

## The Law Firm Disrupted: Like Uber, But For ...

Greenberg Traurig's new venture, Recurve, is definitely worth watching. But is it groundbreaking?

By Dan Packel

**Like Uber, but for...**

Greenberg Traurig executive chairman **Richard Rosenbaum** told me earlier this week that the firm's new innovation subsidiary is an idea that hasn't been attempted before in the marketplace.

He likened the new venture, Recurve, to Uber and Airbnb, describing it as a platform where law firms and their clients can come together with providers of legal tech services, nimble staffing and real estate experts, artificial intelligence purveyors, and more. The idea is that experts with Recurve advise clients as well as law firms on what services they might need, and connect them to vendors who can supply solutions. Some of these will be strategic partners in the initiative, others will be from outside.

"We don't know any other such platform that exists, just like when Uber was created, we didn't know any other place that did what they do," Rosenbaum said.

But Greenberg Traurig isn't the first large law firm to launch a subsidiary to help it dip its toes a little deeper into the innovation pool.



Let's work through what stands out with this new offering and what overlaps with what we've seen elsewhere.

►► Strategic partners: Greenberg is making the initial investment into Recurve. But it's not intended to remain a wholly-owned subsidiary of the firm for long. Its soon-to-be-announced strategic partners (in the areas of staffing, real estate, and technology) will be investors as well.

Dentons' **legal technology startup NextLaw Labs**, unveiled in 2015, also partners with legal tech purveyors to offer their services to clients.

►► Engaging other firms: Recurve is being targeted not just towards current and future Greenberg clients,

but also to other law firms in need of tech solutions and flexible ways of doing business. Rosenbaum even recognizes that other law firms that offer particular technologies could wind up investing in the service.

Dentons' NextLaw Labs was also founded on the idea that it would sell services to other firms. **Reed Smith's GravityStack**, a tech subsidiary announced last year, is another player aiming to license the firms' technology products and provide managed services not just to legal department clients, but to other law firms.

What sets Greenberg's Recurve apart? The firm doesn't appear to be deploying any of its own technology—

certainly nothing that ties directly to legal practice. The firm makes that clear multiple times in its announcement. By contrast, Wilson Sonsini said that its recently announced subsidiary SixFifty also will not be providing legal advice. But SixFifty's first product is a tool that drafts documents for compliance with the California Consumer Privacy Act. Greenberg may look to partners to develop some of these tools, and Recurve's experts will aim to guide clients to what meets their needs—something like a concierge service, even if neither the firm nor Rosenbaum have used that exact term.

Rosenbaum used “architect.” It's a little tonier. More years of schooling go into becoming an architect than a concierge. General contractor could be a good descriptor, too, even if they get their hands a little dirtier than the architects.

Regardless, it's an idea worth tracking, especially in light of my colleague **Rhys Dipshan's finding that law-firm backed technology** can face resistance in the marketplace. Greenberg Traurig

will offer more details once the firm announces its first set of “strategic partners” within the next two months, and we'll likely get a better sense of what the blueprint for Recurve really represents.

#### In the News

Remember Arthur Andersen? Once one of the Big Five accounting firms, the organization flamed out in the early 2000s following a criminal conviction, later reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court, over its role in the Enron accounting fraud scandal. The firm spun off its tax practice in 2002 under a different name, and it rebranded the U.S. and international units as AndersenTax and AndersenGlobal in 2013. The latter just added on a German law firm, as our **Meganne Tillay reported earlier this week**. I'm working on setting up a conversation with CEO Mark Vorsatz, himself a lawyer, to learn more about their legal ambitions.

On to the Big Four, where scale continues to be both a blessing and a curse. These organizations are so big, any given week reveals trouble popping

up one place or another. According to the Financial Times, for this go-around it's Leeds, England, where **PwC was hit with its second multimillion-pound fine in a year** over a “serious lack of competence” in two audits, and also India, where **regulators want a five-year ban against Deloitte and KPMG** over a flawed audit of a major infrastructure and finance group.

And how about our friends at CKR Law, at one point a rapidly growing New York-based firm with global ambitions. The **lesson from my colleague Jack Newsham**: figure out how to pay both non-equity partners and vendors before embarking on a campaign of rapid expansion. Or, alternatively, expect a run of bad press.

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