



# Perfecting the Practice

To start **Delegatus**, one of the leading law firms in Québec, **Pascale Pageau** had to rethink the entire legal industry

BY ANNIE MONJAR

As a legal trailblazer, Pageau has won eight awards over the course of her career. The Women's Executive Network named her on its Most Powerful Women in Canada list in 2013, and in the same year, the Women's Y Foundation awarded her the Women of Distinction Award in the Entrepreneurship category.

**P**ascale Pageau had a vision: a law firm that would provide clients with tailored expertise rather than the expensive, one-size-fits-all contracts typical in the field. So, in 2005, after working in large, traditional law firms for eight years, Pageau decided it was time for a change—for both her and her clients. Today she is the president of Québec-based **Delegatus Legal Services Inc.**, a firm that focuses on client needs, lawyer experience, and being a different type of legal counsel. Here, we take a look at some of the statistics behind her success. ↓

## A 10-year anniversary

In 2005, Pageau was just coming off her second maternity leave and was looking for a way to rethink the legal model she was working in. “I wanted a model that would be more adapted to my clients,” she says. “Ten years ago, clients were paying enormous legal fees, and people in the legal industry were seen as highly expensive sharks.”

After starting **Delegatus** alone in her basement, Pageau eventually began to receive great feedback from both clients and colleagues.

There was, at last, a firm that could create value for its clients and connect with them rather than being expensive and hard to reach.

## 2 essential divisions

The firm's first main division involves contracted, in-house work. With **Delegatus**, companies can have specialized, outsourced help for as long as the company needs it. The firm will send the

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Pascale Pageau, President & Founder

appropriate amount of lawyers to work with companies’ teams for anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Oftentimes, companies want the direct connection and expertise of an in-house lawyer but don’t want to hire someone on a full-time basis. This, Pageau points out, is the truly innovative part of Delegatus’s model, because it is often financially unfeasible for other companies to offer. The second division is for businesses’ legal needs, including commercial litigation, leasing, financing, and labour law.

## 17 years of experience

Pageau prioritizes surrounding herself with lawyers with experience, expertise, and efficiency. Of all the lawyers on board, the average level of experience is 17 years, with the most experienced attorney totalling 40 years. “When we meet with clients, they can’t believe they’re getting this level of experience for the price,” she says. Also, Pageau doesn’t hire junior lawyers. The minimum amount of experience an attorney needs is four years. Delegatus culls its talent from large law firms and major companies with lawyers who are looking for an innovative way to practice law.

## 691 clients and counting

With clients large and small, the firm’s portfolio runs the gamut from construction companies to financial institutions to other law firms that need help with overload or want external help because

of a conflict of interest. Some of its big-name clients include Yellow Pages Group, Ivanhoé Cambridge, Desjardins Group, Concordia University, National Bank of Canada, Veolia, Gaz Métro, and Vantrix Corporation.

## 27 lawyers

Today, with 27 legal experts, Delegatus is a far cry from the one-woman operation it began as. Two years after she launched the firm, Pageau had five attorneys working with her—operating mostly from their homes or at clients’ offices. But in 2010, Delegatus rented its first office. Then it moved to an even bigger space in 2012, with more than a dozen lawyers. A year later, the firm had to lease another floor from its building. Eventually, Pageau hopes to expand to 40 lawyers. “We hope to still be the leading, innovative law firm in Québec,” she says. “And we still want to increase our numbers to benefit our clientele, but not at any price. We want to make sure that any new lawyer that comes in is a great business [and] cultural fit for our team and for our clients.”

## 4 children

In addition to her career, Pageau also has four children between the ages of 4 and 11. She raises the two boys and two girls with her husband, who is a partner at a large Québec law firm. “I’m an ambitious woman, but I’m also an ambitious mom,” she says. “I want it all.” ■

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