

Crowell & Moring Bolsters Fintech Group With New Lead Hire

By Philip Rosenstein

Law360 (October 3, 2019, 10:13 AM EDT) -- Crowell & Moring LLP has hired Michelle Ann Gitlitz, who arrived from Blank Rome LLP, to head its global blockchain and digital asset practice, bolstering its team with a veteran attorney who has expanded her practice throughout the fintech space.

Gitlitz's expertise is spread across crypto asset regulation and initial coin offerings, money transmission laws and addressing enforcement actions and regulatory inquiries in the financial services space, among other specialties.

She joins Crowell & Moring as the firm continues to engage in a variety of innovative practice areas in an effort coined by the firm as its Digital Transformation Initiative. Through the initiative, the firm advises clients in areas including blockchain, autonomous vehicles, drones, artificial intelligence and robotics, the internet of things and cybersecurity and privacy, among other verticals.

"Crowell is at the forefront of helping clients engage in that transformation in a regulatory compliant manner, particularly where, in areas like blockchain and digital assets, the laws are sometimes uncertain," Gitlitz told Law360. "When this opportunity came to me to lead this practice, but more importantly, to be part of a bigger initiative — I said absolutely with both feet in."

At Blank Rome, Gitlitz founded firm's blockchain technology and digital currencies group and served as co-lead. While at Blank Rome she saw the rise and fall of the initial coin offering, assessing early on that many ICOs would be deemed securities offerings.

Largely staying away from the ICO "craze," Gitlitz was able to expand her practice throughout the fintech space, finding herself also in a position to remediate some of the ICOs that fell afoul of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission after the fact. She told Law360 she has worked on a variety of projects advising music auditing companies, energy companies and health care firms in developing blockchain products.

"Michelle's innovative practice will be of great value to our technology and financial services clients, as well as any client launching or changing its business to adapt to emerging technology trends," Philip T. Inglima, chair of Crowell & Moring, said in a press release.



Michelle Ann Gitlitz

“Michelle’s work with payment companies in the cryptocurrency space, blockchain nodes, mining and staking operations, coin/token issuers, and cryptocurrency hedge funds give her the ability to translate complex technical issues to clients and regulators to achieve stellar results for her clients,” he added.

Gitlitz is also active in the nonprofit space and is a member of various industry groups, serving as president and director of Diversity in Blockchain, and as a member of the Wall Street Blockchain Alliance and the Digital Chamber of Commerce.

“The most rewarding thing about these organizations is how collaborative [they are] as many different law firms and other institutions, companies and enterprises get together, and we can all brainstorm and think about the laws, the facts, what we think works and doesn't work,” Gitlitz said. “And that's part of innovation.”

--Editing by Rebecca Flanagan.