

## Reaping ‘Overnight’ Lateral Hiring Success Built Five Years Ago



**Achieving lasting, transformational change requires planning, refining and measuring.**

**By Curtis B. Toll and Alex Scarola | [March 9, 2022](#) | [The Legal Intelligencer](#)**

When we looked across our 30-odd lawyer office back in 2017, there was a lot about which to be proud. In Greenberg Traurig’s first 20 years in Philadelphia, we established solid, core practices—labor and employment, environmental, and public finance and infrastructure leading the pack. We had great clients, and we were humming along.

Discussions began to brew in the background of this success, though. Thoughtful and invested shareholders started honing their lens on a landscape we felt we may be leaving largely untapped. This group started talking more regularly, and the questions they posed bubbled up and expanded to broader conversations with office leadership. Underscoring the dialogue was a focus on how we would sustain, even expand, this success—not just in the short term, but for years to come. The answers fell squarely on using our global firm’s resources to further attract and retain lateral shareholders and of counsel from Philadelphia. As we talked, we dared to start seriously imagining more, challenging ourselves on manifesting this next-level of excellence. So, we launched a locally focused growth project designed to scour and draw top-flight talent with the potential and values to leverage our unique platform. In the process, we would define a new era for Greenberg Traurig in Philadelphia.

The proof of those efforts is found today, as we are on the cusp of celebrating our 25th year operating in Philadelphia. We stand nearly doubled in size, with deeper offerings for lateral recruits, equating to even more expansive services for clients and a stronger bottom line. None of it occurred by accident or overnight. Rather, it came from committed rigorous thinking, swift deployment, smart partnerships, and sharper branding to sculpt and share our narrative in the marketplace. We could not be more excited by the results or what lies ahead.

As the legal profession continues to navigate seismic shifts, we believe that our approach to lateral hiring will continue to grow and become the norm. Whether considering chartable change, such as generational turnover, or unforeseen disruptions, such as global pandemics or racial reckonings, law firms can no longer afford complacency. Those creating actionable plans to address the known and unknown will win the future.

Our diverse group of voices helped us build an orchestra of ideas, a wellspring of perspectives, and helped our leadership team grow our framework for action. That includes a calendar for activity that begins with a review of how we can fill client needs through recruitment. We consider what core and niche legal disciplines may make a difference for our clients going forward and what type of professional would make the best fit for clients, the office, and the firm. Greenberg Traurig is built on trust and empowerment for its professionals at every level. We are known for avoiding bureaucracy—no committees and subcommittees and sub-subcommittees. We are proud that our firm trusts and empowers local leaders, allowing us to power ahead when it comes to a full range of operational actions, including recruiting attorneys who share our core values and whose experience address client needs.

When we see a candidate that fits the criteria for our identified goals, we move quickly but confidentially, understanding even a sizable and cosmopolitan city like Philadelphia can be pretty small when it comes to lawyers looking to move practices—and there are many, many reasons for that, as individual as each attorney. Whether by video conference or other methods, we work to reduce or eliminate concerns about time and expense—or being spotted by colleagues a table over at a coffeeshop or restaurant. These actions further demonstrate our commitment to our attorneys and their careers from the start. Our dedicated and resolute teams—from integration; to diversity, equity, and inclusion; to professional development, human resources, and technology—create a seamless entry into the Greenberg Traurig family. Almost immediately, our new lawyers are able to service their existing clients, as well as begin what will be a lifetime of collaboration with colleagues around the globe and in areas of practice to which their clients may not have had access previously. It is not unusual for a new attorney coming to Greenberg Traurig to close a deal, for example, in London, then another in Denver for their clients with their new colleagues, all within a month of joining the firm. That scenario replicates itself with greater frequency as our teams and resources grow; this is a perfect example of what we call “freedom within a framework.” Collaboration is built into the fabric of the firm, and new joiners know that they can run with the ball from the outset.

A better understanding of our Philadelphia story—our history, our operations, our values—has proven instrumental to our lateral efforts, as well. Prospective new Greenberg Traurig lawyers know our office, understand our vision, and know how they will fit in—always able to remain their authentic selves. Our office is no longer one of this area’s best kept secrets. We are proud that we are viewed as a thriving and diverse Philadelphia force with clear investment in this city and region, seen in engagements with industry leaders such as the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation and pro bono stalwarts such as the Public Interest Law Center and Philadelphia VIP. The same can be said for our support of next generation scholars and lawyers of the Barristers’ Association of Philadelphia and others. Likewise, we encourage all our attorneys and business staff to become involved in civic activities—and we celebrate those efforts together. Anyone considering coming here can see that we wear our values on our sleeves.

Leading with our values attracts those who share our vision and seek to be authentic in all aspects of their lives, including work. We embrace all, whether more junior attorneys who represent the profession's and the city's future, or those who are invested in building a strong pipeline. And we are just as committed to succession plans that create smooth transitions for clients. We are mindful that today's Millennials won't suddenly morph into yesterday's Baby Boomers once they begin to age. Instead, they will further infuse their perspectives, but with greater authority, as they ascend within their chosen fields, and the law is no different. We are completely cognizant of that fact as we build an office well-conditioned and positioned for these leaders.

These inherent demonstrations of vision, trust, and flexibility in practices and the workplace buttress our successes in having at the ready professionals who best fit client needs today and going forward. Having moved from 37 to more than 60 lawyers in under five years, our office continues to execute a bold and positive vision. And by enacting that vision strategically, we expect our trajectory to continue upward for the next 25 years.

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