 2020-present)
- International Franchise Association
- International Distribution Institute
- The Missouri Bar
- Illinois State Bar Association
- The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, St. Louis Lawyer (*Board of Editors, 1997-2015*)

Community Involvement

- FOCUS St. Louis (*Board of Directors, 2017-2023; Development Committee*)
- FOCUS St. Louis (*Leadership St. Louis, Class of 2011-2012*)
- Safe Connections (*Board of Directors, 2015-2022; Development Committee and former Co-Chair of the Lotus Ball*)
- Eastern Illinois University Foundation (*Board of Directors, 2020-present; President, 2023-2024*)
- City Arch River (*Citizens Advisory Committee, 2013-2015*)
- College Summit, St. Louis (*Volunteer Writing Coach, 2012-2013*)
- College Summit Missouri Site (*Advisory Board, 2012-2016, Chair, 2015-2016*)
- Gateway Legal Services, Inc. (*Board of Directors, 2008-2019*)

- Utilities
- Mobility, Consumers & Products
- Cannabis Industry

- Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis (*Board of Governors, 2002-2004*)
- The Compassionate Friends, Inc. (*Sibling Representative, Board of Directors, 1993-1996*)

Firm Involvement

- Co-Group Leader, Franchise & Distribution
- Member, Board of Directors (2021-2024)

Awards & Honors

- Named to *BTI Client Service All-Stars* (2025)
- Named to *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Franchise Law, Missouri (2021-2024; 2027)
- Designated *Best Lawyers*® Franchise Law "Lawyer of the Year" in the St. Louis area (2022; 2023; 2027)
- "No. 1 Franchising Lawyer in USA - Missouri," Lexology Client Choice Awards (2024-2026)
- Distinguished Alumna, Eastern Illinois University (2022)
- Women's Justice Award, *Missouri Lawyers Media* (2022)
- Who's Who Legal: Franchise (2017-2023)
- Decatur Public Schools Foundation, Alumna of the Year (2014)
- AV Preeminent®, Martindale-Hubbell® Peer Review Ratings™
- Washington University *Law Quarterly* (1991-1993)

Experience

- Settled numerous cases for franchisors involved in litigation alleging violations of various state relationship laws and other statutory and common law claims.
- Part of lead counsel team for a major oil company in connection with dealers' claims of unfair gas pricing. In a five-week bellwether trial, a jury found in favor of the energy company client on the pricing claims from four plaintiffs.
- Part of a team defending a major oil company in litigation related to a right of first option for a jet fuel pipeline at a major international airport after the client's sale of a key West Coast refinery.
- Part of a team defending a major oil company with state franchise, fraud, and fuel pricing claims filed by multi-site operators in Illinois.
- Part of a team defending a major oil company and its model multi-site operator contract with state franchise, fraud, and breach of contract claims filed in California and Missouri.
- Lead counsel for major oil companies in cases filed under the Petroleum Marketing Practices Act, often successfully obtaining summary judgment or defeating preliminary injunction motions filed by dealers.
- Lead counsel for a major motor oil company in putative class action litigation regarding alleged commingling and misbranding by jobber (vicarious liability claims).
- Lead counsel for major oil companies in litigation with jobbers regarding debranding issues, including trademark infringement and breach of contract.

- Represented a major oil company with respect to zoning claims related to new gas station development.

News & Media

August 20, 2026

UB Greensfelder Attorneys Recognized in The Best Lawyers in America® 2027 List

August 22, 2025

UBG Partners Dawn Johnson and Fritz Shadley Recognized as 2025 BTI Client Service All-Stars

August 21, 2025

UB Greensfelder Attorneys Recognized in The Best Lawyers in America® 2026 List

August 15, 2024

UB Greensfelder Attorneys Recognized in The Best Lawyers in America® 2025 List

April 24, 2024

FTC Issues Rule Prohibiting Non-Competes

August 17, 2023

Best Lawyers 2024 Edition Lists 66 Greensfelder Attorneys, Including Five “Lawyers Of The Year”

January 26, 2023

Greensfelder Attorneys Named To Who’s Who Legal: Franchising For 2022

October 18, 2022

Greensfelder Officer Dawn Johnson Named A Distinguished Alumna At Eastern Illinois University

August 18, 2022

Best Lawyers 2023 Edition Lists Over 60 Greensfelder Attorneys, Including Five St. Louis ‘Lawyers Of The Year’

March 15, 2022

Dawn Johnson Selected As Women’s Justice Award Recipient

August 19, 2021

Best Lawyers 2022 Edition Lists 60 Greensfelder Attorneys, Including Three St. Louis ‘Lawyers Of The Year’

Publications & Presentations

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Co-Presenter, “Avoiding the Franchise Landmines Hiding in Your License Agreements,” Association of Corporate Counsel, St. Louis Chapter, 2025

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Co-Author, "Being Picky: Choosing the Right Franchisees Can Be the Key to Your Brand's Long-Term Success," *Franchising World*, June/July/August 2025

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Co-Author and Co-Presenter, "To Arbitrate or Not to Arbitrate and How to Draft According," ABA Forum on Franchising Annual Conference, 2023

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Co-Author and Co-Presenter, "Distribution Disputes & Licensing Lessons: Avoiding Detours on the Journey to Growth," Association of Corporate Counsel, St. Louis, 2023

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Moderator, "What Your Future Franchise Lawyer Wishes You Knew Now," Roundtable, Emerging Franchisor Conference, 2022

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"FTC Puts Business Opportunities on Notice Regarding Promotional Claims and Content," *The Licensing Journal*, 2022

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"Keep an Eye Out for Biometrics Laws," *The Franchise Lawyer*, Winter 2021

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"Terminating franchisees without ending up in litigation," International Franchise Association Emerging Franchisor Conference, 2021

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Panelist, "Choosing effective dispute resolution clauses in distribution: choice of court clauses," International Distribution Institute Annual Conference, 2021

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Moderator and Co-Author, "Regulatory Update," International Franchise Association Legal Symposium, 2021

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"Ten Ways to Improve Your Arbitration Clause," *Today's General Counsel*, April/May 2017

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Co-Presenter, "So You Want to Arbitrate? Ten (or More) Ways to Improve Your Arbitration Clause," Association of Corporate Counsel, St. Louis Chapter, 2017

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"Big Data: Opportunities and Challenges in Litigation," ABA Petroleum Marketing Attorneys' Meeting, 2014

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"Frequently Arising Issues in Franchise Litigation (including Electronic Discovery)," International Franchise Association Legal Symposium, 2012

