

Built for Change

An Interview with Richard A. Rosenbaum, Executive Chairman, Greenberg Traurig, LLP

EDITORS' NOTE Richard Rosenbaum joined Greenberg Traurig in 1985 as its 90th lawyer and has since helped lead the firm's growth across the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, navigating the changing times, while remaining fiercely devoted to serving the firm's clients, lawyers, and staff. Most recently, Rosenbaum has taken a lead in the firm's unique approach to coupling substantive excellence with the innovative and efficient delivery of legal services. Rosenbaum is widely known



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for his experience in a diverse range of industries, including real estate, entertainment, media, technology, investment and finance, representing companies of all sizes and many wealthy individuals and successful entrepreneurs over the years.

Whether it is leading and managing the firm and its lawyers or serving the firm's clients, Rosenbaum's focus remains the same: delivering business results which exceed expectations with an extraordinary sense of urgency, efficiency and excellence, while at the same time living the "old school" values of ethics, loyalty, family and personal accountability, which create long-term relationships and lasting trust across the decades.

Rosenbaum has been considered a thought and change leader in the broader legal profession, whether it relates to his devotion to delivering excellence and value to the firm's clients or ensuring an open and fair playing field to diverse talent from all backgrounds, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Before becoming Executive Chairman, in his roles as the firm's Chief Executive Officer and President, Rosenbaum made clear his primary focus on high quality, excellent service and the collaborative, respectful and empowering culture of the firm. He founded and developed the firm's renowned and wide-ranging "Commitment to Excellence" program, which ensures that Greenberg Traurig's values would be and remain core aspects of the firm's global brand for years to come.

COMPANY BRIEF Greenberg Traurig, LLP (gtlaw.com) has approximately 2,200 attorneys in 40 locations in the United States, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The firm has been recognized for its philanthropic giving, diversity, and innovation, and is consistently among the largest firms in the U.S. on the Law360 400 and among the Top 20 on the Am Law Global 100.

The world is fighting a public health crisis that is impacting all countries and their citizens. The pandemic is being fought on the front lines by healthcare workers, first responders, those providing supplies and meals, transportation workers and all other essential workers. What do you say to these true leaders and heroes that are risking their lives to protect others?

Even saying a heartfelt "thank you" to these heroes who are holding our world together now seems woefully inadequate, but it is a good first step. I say "thank you" for your selfless efforts and dedication. Thank you for your tireless and generous spirit that continuously guides you to be of service to the people in your communities. Thank you for inspiring all of us to unite and take the precautions necessary to end the spread of COVID-19.

Greenberg Traurig is a purpose-driven firm with a long history of supporting its employees, clients and communities. How has Greenberg Traurig adapted its business and the way it works during this unprecedented time in order to continue to effectively support its employees, clients and communities?

In times of crisis, the character and core values of a firm and its leaders are tested and truly revealed. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew that our clients, attorneys, and business staff were facing a multi-dimensional crisis and uncertainty about the future. With our attorneys and business staff, we made transparent and honest communication a top priority. The goal of that commitment was to ensure that no members of the GT family had to face the added stress of financial uncertainty in the early stages of the pandemic. For our clients, we focused on new ways to deliver value and help them develop plans to address the wide range of legal challenges that are directly impacting companies of all sizes during the pandemic.

Going forward, we are continually focused on how to adapt our business model to best serve our clients, our attorneys and business staff, and the communities where we live and work. The possibilities are endless. We must put people and clients first, and then operate from strength, in order to look up and be ready for change.

How have Greenberg Traurig's people changed the way they work in order to be effective with the changes that have been necessary for all businesses to make and how proud are you to see the resilience of your team?

Very early on in this crisis, we understood that providing our exceptional service day and night – whenever and wherever needed – would be the key to helping our clients navigate these challenging times. To do it, we moved quickly to facilitate remote working across our platform of more than 2,200 attorneys and more than 2,000 business staff in 40 offices worldwide. We are defined by our people, not our buildings. Our long-term commitment to state-of-the-art technology has allowed for a seamless environment with people working both in the office and remotely. We have proven once again that a unified law firm with diverse practices that are linked, collaborative, and known for excellence across the system is a far more durable model during times of crisis or change.

The cultural glue must be strong to keep people together and communication of the business model must be constant so that it is understood. For example, firms like Greenberg Traurig that did not eliminate their labor and employment lawyers, or which have built or retained their federal, state and local government practices, are now likely to be hugely busy in a world recovering from a variety of shocks. This has proven to be even more accurate than expected as we have seen with a successful performance during the first half of the year. The results for our clients and our firm have been outstanding, and I am proud of our team every day for what they continue to achieve during these difficult times.

There is a great deal of discussion about businesses reopening in a "new normal." What is your outlook for what this new normal may look like and how is Greenberg Traurig preparing for the next stage in this crisis?

Every day brings more adjustments – that is the new normal. At all times, we remain nimble and responsive, as we adapt to the change and realities on the ground. We know that each Greenberg Traurig office, each practice, each person, is unique and so are the challenges they face. Now more than ever, we are seeing the benefits of our entrepreneurial model that puts

the decision-making power in the hands of the attorneys closest to the clients and the market. These attributes are critical to a global business surviving and thriving in a challenging environment. We are built for change and continuously evolving for that purpose.

The country is facing a crisis around social injustice and racism. Greenberg Traurig is a firm that has a long history of supporting diversity and inclusion, with a culture built on fairness and equality. Will you discuss the firm's commitment to diversity and equality?

Greenberg Traurig's commitment to diversity and inclusion dates to our founding more than 50 years ago and has always been a critical part of our DNA, but given recent events we realized the need to do more. We are proud to commit \$5 million over the next five years to support programs that address the causes and effects of systemic racism in our society and seek to aid impoverished communities and individuals. Our Social, Racial, and Economic Justice Action Plan includes a range of targeted activities and new initiatives designed to create even greater impact in the communities that need the most help.

One foundational component of the firm's plan is its dedicated funding for additional Greenberg Traurig Equal Justice Works fellows focused on addressing racial, social, and economic justice issues. Already the largest sponsor of Equal Justice Works fellows since 1999, the firm will initiate a new effort in December by providing fellowship funding to select law school students who will deliver critically needed legal services at nonprofit host organizations focused on these issues. The fellows will begin to implement their plans in September 2021.

The firm also launched Greenberg Traurig's Social Justice Action Academy, which aims to educate and train Greenberg Traurig employees on matters of race, justice, and equity. The academy's "Courageous Conversations" program includes a series of internal and external programs where attendees will have opportunities to hear about personal experiences with social injustice and racism and new initiatives to right these wrongs. The goal is elevating Greenberg Traurig's collective empathy and creating positive change.

Greenberg Traurig has a long and deep commitment to New York City which has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. What are the keys to New York City's recovery and how critical is it for there to be a strong public/private partnership to ensure a safe and effective reopening of New York City?

We are committed to remaining highly engaged with New York City, where we have a large office with nearly 500 lawyers and business staff. Our premier real estate practice includes about 80 New York lawyers who have helped to shape the skyline we all enjoy. Our Government, Law, and Policy Group works with city officials every day on behalf of our clients with New York business interests to help them navigate these uncertain times in tandem with government

initiatives. We continue to be leaders in the New York City legal profession, which as of July 2020 employed more than 76,000 people.

Recovery of our city depends on government and business interests continuously working together. It also depends on how we handle COVID-19 issues moving forward. We have done a good job of flattening the curve of new COVID-19 cases, however we need to remain vigilant on this front going forward, including consistent testing, vaccines, medical services, and proper ventilation.

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What do you say to other business leaders and to those who built the leading companies in New York City about the need to remain loyal and committed to New York City and its future during this difficult time?

As a highly successful business committed to remaining in New York City, Greenberg Traurig moves forward here with the strong belief that we are in one of the two worldwide epicenters for the practice of law in the world, with London being the other location. Through good times and challenging times, New York has long been known globally as a city where top lawyers create new

legal vehicles, advance new legal ideas, and litigate important cases. This won't change due to COVID-19. It is merely a bump in the road for a city whose journey is timeless and whose benefits to businesses will endure – access to an evergreen pool of significant business talent, home to endless trendsetting thought leaders, and an energy so vibrant that it informs the dreams of millions.

You had lived in New York City prior to moving to South Florida 35 years ago and then returned in 1996 to build Greenberg Traurig's office in New York. What excited you about coming back to New York and how committed are you personally to stay in New York and be a part of its recovery and rebuilding?

I am a New Yorker through and through. The city is forever in my heart and soul. No matter where I travel worldwide, it only takes about two minutes before they peg me as a New Yorker. Our city draws me back like a magnet to once again experience all its unique treasures. I feel most alive when I am walking our fascinating streets, feeling the energy of our business district and experiencing our diverse population through architecture, art, and food. While I still travel a good deal, I remain committed to staying in New York and ensuring the city that I love comes back better than ever before.

There are many who question New York City's future during this difficult time. Are you optimistic that New York City will be able to get back what has made it so great and that it will continue to be a leading global city?

Every city has its cycles. New York has historically been a highly resilient city that is particularly adept at moving itself forward after catastrophe. Here, we are always thinking ahead, which is evident in our ever-changing skyline that includes a rebuilt World Trade Center. While we respect our history, we think change is vital and we embrace it. The key issues going forward are about making sure we can educate our children, maintain our urban landscape and keep the city safe. If we can do that, people will come. New York's past successes rebuilding in the face of challenge are strong predictors that out of our current turmoil and uncertainty will rise an even stronger global city.

During this unprecedented time, what are you telling your people and what would you say to young people across the country who are deeply concerned and uncertain about the future?

Hard times are when visionaries use their intelligence, foresight, and energy to build new success. Now more than ever before is a time for focus. Focus on all aspects of the personal relationships, values, business interests, and service that you can control. Strive to do even better at everything than you did before, and impress everyone with whom you interact. If each of us does these very important things, we can collectively build our successful future together. It is in times of crisis that values and character really shine through. ●