

# Excellence, Integrity, Collaboration and Responsiveness

An Interview with Daniel Nardello, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Nardello & Co.

**EDITORS' NOTE** In 2003, Dan Nardello opened Nardello & Co., first in London and shortly thereafter in New York, to fill a service gap he saw at other investigative firms. Nardello is an experienced litigator, prosecutor, and investigator. After working in private practice at Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler, Nardello served as a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of New York. Following his stint as a prosecutor, Nardello headed up the European office of an international investigative firm, opening that firm's first European office. He also created and teaches a CLE course for lawyers entitled *Retaining Private Investigators: Ethical Considerations and Concerns*. While in the U.S. Attorney's Office, Nardello was an adjunct professor of Trial Advocacy at Columbia University School of Law. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Coalition for the Homeless. Nardello is a graduate of Columbia College and received his J.D. from New York University School of Law.



Daniel Nardello

I became a partner in that firm and in 2001 we sold the firm to a publicly traded company. I stayed on for another two years. I was living in London and opened Nardello & Co. there in 2003. I started the business with the idea of providing bespoke investigative services to premiere clients. I didn't want to do commoditized work.

I wanted to do real boots on the ground investigating and analysis. Our first clients were primarily lawyers, many of them partners in law firms who had been my colleagues in the U.S. Attorney's Office, and it just grew from there. Our next office was in New York, because I am a New Yorker. We opened in New York just about a year after we opened in London.

I moved back to the U.S. in 2006, and shortly after that, we opened in Washington, D.C. and the business has since grown to include offices in New York, which is our headquarters, Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, and internationally in London, which is our original office, as well as Dubai, Milan, Hong Kong and Tokyo.

Our growth has been fueled by an absolute attention to our clients' needs. We place an enormous amount of emphasis on doing things the right way, meaning ethically and within the bounds of the law. We find key people in jurisdictions where our clients need us who understand the local culture, the local research and investigative methodology, and can attract new clients as well.

#### How critical has it been to maintain the firm's culture as it has grown?

It is fundamental that we retain our culture. As you grow, it can be challenging, but it is a priority for us. We demand the highest level of professionalism and work product which starts with hiring the right people and training them in our way.

We believe in working as a team and financial incentives are built around collaboration.

We pride ourselves on being responsive. When clients call with problems, it's our mission to get back to them and address their problems immediately, because this is a business that is often dealing with tight deadlines and urgent matters for the client.

#### What has been the impact of technology on the business?

The biggest impact technology has had on the business overall is in the area of cybersecurity and digital investigations. We have invested

a lot of time and resources in finding the best cyber-professionals. In cybersecurity, technology is a key component, but it doesn't function without smart people employing whatever the technology is. It's the same thing on the research side. More than ever before, we have access to research technology, databases, information and searching tools, but it really comes back to who is employing those tools.

#### Will you discuss your focus on building a diverse and inclusive workforce?

This is partly taken care of structurally, because we're in so many jurisdictions so you need people with different backgrounds coming from different cultures. That brings with it a diversity of experience as well as cultural diversity and linguistic diversity.

Our leadership structure is a little bit different than other firms in the industry. Nardello & Co. is run, with some exceptions, including me, by women. Sabina Menschel, our President, runs the business on a day-to-day basis; our Chief Professional Officer, Tara McMillan, is responsible for the workflow and quality control. We have women in leadership positions throughout the firm and on our advisory board.

#### Do you feel it is a responsibility of leading companies to give back and support the communities they serve?

We have been focused from the beginning on giving back in the communities that we work in. We have been very strong supporters of the Coalition for the Homeless in New York. We contribute to charities and not-for-profits in every city where we have offices, and we are looking to increase what we do in the various communities where we work.

The firm also does a significant amount of pro bono work. This includes anything from doing an investigation to support a lawsuit for an indigent person who's facing eviction to working with a law firm that is representing somebody on death row. We are very proud of the work we did in a capital case, where our investigation was critical in having the conviction overturned.

#### Did you know that you had the entrepreneurial spirit to build your own company?

I knew when I left my old firm that I wanted to do something the way I wanted to do it, prioritizing excellence, integrity, collaboration and responsiveness. I never really thought about it in terms of building a business, it just sort of happened. ●

#### What is the history and heritage of Nardello and Co. and how has the company evolved?

I started the business 16 years ago in London. I am a lawyer by training and I was a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of New York. When I got into the investigations business, I joined another firm that is now defunct, as they were looking for somebody to open up their first European office.