

Women Attorney Leaders at Greenberg Traurig Discuss Their Formula for Moving the Needle

How to Mentor, Inspire, and Retain Successful Attorneys: My Playbook as a Woman Law Firm Leader to Develop Diverse Legal Talent

By Lori G. Cohen



EDITORS' NOTE Lori Cohen is vice chair of Greenberg Traurig, LLP and co-chair of its Global Litigation Practice, leading a group of 600+ attorneys nationally and internationally. She also is co-chair of the Trial Practice Group, which she created at the firm, and built its Pharmaceutical, Medical Device and Health Care Litigation Practice. Nationally ranked and recognized for her extraordinary trial record of 58 defense verdicts, she leads attorneys focused on complex litigation, including products liability and pharmaceutical, medical device, and healthcare litigation.

Providing clients with spectacular service and meaningful victories requires a deep bench of attorney talent with valuable and diverse perspectives that come from varying backgrounds, genders, and experiences. As vice chair of Greenberg Traurig, LLP and co-chair of its Global Litigation Practice with oversight of 600+ litigators, I know that achieving this goal depends on attracting, training, inspiring, and retaining gifted junior attorneys – replacing obstacles to success with opportunities. My playbook for developing attorneys includes several strategies that have proven successful over time. They include principles that also apply to mentoring in virtually any industry:

- **Provide junior attorneys with meaningful work and mentor their legal skills** – There's no substitute for learning by doing. Often, I can tell attorneys are ready to stretch their skills before they realize it. I provide them opportunities to grow – succeeding and failing in the process.
- **Bring them to observe/participate in trials/transactions** – It's not enough to have them behind the scenes. Ensure they are visible: Put them out front handling matters; give them real client experience and exposure. This is essential to their becoming leaders.
- **Teach them how to provide exemplary client service and provide them substantial opportunities to interact with clients** – This occurs on a daily basis and extends to bringing them to trials and industry conferences, sometimes as a firm expense.
- **Showcase their talent to clients so they create relationships and skills vital to business development** – This involves my advocating for attorneys with clients, often paying for certain costs to generate collaboration.
- **Promote their elevation to shareholder** – People go where they can see themselves succeeding. There's no better way to reward success and show attorneys their careers can flourish than promoting them as soon as they are ready.
- **Advocate for their appointment to firm leadership roles** – This maximizes the impact of attorneys who demonstrate leadership skills.
- **Support attorneys' opportunities to serve as in-house counsel with clients** – Sometimes our attorneys work so well with clients they see their career advancing within their companies. When this happens, I feel particularly gratified, knowing I've helped both achieve crucial goals.
- **Give them opportunities for community involvement and support their efforts** – This is important to their personal and professional development.

These tactics take time and effort to show results, however they deliver exceptional return for individual attorneys, clients, and law firms.

Mentorship is a Responsibility: Pay It Forward

By G. Michelle Ferreira



EDITORS' NOTE Michelle Ferreira is co-managing shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's San Francisco and Silicon Valley offices. In 2015, she was selected as a voting member of the firm's Executive Committee, where she contributes to the firm's overall strategic initiatives and operations. As a former tax litigator for the Internal Revenue Service, Ferreira offers a unique perspective when handling complex tax and penalty disputes before the agency. She has 18 reported decisions in the U.S. Tax Court on issues ranging from unreported income, civil and criminal tax fraud, and penalty assessments to valuation disputes, tax shelters, and complex real estate transactions.

As a Hispanic woman who has been given a seat at the leadership table at one of the largest law firms in the United States, I find it important to pay it forward by serving as a mentor to the next generation of lawyers.

Mentorship is an essential responsibility of a good leader. It needs to be proactive and visible. It is not just about recruiting a new class of diverse associates every year. It is about facilitating a path here so they can eventually evolve into new leaders.

Greenberg Traurig is recognized for its entrepreneurial and highly collaborative culture. These attributes drew me here 17 years ago when I moved from the public sector. But now with 2,300 attorneys and 40 offices worldwide, it can seem a bit daunting to connect with this vast network of attorneys. I assist new associates and lateral hires by helping them make those connections, setting up meetings with attorneys who have a similar practice focus, doing it in person as we visit other offices, at firm meetings, or on a video call in our new COVID-19 normal. I am hands-on because if new attorneys can tap into our global platform, develop new business, and grow their practices, they will likely be successful and happy here.

Creating opportunities means going beyond having women and minorities as lawyers working on matters and in leadership positions, but also as members of the firm's professional staff, vendors, and clients. I have long been involved in the firm's Women's Initiative as another avenue for empowering women attorneys. Externally, I mentor and promote women and diverse attorneys as a board member of the Bar Association of San Francisco's Justice & Diversity Center as well as via local, state, and federal tax bars to which I belong. I am often involved in speaking and writing opportunities that further my dedication to mentoring diverse and women attorneys.

Throughout my career, but especially early on, I was blessed with diverse mentors, young and old, men and women, with different ethnicities and backgrounds, who helped shape my career. I want the same for the young attorneys who join the firm now. That is my mantra: the more mentors you have – and the more diverse they are – the better lawyer you are going to be.

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Michelle Ferreira

Leading by Example, with Intention and a Servant Heart

By Shari L. Heyen



EDITORS' NOTE *Shari Heyen is co-chair of Greenberg Traurig's Global Restructuring and Bankruptcy Practice and co-managing shareholder of the Houston office. Heyen has experience in complex restructuring, bankruptcy, insolvency, and complex commercial litigation matters. She has represented numerous creditors' committees, debtors, bank groups, acquirers and other significant constituencies in national Chapter 11 cases and workout proceedings, including complex oil, gas, and energy cases. Heyen has broad experience in the prosecution and defense of fiduciary litigation, real estate, oil and gas, healthcare, receiverships, and alternative energy matters.*

In my experience, I have found that great leaders lead by example, with intention, and with a servant heart. It is their authenticity that draws people closer, allows others to trust them and showcases their excellence. By being true to yourself, and not a second-rate version of someone else, you are able to foster genuine relationships. These relationships, especially those with mentors or sponsors in the legal field, can make all the difference in your career.

As a woman in a prominent leadership role, it is important for me to recognize my potential and responsibility to serve as a role model, and vital for me to make myself visible, accessible, and available to engage with others, especially those who are interested in growth. A leader's team is their responsibility. The pros, cons, positives, and negatives can all be traced back to how well a leader was able to provide their team with means for success. I have made it a point to keep a strong group of diverse individuals around me. The importance of this not only lies in the diversity of experience, but also in the diversity of logic and thought. A diverse group allows for commercial solutions in real time that work in our complex world. This is also why it is important to maintain diversity in roles across the team, especially leadership roles.

I am grateful to be at a firm that has allowed many diverse individuals, like myself, to be at the forefront of change in the legal profession. This is a firm that values leaders from different backgrounds, with different experiences, and different voices. Greenberg Traurig believes good leaders come in all shapes and sizes, and I am honored to work with many of our firm's great leaders.

Writer Joel Barker put it best when he said, "Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world." With that, I encourage women who want to lead to be intentional with their actions. They can help make a world of difference in their organization, community, and beyond. Leaders must make sure their voices are heard and used to lead by example towards the greater good.

Allyship and Sponsorship are Key to Real-Life Impact

By Nikki Lewis Simon



EDITORS' NOTE *Nikki Lewis Simon, a commercial litigator with more than 21 years of experience, primarily serves as the firm's Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer. In this capacity, she designs and guides strategic initiatives and programs to deepen firm-wide diversity and inclusion efforts that further enrich client engagements and community investments. Her role is indicative of, and integral to, Greenberg Traurig's core values of collaboration and inclusion – principles that inform the firm's operations and legal business in meaningful, positive ways.*

Allies and sponsors are the key to making a real-life impact on the careers of women and diverse individuals and a true impact on the ability of a law firm to move the needle forward on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

My route was an unexpected one. Becoming a shareholder was important to me, and I was the first lawyer in my family. Therefore, many of the situations in which I found myself were very new and unique to me. Without mentors and sponsors, my path would have been that much more complicated and difficult.

The lines between a mentor and a sponsor are often blurred. A sponsor takes a highly active role in your career from a holistic point of view. The sponsor usually has a position that can truly be the difference regarding your access to have that "seat at the table." Mentors are amazing, and they are role models and have a major place for minorities in the workplace. Sponsors are direct and intentional.

An institutional program of sponsorship or allyship requires a team approach and must permeate every element of the organization, from recruitment, to hiring, to integration, to training and advancement.

Implementing this type of program on a large scale can be a challenge. Sponsorships are normally very personal relationships. However, when a firm establishes actionable and measurable initiatives to create a sanctioned system for sponsorship, these grow as does overall support for the professional development of diverse attorneys and women.

Sponsorships not only help individuals; they also create a stronger firm and corporate environment. The professionals who have access to this have influence and will soon in turn serve as mentors, sponsors, and allies to new employees, galvanizing the fabric of the organization. Sponsorships are good for people, firms and, ultimately, clients who benefit from an increasingly diverse team with diverse experiences and points of view. ●

FIRM BRIEF *Greenberg Traurig, LLP (GT) has approximately 2,300 attorneys in 40 locations in the United States, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. GT (gtlaw.com) 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 25 firms on the Am Law Global 100. The firm is net carbon neutral with respect to its office energy usage and is Mansfield Rule 4.0 Certified Plus.*