

## How I Made Office Co-Managing Partner: 'I Strive to Be Fair and Live by the Servant Leadership Philosophy,' Says Yosbel Ibarra of Greenberg Traurig

**'My position is a privilege in service to the firm and understand that I do not have any authority beyond the respect I earn from my partners.'**

By Tasha Norman

**Yosbel A. Ibarra, 48, Greenberg Traurig, P.A., Miami Office.**

**Job title:** Co-Managing Shareholder, Miami Office.

**Practice area:** Corporate/M&A.

**Law school and year of graduation:** New York University School of Law, 1998.

**How long have you been at the firm?** 17.5 years. I was elevated to partner in January 2007, and I was promoted to co-managing shareholder of the firm's Miami office, which is the firm's founding office, in March 2017.

**What's the biggest surprise you experienced in becoming managing partner?** At our firm, management decisions are made relatively quickly, but they are almost always consensus-driven. As managing partner, I can now better appreciate the challenge of doing this at a more than 2,300-lawyer firm with 40 offices across the world, all while proudly shunning bureaucracy. I think we are successful because our firm empowers local leadership, who best

understand the dynamics of their market and are closest to clients, which underscores for me how important our culture is to the success of our law firm.

**What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you managing partner?** I believe successful law firm leaders must be respected by their peers and clients for the quality of their legal work, and their partners must also trust that they are going to make decisions based on the best interests of the institution and not those of any one individual. I try to live by these standards: I believe in treating a first-year partner with the same deference and respect as a 30-year partner, and I strive to be fair, focusing on doing what is good for the institution and our clients. I also believe that my position is a privilege in service to the firm and understand that I do not have any authority beyond the respect I earn from my partners.

**What's the key to successful business development in your**



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Yosbel A. Ibarra

**opinion?** Teamwork, collaboration and a focus on client service. You can't be an expert in every subject, so it's important to be part of a strong team and leverage the resources available for your clients. It's also critical to understand your client's business and goals, keeping their priorities in the forefront of everything you do.

**Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to managing partner?** I am lucky to have had several great

mentors throughout my career, but my career has directly benefited by having grown up under the firm's two Senior Chairmen, Cesar L. Alvarez and Matthew B. Gorson. Cesar, a legend in the legal community and the former CEO of the firm, is a Cuban immigrant like me, who taught me the importance of living by the servant leadership philosophy.

From Matt, who oversees day-to-day operations of the firm's Southeast and California offices, I have learned the economics of running a law firm, from managing a P&L statement to the metrics that impact profitability and productivity. Matt also reminds everyone to find time to enjoy life and not take ourselves too seriously. Together, what I have learned from Cesar and Matt are all the things they don't teach in law school but are critical to being a successful law firm leader. I have taken their teachings to heart and am lucky to have them as resources to call on regularly for advice.

**What's the best piece of advice you could give a partner who wants to elevate to firm leadership?** Rather than focusing on being promoted to a leadership position, put your energy into excelling in your profession. Be a good attorney, be a good partner, treat others with respect

and care about the institution. The rest will follow.

**What initiatives at the firm are you most proud of?** Our firm was founded in Miami, and together with my co-managing shareholder, Jaret Davis, we have focused on continuing the legacy of excellence, entrepreneurship and meritocracy that has helped make Greenberg Traurig a success since the firm was founded in 1967. Therefore, I am most proud when a client, lateral partner candidate or even opposing counsel is walking the hallways of our office and comments on how our culture of collaboration and camaraderie is evident to even those outside our organization.

**Can you tell me about how your personal story has shaped the leader you are today?** My mother was 25 years old when she decided to leave Cuba with two young children. I saw the struggles she faced raising my brother and me in the United States. It is because of her hard work and sacrifices that we enjoy the privileges we have today. When I am faced with challenges in my own career, I know they hardly compare to the hardships she tackled daily. That mindset breeds gratitude and helps keep life in perspective. When difficult situations arise, I remember that I am



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grateful for the opportunity to do what I do best. I am grateful every day.

**What do you think is the biggest challenge facing leaders today in the legal industry?** The challenge right now is how to develop a "new normal" that provides a balance between remote work and having our teams in the office. Our partners, associates, and support staff did an amazing job over the last two years. We handled major transactions and cases, while also winning new business without missing a beat. But personal interaction remains a strong part of our culture and critical to the success of the legal services we provide clients. Things may never go back to exactly how they were previously, but it is our responsibility to help usher in a new era of relationship building, client service, and professional development and training.

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