

Speaker 1 ([00:06](#)):

Hi, this is Caroline Heller, chair of Greenberg chart's global pro bono program. I'd like to welcome you to Greenberg Charter's pro bono podcast. Good in practice because everyone has a story. I am really excited to have with us today. Three of the leaders at our firm to talk about the importance of pro bono we have with us, Brian Duffy, who is the chief executive officer at Greenberg Traurig, Brad Kaufman, who is one of the co-presidents of Greenberg chart. And who's also the global chairman of professional development and integration. And we also have Ernest Greer, who is the other co-president of Greenberg chart. This interview was originally recorded in the summer of 2020. I want to thank everyone for being here today. So I wanted to talk about the importance of pro bono at the firm during this interview, but we find ourselves in a very different situation than any of us have ever been involved in. And I wanted to talk about that first. So this question is for all three of you, how do you view the role of pro bono in the face of the current pandemic?

Speaker 2 ([01:12](#)):

This is Brian, I mean at this moment, right? Kind of an unprecedented I'm and in my experience, and probably in the experience of most practicing lawyers and law firms, you have to kind of step back and say, what is, what's the role that lawyers should play at a moment of such a global need and, uh, and, and national need as well, and all the way down to our local communities and to our, our family as well. And if you step back and kind of look at it in that scope, it becomes clear that lawyers at that at this moment where rule of law is such a critical part of the response to the pandemic, um, and looking at what our communities need. And this pandemic, I think has put a microscope on the fact that, uh, the income inequality, the rights of access to justice and equality, the, and you see it, the pandemic is highlighting that, uh, our communities that are most that made our most vulnerable communities are being impacted the most dramatically and lawyers and law firms at this moment have a responsibility to step up and make sure that we're delivering those critical legal services to people that are at this time of need be the undocumented workers.

Speaker 2 ([02:44](#)):

Be they children be the people who need access to healthcare. I'm looking Carolina, you know, the fantastic pro bono work that you're doing right now that our entire firm is doing. And, and it's a time that's most important. I couldn't be more proud of what you're doing and what so many of the 2300 lawyers at Greenberg chart are doing right now. I think we're answering that call. Um, but I think we need to double down if this is Brad, if I, if I could just, uh, echo the other side of what Brian is saying, um, as somebody who works closely with our associates, all of the things that Brian said or unquestionably true, the, the need has never been greater, but there's another reason for attorneys such as attorneys at Greenberg Traurig, or any other firm to want to, to actually need to get involved.

Speaker 2 ([03:39](#)):

One of the things that this crisis has highlighted, and it is how unnerving it is to feel like there's nothing you can do about it. You know, for the first time in your life, a lot of high achieving people, they've always felt like they can contribute some solution to any problem. And, uh, with this particular crisis, we're being told that the only solution we can contribute to is to stay at home in our pajamas and for a lot of people that, that that's unnerving. And so while it is absolutely right, that there's never been a greater need for pro bono legal services. It's also helpful for you that I'm talking about you as an individual lawyer to participate in that where your own mental wellbeing, if ever there was a time when you could use the help of feeling like you're contributing to a solution it's right now, and what greater

way to do that than by getting involved in your local communities, absolute need for those services at this point in time. So don't just simply do it because you have an obligation to do it. You should want to do it. There's a need for it, do it because it'll actually be good for you. It'll be good for you as a lawyer, and it will be good for you as a human being.

Speaker 1 ([04:57](#)):

I've been so impressed by the resounding response to the pro bono opportunities I've sent around in this crisis. And I know that a lot of individuals are juggling a lot of different issues at home, including childcare, remote learning spouses, or partners who may have additional needs or who may be out of a job. But despite that everybody has really wanted to help individuals in their own communities. And I'm hopeful that, uh, podcasts in the future will be dedicated to the great work that Greenberg charged attorneys around the world have been doing in response to the pandemic. Something else I was curious about, there are a lot of lawyers who provide pro bono services for personal reasons. I was wondering if you could tell me a story about why pro bono services important to you.

Speaker 2 ([05:43](#)):

Okay. Thank you, Kara. I will tell you that, um, one of the things I really love about graver truck and I'm seeing it was here on this call with Brian and Brad providing a leadership role in this firm. And I realize very quickly that all of our stories are similar. They're similar in the sense that we all have had a lot of help in our lives. And some of that help of course came when we were younger, when our parents were struggling financially to provide for us, um, struggling to make sure that we were educated, struggling to just get through life. And the reality is, is that that struggle has left an indelible mark on me. And I know that everyone who is in particular socioeconomic classes, particularly those that are below middle class need help and aid. It's not that they're big for forward.

Speaker 2 ([06:39](#)):

It's not that they don't appreciate it. It's just that the difficulties of life, including issues like truancy, for example, issues such as displacement from employment, because you have served this, serve this country in the military. And so all of those issues, my life issues have caused me to understand that it is an obligation for li for institutions that I'm a part of to play a leadership role in helping others. And that is one thing that we all as leaders of this firm agree on is one thing that this firm has always been committed to. It always will be committed to. And I think lawyers, if you take time, you know, so often, you know, the kind of work that we do as a big law firm, we're dealing with big corporations or high net worth individuals, and you don't get that time to, to, uh, you know, play that important role as a, as a counselor to people and to help them understand, you know, what what's going on. And, and I find that incredibly gratifying, it feeds something for me. Um, and it feeds a part of what I need as a lawyer that I don't get, frankly, from the day-to-day practice. Um, you know, love our clients, but, uh, the big corporations don't have the same soul as individuals.

Speaker 1 ([08:13](#)):

I think that's right, that the impact that you can have and doing pro bono work is not only achieving a positive legal outcome. In addition to that, sometimes you just improve a person's life by standing up for them, making them feel like they're not invisible and helping them navigate a process that they don't feel capable of navigating themselves, and often are not able to navigate themselves. Sometimes the biggest impact you can have in someone's life is making them feel seen and heard and cared about something else that I think is really interesting about pro bono. And I wanted to talk to you guys a little

bit about, this is the fact that at our firm, we collaborate with a lot of our clients, banks, companies, and their in-house counsel on pro bono cases. I was hoping that one of you could speak about the importance of pro bono work with the client.

Speaker 2 ([09:05](#)):

Yeah. I mean, Caroline, you and I had personal experience with that. Um, well, I, you know, it's just kind of, I feel like I'm giving away a state secret here. I can't imagine, uh, something that you can do with, uh, the senior folks at, at a client that, that that's more valuable to be candid with you. The, the obvious things that we do every day, which is to provide extraordinarily valuable legal services. That's a given that's like the little arm at the ride at Dean Witter. I mean, at Disney world, it says you have to be this tall to get on this ride, providing incredibly valuable legal resources. But what if you could do something beyond that? What if you can partner with the senior folks at your clients in a cause that they're passionate about and, uh, deliver something that makes them feel good as human beings, in addition to everything else you do.

Speaker 2 ([09:55](#)):

We had an experience with, with Carolina and I did, uh, where, uh, after Greenberg chard rolled out a, a brand new program in the state of Florida, where, uh, we were going to be providing, we are providing legal services to active military, uh, folks, uh, most programs that provide pro bono legal services are geared towards veterans, but we rolled that out. Actually, I, I, I had the privilege of doing that on behalf of Greenberg charged with the governor of Florida and shortly thereafter, uh, some senior folks at one of the major financial institutions in the world found out about it. And they had their own effort with respect to outreach towards both veterans and active duty military people. And, uh, a conference was arranged, led by Carolyn and the folks at this financial institution who were very senior, very prominent folks. And we have agreed to partner with them, uh, in, in helping them expand their program.

Speaker 2 ([10:51](#)):

And as you can imagine, very few things that you could do that would bond you and bind you more closely to a client than that. You know, there are certain things we do as human beings that create great tight and lasting relationships, right? Eating together, being at trial together. Part of that list of things is passionately engaging in community service together, people in the heart feel a need to give back. They have that connection to an issue that they're passionate about and being able to work arm-in-arm with them that meet that need as a human activity. I mean, our clients are, are, you know, the kind of individuals that we love to represent the kind of people that love to give back to their communities and to help them do that and do that with them. Um, I mean, that's how you bond, that's more important than a round of golf. That's more important than a thousand ago is, is sharing that with another person. I think, I think lawyers would be well-served and any of the GT associates who are listening in to this, um, that client relationships will be stronger. There'll be better people. I'm not making fun of golf, but we spend a lot of time on, on activities that from a return on time investment, I can't imagine anything that has a heart, a higher ROI than a pro bono activity with a key client.

Speaker 2 ([12:27](#)):

I think you said it right, Brian and I, and I think the future bodes well for our industry. We see every day more clients on the partner on pro bono initiatives. Uh, I too believe that it has a greater Ora ROI than a round of golf, although I would have loved to play today. Cause it's beautiful. Uh, but I agree with what Brian and Brad are saying, you know, the whole pro bono mix allows us to really see what the person is

about. You know, when you're dealing with legal issues, those illegal issues, those are economic transactions. That's driven through a value proposition. I'll give you my time, you pay for it. So when you're dealing with pro bono, there is no exchange of dollars. It's just exchange of effort, commitment to something and belief in something. And I think that just brings the souls of the clients and the souls of the lawyers in the law firm, much closer together, the causing them to be brothers and sisters and caused them to want to live life together.

Speaker 1 ([13:33](#)):

Earnest. You are one of the co-presidents of the firm, but you also spearhead Greenberg chart's diversity initiatives along with Nikki Louis Simon, our chief diversity officer. I was wondering if you could tell me, is pro bono important to the law firms, diversity initiative? And if so, can you tell me how the two initiatives intersect?

Speaker 2 ([13:56](#)):

Well, absolutely is important. Um, you know, Caroline, when I look at it and I, and I want to make sure we make this point, I think for a long time, pro bono has been focused on landlord tenant, truancy projects, um, other types of litigation. But when we look at this economic divide and we look at the issue of travel, create upward mobility, which we're talking about more and more in the country, the ability of [inaudible] truck, for example, to help diverse community, such as communities who are driven and, and creating entrepreneurial engines, entrepreneurial workshops, to start companies to understand how to open bank accounts, to identify, um, accountants, all those things create for us, that's a strong initiative to be supportive of the diverse lawyers in for families of diverse lawyers and the friends of diverse lawyers and staff as well. I don't want to leave it to just, it you're

Speaker 1 ([14:59](#)):

Absolutely right. Actually, we are going to do a podcast in the future that addresses the support. The staff gives us in our pro bono work because we couldn't do our immigration work or not for our incredibly devoted paralegals clerk's assistance who speak multiple language, everything from Spanish or dude Portuguese. And they help us communicate with our clients and our immigration pro bono work. So I'm glad you mentioned the support staff at Greenberg Traurig as well. My next question goes to Brad and Brad, you touched on this a little earlier as the global chairman of professional development and integration. You lead the charge and associate development. Can you tell us a little bit about why associates should do pro bono work?

Speaker 2 ([15:44](#)):

Sure. Uh, first of all, they're required to, um, we, we have an absolute expectation that every associate will do at least 25 hours of mandatory pro bono. And we give them credit towards their billable minimums of a hundred hours for pro bono. And, uh, we encourage them to do as much as they humanly can. Beyond that. Let's talk about the real concrete benefit that occurs when associates get involved in pro bono work. There, there are two aspects of it that are invaluable. The first one is obvious. The one we've all been talking about it is the self-actualization, how they will feel about themselves, giving something back it'll likely be for, for most associates at most law firms, they, the first time they handle a pro bono case will probably be often is the first time they will be first chair. And that's true whether or not it's a, uh, some kind of transaction for a not-for-profit that needs pro bono legal services or whether or not it's a litigated matter, which most people more commonly think of when they think of pro bono legal services.

Speaker 2 ([16:48](#)):

So what a wonderful opportunity, uh, for them to, to see the legal process and to be the focal point, the sphere of the process by taking belief. So that, that is that's a great opportunity for any associate. Secondly, it, it helps fill in the gaps that often exists in their development without casting aspersions on large law firms or small law firms or medium firms, many associates start their career and they, they, they end up doing the same things over and over again for a significant period of time without seeing the whole process as it is, uh, it exists. And so pro bono is another opportunity for them to see a matter from intake to the end and have them be responsible for it. And so it helps them develop their skillset. So whether they're doing it for the community outreach part for self-actualization, how they feel about themselves, whether they're doing it because it'll give them more opportunity to deal with substantive issues as a first-year lawyer for the first time in their career, or whether they're doing it because they're required to do it. There are every good reason for them to be involved in pro bono as much as they possibly can. And we message that all the time, that there's hardly a conversation that any of the folks on this call have with our associates, where we don't encourage them to engage in pro bono activities.

Speaker 1 ([18:21](#)):

Brian, I read an interview recently that you gave, where you said you hoped that the title of your biography would be called doing well by doing good. What did you mean by that? You

Speaker 2 ([18:33](#)):

Know, whereas a at a big law firm, there's so much focus in so much of what we do in winning for our clients in economic success. Life has to be about more than money. It has to be about more than just complicating things and recognition. And we spend so much time on those endeavors, but they're important, right? I mean, we're, we want to be economically successful. There's over 4,000 families in this firm that count on us to pay their mortgages, to pay their car loans. That's important. And I never want to minimize that, but at the same time, we want to do that and also be doing good. We want to be good partners. We want to be good members of our community. We want to be, um, good people with good soul who do things for other people. And I think those two things go hand in hand.

Speaker 2 ([19:30](#)):

I think the more that we give, the more that we receive, the more we allow others to lean on us, the stronger we become. And so that's my point about doing well by doing good. I think they go together. I think they're inextricably intertwined. I am morally convinced as I've seen lots of lawyers and lots of professionals that if you look at the people who truly have been successful, but the people understand that they understand that it's to be a great lawyer means that not only are you the, you know, have you achieved economic success, but more importantly, you've realized and recognized that you've become a truly valued counselor to your clients, your friends and colleagues, and you've improved their lives as well.

Speaker 1 ([20:22](#)):

You have been listening to good in practice Greenburg charts, pro bono podcast. I'm your host, Caroline Heller chair of Greenburg chart's global pro bono program and litigation shareholder in the New York office. On today's episode, we had three of the leaders of our firm, Brian Duffy, who is the chief executive officer at Greenberg Traurig, Brad, Calvin, who is of the co presidents and a square, who is the other co president, thanks for joining us. And I hope you join us in two more weeks for another episode of good and practice. [inaudible].

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