

Soul At Scale: Growing Greenberg Traurig On Our Own Terms

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

EDITORS' NOTE Richard Rosenbaum is the Executive Chairman of Greenberg Traurig. He has long been considered a thought and change leader in the broader legal profession. He joined the firm in 1985 as its 90th lawyer and has since been integrally involved in forming and successfully executing the strategies that have led to the firm's growth and unique culture across the United States, Europe and the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. He closely guards the firm's long-term core values while still aggressively navigating ever-changing times. Rosenbaum has always put the firm's clients and people first, understanding that a law firm leader works for them, first and foremost. He is proud of his work in founding the firm's renowned and wide-ranging "commitment to excellence" program, which ensures that all these values remain core to the firm's daily practice and global brand for many years to come.



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FIRM BRIEF Greenberg Traurig, LLP (gtlaw.com) has approximately 3,200 lawyers across 51 locations in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The firm's broad geographic and practice range enables the delivery of innovative and strategic legal services across borders and industries. Recognized as a 2025 BTI "Best of the Best Recommended Law Firm" by general counsel for trust and relationship management, Greenberg Traurig is consistently ranked among the top firms on the Am Law Global 100, NJLJ 500, and Law360 400. Greenberg Traurig is also known for its philanthropic giving, culture, innovation, and pro bono work.

New York has reinvented itself countless times over the decades. What lessons have New York's resilience taught you about leadership and building an institution that can thrive despite constant change?

New York is the epicenter of resilience. Every decade, people predict its decline, only to discover that betting against the city is usually a losing proposition. This is a city that has endured financial crises, terrorist attacks, tech disruption, a pandemic, and more, yet it always comes back swinging because of the character of the people. New York attracts makers, builders, entrepreneurs, and professionals who are determined to achieve their goals. It's a meritocracy where talent and grit still define possibilities.

After many years here, the city's spirit still inspires me. The way I view Greenberg Traurig echoes that spirit. The foundations that hold us together are built slowly, brick by brick, day by day. But to last, those foundations must be malleable enough to withstand inevitable change. Markets shift, technology evolves, and client expectations grow at breakneck speed. To not only endure but thrive through seismic changes, institutions should remain grounded in their values while allowing their people to adapt, innovate, and lead. While strategies may shift based on the conditions, culture and principles should be unshakable pillars. That philosophy has served us extremely well over decades of growth and transformation.

Today, I see many of the same signals of renewal that have defined New York's recoveries through each setback. People are returning to offices. Development is accelerating. New businesses are emerging. The energy is palpable. And the Knicks winning the championship is another example of New York roaring back. It's a city that embraces the mindset of team first – where playing together rather than trying to own the limelight is what leads to victory.

We share that same team-first paradigm. We welcome people from around the world who bring distinct perspectives. We believe in empowering individuals to build something meaningful while being a part of something bigger. Like New York, our success has never come from standing still. We embrace change while remaining true to the values that brought us here.

Greenberg Traurig describes itself as entrepreneurial. What does entrepreneurship mean inside a law firm, and how have you preserved that mindset as the firm has grown globally?

When some people hear the term, they may think of a lone wolf taking excessive risks for personal gain. However, that is miles apart from the way we operate. For Greenberg Traurig, it's about empowering talented people to identify opportunities, solve problems creatively, strategize with a business-forward mindset, and build relationships within a culture of trust and camaraderie.

We give our people freedom to lead. Our model is "freedom within a framework." We expect our lawyers and professionals to think like owners, not employees. We want them to bring ideas forward, develop client relationships,

build practices, do stellar legal work, and respond adroitly to changing market conditions. Importantly, they do so within a culture grounded in teamwork and a shared commitment to excellence.

That distinction is key. Many organizations struggle when they grow. As scale increases, bureaucracy often follows: decision-making becomes centralized, innovation falters, and people stop taking initiative. We have carefully avoided those pitfalls by always growing organically without mergers or vereins. While we have become one of the world's largest law firms, our goal has never been growth for growth's sake; rather, we created a platform where entrepreneurial people can succeed together.

What makes that possible is culture. Everything flows from this bedrock. When you foster an environment where people feel empowered and invested in one another's success, you have something that's built to last. The trap that some firms fall into is the mindset that entrepreneurship and teamwork are competing ideas. For us, they reinforce each other. When talented people trust one another, share opportunities, and operate without excessive hierarchy, innovation flourishes. That has been true throughout our history, and it remains essential to our future.

Many organizations talk about culture. How do you build a culture that remains strong across 51 locations while encouraging teamwork, innovation, and local leadership?

There's a reason many organizations and institutions struggle with culture. They think it can be created through slogans or marketing campaigns, or worse – that it exists merely because they pride themselves on it. Real culture is built through daily efforts, leadership behaviors, and the decisions people make when nobody is watching. It is a muscle that must be continuously exercised, or it will atrophy.

For us, culture starts with respect for the individual. We want every person in the firm to feel empowered, valued, and accountable. Our success is based on the belief that people perform at their best when they are trusted and given genuine opportunities to contribute. That philosophy has been our north star since the firm opened in 1967 and continues as we grow to 51 global locations and blow past \$3 billion in revenue.

One reason our culture has remained strong is that we have resisted becoming a centralized bureaucracy. Every business market is different; strong institutions recognize that and empower local leaders. Our offices operate autonomously,

but not in isolation. The full resources and reach of a global firm are behind every office. Local shareholders, however, are in the best position to recognize the best way to serve client needs in their market. They know the nuances of their legal landscape and clients better than anyone at a distance ever could.

Similarly, innovation has its greatest utility when the people closest to clients are trusted to identify better ways to serve clients, test ideas, share what works, and move quickly. That is especially true in this era of AI, where innovation flows from a culture that empowers entrepreneurial people, respects local knowledge, and connects those ideas across a powerful global platform.

Again, it comes back to the way our lawyers and professionals work together as a unified team. Collaboration is fundamental. The highly sophisticated matters that we work on increasingly cross industries, jurisdictions, and practice areas. Teamwork is not simply a cultural benefit; it is a business necessity. Lawyers in Tokyo work in lockstep with colleagues in Tel Aviv and around the world. That is how we best serve our global client base. Lawyers who maintain isolated fiefdoms could not succeed in our framework.

We have also invested heavily in mentorship, professional development, and our Commitment to Excellence program to help ensure that our culture is instilled in the next generation. When people understand what an institution stands for and see leaders modeling those values, culture becomes durable. It survives growth, technological change, and market cycles. Ultimately, culture isn't meant to be preserved in a display case. Rather, it's the standard we work to maintain and enhance each day.

Client expectations continue to evolve. What do clients need from their outside counsel that may not have been expected a decade ago, and how is Greenberg Traurig meeting those needs?

Clients today operate in a world defined by complexity, speed, and constant disruption. Ten years ago, clients expected excellent legal advice. They still do, of course, but now they also expect business insight, technological sophistication, an understanding of political undercurrents, and seamless service across jurisdictions and disciplines.

Clients want advisors who grasp the intricacies of their businesses, not simply their legal issues. They expect outside counsel to anticipate challenges, spot opportunities, and help them navigate uncertainty. Firms that have a deep understanding of each client's sector will be at a distinct advantage.

Another major shift is in expected value. Clients now carefully evaluate how legal services are delivered and whether technology is generating greater efficiency. They want their representation to offer transparency, pragmatic strategies, and to embrace innovation while maintaining exceptional quality.

At Greenberg Traurig, we anticipated this evolution years ago and made significant investments in both people and innovation. We not only have leading-edge capabilities, but we also help

clients utilize their own AI systems to achieve greater efficiency. We continue to expand capabilities across industries, practices, and geographies while empowering lawyers to remain close to their markets.

Greenberg Traurig's decentralized structure encourages decision-making to occur close to clients. Our lawyers respond quickly to changing circumstances, understand the intricacies of local and international markets, and have the resources to handle virtually any matter. Clients remain loyal to us because they see we understand the facets of their industries and zealously fight for their interests.

In short, clients want advisors who understand their objectives, share their sense of urgency, and are committed to helping them achieve their goals. That focus on relationships, combined with our commitment to excellence, remains central to how we serve clients today.

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One of your defining priorities has been developing future leaders. What characteristics do you look for in the next generation, and how can emerging professionals prepare themselves to lead?

The future belongs to people who demonstrate astute judgment, elevated intelligence, and sheer determination all while remaining grounded in strong values. It's a tall order, but it's why we're so selective in targeting lawyers whom we believe possess these qualities. It's also what we seek to instill in our emerging talent. We want to see their hustle and grit as well. While the world may be more uncertain than ever, the qualities that define great leadership have remained remarkably consistent. But these qualities alone are not enough.

I look for people who demonstrate curiosity. The most successful leaders are rarely satisfied with what they already know. They ask questions. They seek new experiences and want to learn from people with different perspectives than their own. They challenge assumptions and freely admit when they don't know something. They remain students throughout their years, not just in their careers, but in life.

I target resilience. Every meaningful career includes setbacks. I've had more than a few. But there is no growth without failure. What I look for is how people respond to it. What defines that individual is not that they got knocked down, it's what they did when they got back up.

Lastly, I'm drawn to people who genuinely care about others. Leadership is a service role. It is not about titles. The most effective leaders are the ones who build trust, develop talent, share opportunities, and help others thrive. They show respect to everyone. When the team works by this mindset, there is little they can't accomplish.

My advice: develop your base of knowledge but do not be confined by it. Build relationships. Listen and offer a hand where you can. Seek mentors. Embrace change. Learn how businesses operate. Understand not only where technology is today but where it's going. Expand your perspective beyond your immediate responsibilities. Don't act simply because you are looking for credit. And maintain your integrity. Reputations are built slowly but lost quickly. Again, it's a tall order, but if you can strive toward these goals each day, you will be well equipped on your journey.

After decades in the profession and firm leadership, what continues to inspire your optimism about the future of law and the role lawyers play?

My optimism comes from people. I have had the privilege of working with extraordinary clients, talented colleagues, and emerging leaders from around the world. Every year, I meet individuals whose intelligence, curiosity, grit, and sense of purpose give me confidence that the future is in capable hands.

My take, which is admittedly a tad biased, is that the law represents what's best in society. Lawyers help businesses grow. They facilitate innovation. They protect rights and pursue justice. They help families preserve legacies. They solve disputes and give voice to the voiceless. Lawyers sit at the intersection of commerce, government, technology, philanthropy, and social progress. I am inspired daily and honored to be among them.

I am also optimistic because the profession continues to evolve. Global connectivity is opening new markets and fostering collaboration across borders. Diverse perspectives are enriching organizations. What gives me the greatest confidence, however, is that trust, integrity, and relationships remain paramount. These principles have endured through every transformation.

The challenges facing society are significant, but so is the outstanding talent rising to address them. That combination gives me conviction that the legal profession will remain in good hands for years to come. ●