

The Future of Law

**An Interview with Ejim Peter Achi,
Co-Managing Shareholder, New York Office and Co-Chair, New York Corporate Practice, Greenberg Traurig**

EDITORS' NOTE *Ejim Achi is Co-Managing Shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's New York office and Co-Chair of the New York Corporate Practice. He represents private equity sponsors in connection with buyouts, mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, joint ventures, restructurings, and other investments spanning a wide range of industries and sectors, with particular emphasis on technology, healthcare, industrials, consumer packaged goods, hospitality, and infrastructure.*



Ejim Peter Achi

representing a different generation of dealmakers and clients. To represent them effectively, you need to employ design thinking. Think about what it's like to be in their shoes with that particular problem and what solutions would be most suitable. Our clients don't want us to just tell them what the law is and what they can or cannot do. They want us to also offer viable solutions to help them achieve their objectives. GT empowers people who are ambitious and hardworking. When you create an environment like that, you're going to

attract great talent.

How is GT using technology to better serve clients?

The legal industry is not famous for being an early adopter of technology, but

accelerated that change because to maintain high productivity while working from home indefinitely, the technology infrastructure needed to improve very quickly, and it did. But pandemic aside, we have always believed that lawyers need to incorporate more technology into their work process. For example, we encourage our lawyers to make use of tablets for things like note taking to facilitate easier and quicker access to information, subject of course to information security best practices. Introducing technology in specific ways helps people do their best work, which ultimately benefits our clients.

How will technology affect law firms in the next decade?

It's going to completely transform the practice of law and law firms. While I don't believe that robots will completely replace lawyers, since the highest value humans bring to the equation – good situational judgment, emotional intelligence, nuanced strategy, etc. – might be more difficult for software to replicate consistently and reliably, there are categories of pattern recognition that machine learning can and will take away from humans. And it probably would be efficient in those cases, to the extent machines can perform those tasks with higher levels of accuracy and at much lower cost. It will become increasingly important over time for law firm leaders to consider which aspects of the business are more vulnerable to technological disruption and consider potential opportunities to introduce technology to boost effectiveness, productivity, and deliver greater value to clients.

How do you achieve work/life balance?

It is very difficult, and I honestly don't know that I've achieved it. In my experience, the people who say they have achieved work/life balance typically aren't in service provider industries like corporate law or medicine where you generally do not have complete control over your schedule. The best thing you can do, in my opinion, is to build teams full of capable people who can help each other. If you need to be at your child's school event or a doctor's appointment, maybe someone else on your team can step in. There will always be situations where you are required and that's just part of professional success. But if you can build a team that looks out for each other, then everyone can achieve some semblance of balance. ●

Did you always want to be a lawyer?

No. I am from Nigeria originally, and if you know anything about Nigerian parents, they want their children to be doctors or engineers. For the first two years of undergrad, I was pre-med and planning to become a doctor, but I was also taking liberal arts and social science courses and became increasingly interested in the law. The compromise with my mother was to declare a liberal arts major, but still plan to go to medical school. The turning point came after my sophomore year, when I visited a cousin in London who was a lawyer; I came away confident that pursuing a career in law, and not medicine, was the right path for me. I have also always been interested in strategy, so I earned an MBA and was also fortunate to have had the experience of founding a startup before making my way to Greenberg Traurig about five years ago.

How has your MBA made you a better lawyer?

One of the first things they teach you in business school is expected value analysis, which is basically a framework through which to think about outcomes on a probability adjusted basis. It helps in general with decision-making, whether you are helping a client select a suitable solution from a list of options or analyzing plans or strategies for a business you are running. It's all about making better decisions. Discovering the associated probabilities of outcomes facilitates good decision-making.

What about GT's culture appeals to you?

I like that GT encourages you to think about things differently and not be limited by the way things have been done for many decades. We're

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