

Speaker 1: [inaudible]

Speaker 2: Welcome to getting through a mini series focused on environmental concerns during the COVID 19 pandemic. I'm your host Bernadette rappelled. And joining me here today is [00:00:30] my friend and colleague Mike [inaudible], who along with many of our other colleagues has started a really cool thing and equine industry practice group. And so I've invited him here today to talk about how the group got started and the kinds of issues they're facing and addressing. So, Mike welcome. And if you could say a few words about how you got started, I'd appreciate it.

Speaker 3: Sure. Burns great to be with you. Uh, well I've always had a love for horses and [00:01:00] my wife and I have been in the equestrian world for over 15 years. She's an amateur owner. She rides in amateur owner jumping events and all the major shows across the east coast. And I'm kinda like her part-time groom, you know, go to the shows. I support her and, uh, every now and then I'll look out a few stalls, which kind of keeps me honest, but I love the atmosphere shows they're very festive, very family oriented, and you get to see world-class athletes practicing their craft. So last year I was thinking about [00:01:30] it and I saw an opportunity to provide value to the equestrian industry with GT's platform. We have a global presence and we have many, many practice groups. And then I started to dig into this and I found out that there were many like-minded people in the firm.

Speaker 3: There were many, many attorneys who were already servicing clients involved in a questioning in sports and, and the racing and thoroughbred spaces, but there was no integrated group. So me and a bunch of other folks in, in several GT [00:02:00] offices got together and we said, Hey, how about forming an integrated equity industry group? And we actually made a business case to the firm and, you know, I've been with the firm 18 years and the firm is great about addressing current and future client needs. And this was a need that hadn't been addressed and we made our business case and the firms supported 100% and we've been off and running since April. And it's really exciting.

Speaker 2: That's great, Mike, um, [00:02:30] you know, one of the things in thinking about our discussion today, I imagine that there are not many other large firms with an equine group as robust as ours. What advantages does that give, give the Greenberg traffic equine industry?

Speaker 3: Sure. I think you're right. Burn, uh, Equon law and equine practice groups are usually the domain of very small firms or, or mid-sized regional firms. I could be wrong, but I don't know of other firm of our [00:03:00] caliber, our size or global reach that has an equine industry group. And I think our advantage is just that we're global in our presence. We're global in our prep platform and we have many diverse practice groups so we can serve a wide range of client needs.

Speaker 2: So what kinds of resources does the group offer the equine community? Well,

Speaker 3: I like to say we offer a lot of them. Uh, the first is we publish a lot of alerts and these are these short [00:03:30] articles that, uh, touch on topics of interest in your question

world, in the racing world, uh, I've published seven of them, myself in the last two months. And now we're starting to transform those alerts into articles to get published in the major question, your magazines. And we have a client who, uh, who runs a major, uh, questioning show in Connecticut every year. And he has a database of over 20,000 [00:04:00] members of the equestrian community riders, trainers, owners. And he has given us access to that. He has a platform where we can do webinars to his, uh, membership on all sorts of topics. We did one on the circular economy a few weeks ago. That was our partner Libby Stennis that did that.

Speaker 3: She did a fantastic job and we're going to do one every four or five weeks on, on different types of topics. We've also had some very successful sponsorships. Last year, we sponsored [00:04:30] an event for the Wellington boys and girls club at the show grounds and Wellington just a week ago, we sponsored the Travis Sydney gold cup event in Michigan. Uh, you know, and it's great because at both events, both of Wellington and traverse city in the grand Prix ring, all the sponsors at one time or another, had their name in lights all the way around it. So you see Greenberg Troward with our logo and lights all the way around. It was really cool. Uh, what else did we do? Well, we collaborate with, with groups like yours, with [00:05:00] other GT groups that have overlapping interests like the agricultural group and the environmental group. And when I think of resources, this one I think is really important.

Speaker 3: So the questioning in worlds, the racing world, you know, they have their own language customer informs, and you need to know how to talk the talk and our group knows the various state equine laws. We know how shows are run, uh, the issues that can arise in buying and selling of horses, you know, that kind of [00:05:30] knowledge burn, uh, uh, it, it really creates a lot of trust with clients and potential crime clients. For example, I could be at a horse show, I'm talking to a rider or a trainer, and, you know, and I know what they're talking about when they say that, that the horse Mr. Jump long, or the horse moves it's short or a horse, is scopey meaning that it can jump high over a fence. All of those terms, all that vernacular, you know, we know that because we live in that world and I that's part of the resources that we can provide to the [00:06:00] community.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I think that's, I think that's key really across the legal industry is really not only understanding the law, which of course we have to do, but also really understanding people's business and the community and the norms as you talk about, um, which I think is so key and something that's, that's unique that we [00:06:30] bring at Greenberg traffic. Well, what are some of the main legal issues you find cropping up in the equine industry?

Speaker 3: Well, you know, there are a lot of them, but, but let me think about what the most common ones are. Well, certainly litigation over the buying and selling of horses. That's very common and safe sport issues, a very common and not a lot of people unless you're involved in Olympic sports, knows what safe sport is. And many equestrian sports shuts, such a show, jumping [00:07:00] dressage, eventing, they are Olympic sports. Now safe sport was an organization created by the us Olympic committee three years ago to deal with claims of abuse and harassment, uh, in Olympic sports. And when we

give our webinars questions about safe sport, always come up, uh, branding and intellectual property issues. Now riders and trainers, they are celebrities in their own, right? Just like a baseball player as a, an Olympic soccer player, basketball player, celebrities, riders, [00:07:30] and trainers are celebrities too.

Speaker 3: And they have all sorts of branding and endorsement issues that come up that we handle real estate and land use. That's another big issue that comes up goose barns and show, show arenas. They occupy lots of space, lots of acres. And these issues come up all the time. Let me see. Another one is of course, injuries that result from riding in the propensities of horses. We get questions about that all the time, because people get injured, you have to know, uh, the various state liability statutes, [00:08:00] you know, what's covered, what's not, and those are the kinds of issues that we deal with every day. I, uh,

Speaker 2: I think I know the answer in part to the next question. I'm about to ask you Mike, but I'll ask it anyway, uh, because I've worked on some of these issues myself from an environmental and agricultural perspective, but can you say a little bit about the kinds of environmental issues that you've run into in the equine industry? Sure.

Speaker 3: Well manure and other types of ways [00:08:30] that whole concept of the circular economy land use, you know, barns and show facilities, equestrian housing, that's near the facilities. They occupied lots of space. And, you know, I mentioned those equine liability statutes, uh, before. So 48 states have them. And the reason why those statutes were enacted was because the state legislatures understand, uh, how much the equine industry can contribute to the local economy and recognizes [00:09:00] that barns and show facilities preserve land. Uh, and then how about feeding supplements for horses? A lot of questions come up is the feed organic. What else is in the feed? Where does it come from? You know, a lot of these feeds are GMO feeds made from corn and soy that is sprayed with synthetic pesticides. You know, more than a few people in the equestrian world are, uh, they think that, that these GMO feeds and, and the, and the things that they're sprayed with may cause [00:09:30] collagen horses. So, so this is a very topical issue right now in both the racing world and the equestrian world. So there's a big push in the industry for more natural and non-GMO feeds, right.

Speaker 2: We we've seen that in our practice group across, uh, species. So not it's, it's not just limited to, uh, to horses of course, but, um, uh, but to all kinds of animal species in their feed, you know, speaking of which, in, in the animal [00:10:00] agriculture arena, I've personally worked on some pretty cool projects where, uh, farmers have taken the waste and used, uh, a process called anaerobic digestion to generate renewable power. And I'm wondering whether you've seen much interest in that in the equine world,

Speaker 3: It's global, I mean, using manure as a source of power, you know, at the barns and the show grounds, [00:10:30] the manure tons of manure is generated because you have hundreds and hundreds of horses there. And, and it's usually carted off in the owners of the property or the facility you have to pay for that service. So now there's a lot of buzz, Hey, how can we monetize this? How can we make money off the manure and the waste and the large barns in the show venues, like I said, they occupy many, many acres

and they, and they need a lot of power. It's almost like a small city, you know, uh, a show can be, I don't know, over a hundred acres [00:11:00] of one of the big show grounds, and there's all of the stalls. And then there's all of the buildings and there's all of the concessions and they all need power. And, uh, you know, we just did a webinar. Uh, Libby did it for the question community on a circular economy. And it was very well received. I mean, people are starting to think about this and, and we're trying to help them provide answers to the, to the issue.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I think that's really cool. We've, we've been focused on the circular [00:11:30] economy issues in the environmental group and, you know, starting to envision new uses for waste. So, as I said, I've worked personally on projects to convert manure into renewable bio gas, and actually it, it generates, uh, a couple of the projects I've worked on any way have, have generated a positive return on investment remarkably quickly, so it can be done. And it's an exciting, uh, [00:12:00] area of practice, I guess, from my vantage point. Well, as you know, Mike, this, this podcast has a focus on some of the particular issues that are arising during the pandemic. And I'm wondering if you can say a few words about how the pandemic has particularly affected the equine industry, the

Speaker 3: Fact that the racing world and the question role in ways that you can imagine. I mean, crowds side's limitations, [00:12:30] uh, have restricted competition and racing, uh, shows have been canceled. I mean, this is their livelihood. You have jockeys, you have, uh, uh, grooms, you have owners, you have trainers, you have riders, you know, when the shows aren't there, their livelihood is cut into, and it's a, it's a big deal. Uh, the summer Olympics were postponed. Uh, so, you know, equestrian competitors are having a little bit of a harder time maintaining their levels of readiness. [00:13:00] But I have to tell you, this taking care of animals is considered an essential business. So trainers and breeders and others have found ways to ensure the health of their horses while minimizing the risk of a COVID spread.

Speaker 2: Interesting. Um, have you seen particular measures being adopted right now to relay that relate to infection minimization, you know, in light of COVID and other restrictions?

Speaker 3: [00:13:30] Absolutely. Uh, and the two major organizations in the equestrian world are, uh, uh, use of us, uh, questioning Federation and FEI, which is the international equestrian Federation. They've been the leaders in this regard. All you have to do is go to their websites and they have a ton of information about protocols for shows, mask usage, social distancing. They pretty much follow the CDC guidelines. They have FAQ's for riders, trainers, and officials, and these get updated [00:14:00] all the time. These websites get, get updated. All the protocols get updated, the latest information that people need or are provided on these websites. So really Yusef and FBI, they they've been great. They've been leaders in this area and then at the shows, so, you know, temperature checks for spectators riders and everybody else before they hit the show grounds. If you're doing a course walk that's where, uh, the rider and the trainer, or just the rider walk, walk the jumping course to get a [00:14:30] feel for the fences and what sequence that they're in and how many strides there needs to be between the fences.

Speaker 3: They have to wear masks for that. But when they're riding, they don't have to wear masks because riding in a, in show jumping or just socks, that's, that's the ultimate social distancing. Cause it's just you in the horse, in the ring, uh, you know, masks have to be worn after the, and around the barns. And the spectators of course have to wear a mask. And one of the big things is crowd size limitations. I think it's easing a little bit now, [00:15:00] but since June, when, uh, Youssef, uh, rated events opened up again, uh, the guidelines were about 25% of normal capacity.

Speaker 4: Um, have the,

Speaker 2: I know that you were just talking about some of the pandemic related issues that the industry has faced. How about pandemic related issues that the Greenberg Traurig equine group has faced?

Speaker 3: I mean, we all wish we could get out there [00:15:30] and see our clients and go to the shows. Remember I said about being able to talk the talk, you go to the shows you go to the barns, uh, you visit with the clients, you know, many shows have been canceled and travel has been, you know, restricted over the last few months. It's starting to open up now. Uh, and, and I see it getting better and better as the days and weeks and months go on, but we've adapted, you know, we publish the alerts, we do the webinars, we collaborate with other GT groups like yours. You [00:16:00] know, we want to service the industry and we want to do it even with the limitations.

Speaker 2: Well, at some point and fingers and toes crossed in the not so distant future, the pandemic will be behind well, will be behind us. What do you think will be the big issues that crop up next year when, when races and competitions begin again in earnest?

Speaker 3: Well, I think the same [00:16:30] issues that arise in other aspects of society, you know, getting back to work on a full show schedule, getting back to normal crop sizes and, and the natural fears that go along with all of that. You know, if you look at the major, uh, uh, questioning of racing venues, a lot of mess stadium seating. So you've got a lot of people sitting close together. You know, there can be hundreds of people at a major grand Prix event or a triple crown event. And, uh, you know, that we have that we have to deal [00:17:00] with that. And, um, you know, the Yusef rated shows they've opened, like I said in June. And everybody just wants to get back to showing, you know, after staying home for so long, uh, you know, and we're all gonna have to feel our way, uh, us and the clients. And, and, but we're going to get there. It's, it's going to take a little bit, but we're going to get there.

Speaker 2: Well, I, I love that optimism. I think that's absolutely right. And I'm so grateful [00:17:30] for you spending a few minutes with me here today, Mike, I really appreciate your time here today. And I'm, I'm excited cause I've, I've always loved horses and I'm excited to be part of the group and working together with you. So, uh, with that, I'll, I'll just, uh, send a note out to our audience, to thank them for their, uh, listening to this podcast here today and to stay tuned for more in the weeks and months ahead. And in the [00:18:00] meantime, stay safe, be well, and be in touch, take care.

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Speaker 1: [inaudible].