

Leading With Unity: The Framework And Freedom For Success

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

EDITORS' NOTE *Richard A. Rosenbaum is the Executive Chairman of Greenberg Traurig, a unified international law firm of more than 2750 attorneys in 48 locations around the globe. 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.*



Richard A. Rosenbaum

FIRM BRIEF *Greenberg Traurig, LLP (gtlaw.com) has more than 2750 attorneys in 48 locations in the United States, Europe and the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The firm is a 2022 BTI "Highly Recommended Law Firm" for superior client service and is consistently among the top firms on the Am Law Global 100 and NJ 500. Greenberg Traurig is Mansfield Rule 6.0 Certified Plus by The Diversity Lab. The firm is recognized for powering its U.S. offices with 100 percent renewable energy as certified by the Center for Resource Solutions Green-e® Energy program and is a member of the U.S. EPA's Green Power Partnership Program. The firm is known for its philanthropic giving, innovation, diversity, and pro bono.*

What is the key to your effective leadership as executive chairman of a top-tier global law firm?

"Where there is unity, there is always victory." Latin moralist Publilius Syrus wrote these powerful words more than 2,000 years ago. Two millennia later, we live in a hyper-connected, yet polarized world plagued with geopolitical, ideological, and economic upheaval. We are at an inflection point. The need for unity has never been greater.

At Greenberg Traurig, we fiercely protect our culture and core values of respect for the individual, integrity, commitment to excellence, diversity, and collaboration. The key to achieving this lies in our unity. By operating as one united firm, we ensure that our foundational principles remain intact. We never merge or create a *verein*. Instead, we grow organically by hiring laterals or teams that align with our values and strategies.

Unity strengthens, unity diversifies, and unity allows us to be our authentic selves and work together with common goals. Unity is the framework that gives us the freedom to "win."

How did your leadership style develop?

In 1985, I joined the firm in Florida as a young associate and our 90th lawyer. I am honored that Mel Greenberg, one of the firm's founders, saw a special quality and drive in me and took me under his wing. Mel often spoke about the value of collaboration: "I really believe that the strength and character of Greenberg Traurig was created because of our relationship, and mutual respect and interdependence." This concept of unity as integral to success resonated deeply and still guides me today. We have grown into a leading global Big Law firm with more than 2750 attorneys working together as one united firm across 48 locations in the United States, Europe and the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia.

How do you empower those you lead in many locations, practices, industries, and cultures?

We believe in our attorneys – both as talented professionals and entrepreneurs. In an increasingly complex world, Greenberg Traurig attorneys operate as resilient problem-solvers with the adaptability, strength, and capacity to successfully navigate evolving challenges. We invest in our attorneys' personal and professional growth. Our award-winning mentoring and training programs further empower our attorneys to achieve their highest potential and deliver unparalleled service to our clients worldwide. Greenberg Traurig is a meritocracy where everyone has the freedom to shape their own success through the power of their drive and their unwavering commitment to client satisfaction.

Perhaps most important, we created an environment of mutual trust and collaboration – rare in a global Big Law firm. Wherever we open our doors – across the United States or the world – we seek out respected regional attorneys who not only enhance our capabilities, but also share our core values, and this makes all the difference. These principles transcend borders, cultures, and customs, anchoring us as a global force with a shared purpose.

The result is a multidisciplinary global platform where our attorneys fluidly collaborate across locations, exchanging deep knowledge of practice areas, industry-specific insights, and regional nuances. A common sentiment I hear among our professionals is, "I haven't yet seen a client issue arise that someone, somewhere at Greenberg Traurig can't address." We can count on each other. We are all stronger, and better equipped to service our clients and their industries holistically and seamlessly, when we work together across the globe as one united firm.

What core aspects of Greenberg Traurig's business model have led to consistent leadership in the industry and long-term client relationships amid so many other changes in the world?

It is essential to define what Greenberg Traurig stands for: exceptional client service, a collaborative and respectful environment, diversity, sustainability, the responsible adoption of emerging technologies, and a unified global perspective. It is also imperative to note what differentiates us. First and foremost, we are client-driven. This commitment to exceptional client service, along with our sound fiscal management, drives our sustained financial growth. We have historically increased our year-over-year revenue for a decade.

Our secret sauce is in our unique business model. We grow by strategically targeting locations poised for expansion and hire regionally respected and connected professionals who share our values. This allows us to operate as one collaborative, unified global firm and offer the agility and geographic and practice diversity required to meet evolving client needs worldwide. Clients stay with us because our flexible and vast global platform enables us to provide industry-focused teams well-versed in relevant practices, align fee structures with client needs and market conditions, and adapt to any economic climate. In short, we meet clients where they are in terms of proximity, budgets, and legal requirements. One more intangible

asset: at Greenberg Traurig we genuinely like each other and clients enjoy working with us. In fact, over the years, many clients and attorneys on the other side of a matter have joined our firm.

By staying true to our foundational principles, we attain success through unity, and our attorneys have the freedom to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams and provide a better way forward for the legal profession and for those we serve.

Greenberg Traurig's New York headquarters is located at One Vanderbilt in New York City. As the world continually evolves, why does New York remain so central to business and law in the U.S. and worldwide?

New York's importance to business and law around the world is driven by its legal influence, financial strength, global reach, and cultural diversity. Therefore, to become a premier global law firm, we had to build a formidable New York presence. Our renowned New York attorneys collaborate around the globe both as team leaders and team members sharing knowledge with talented peers around the country and the world.

Almost 30 years ago, Larry Hoffman and Cesar Alvarez asked me to grow the newly-formed New York office as its managing shareholder. Staffed with only 30 attorneys in the world's largest and most competitive legal market, I was honored and humbled. Today, our New York office has more than 300 attorneys comprising all the firm's major practices including corporate, real estate, litigation, white collar, restructuring, intellectual property, tax, entertainment and media, labor and employment, and government law and policy. Our clients – ranging from Fortune 100 companies to startups – conduct business locally and around the world. Our Long Island, Westchester, and New Jersey offices enhance and support the New York City office. We are the only global Big Law firm with offices in all these locations. And, of course, I am Brooklyn-born, and Queens-raised. New York is my hometown.

Greenberg Traurig places a major emphasis on building a diverse and inclusive workforce. Will you discuss these efforts and how critical this is to the continued strength of the firm notwithstanding the changes we are all living through?

Our origin story and core values reflect our unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. Founded by three attorneys who themselves faced discrimination, Greenberg Traurig was established as a firm where everyone is welcome. We take pride in our long-standing, comprehensive, and award-winning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative. By building teams of attorneys from diverse backgrounds, worldviews, and approaches, we can provide more well-rounded and creative solutions for our clients and the communities we serve. We are privileged to have Senior Vice President and Litigation Shareholder Nikki Lewis Simon, an internationally recognized thought leader, as

our chief DEI officer. Under her guidance and with support from other firm leaders, we develop programs that address inclusion and diversity in all its definitions.

A rise in divisiveness and hate crimes only embolden us at Greenberg Traurig to accelerate our efforts to actualize meaningful change. Recently, there has been an alarming increase in antisemitism on our campuses, across our nation, and globally. As attorneys, we have a moral obligation to combat hateful rhetoric that incites violence or intimidation whenever and wherever it arises. We must not remain silent.

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Greenberg Traurig has achieved robust growth and success under your leadership. Are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to reflect on what the firm has achieved?

This may seem trite, but time really does go by so fast. I can't believe that it has been

almost 40 years since I was first welcomed into the firm. I am incredibly grateful for the unbelievable opportunity I have been blessed with at Greenberg Traurig. I have grown, I have led, and I have witnessed the firm experience tremendous expansion while holding fast its core values, the highest ethical standards, and commitment to excellence. I always remember that the successes in my own career are the result of the combined investment of many others – both those who have mentored me as well as those I continue to lead and serve. They make me proud to be at Greenberg Traurig every day. I continue to work hard to honor that investment.

Reflecting on the countless hours over more years than I care to remember, I know in my heart that the sacrifices have been well worth it, not just for me personally, but also for the more than 5,000 members of our Greenberg Traurig family. I remain ever ready and nimble for both the predictable and the unforeseeable changes that await our noble legal field. Looking to the future with optimism, I am eager to witness the unimagined efficiencies and democratization of law that emerging technologies promise. I see opportunities to further influence the practice of law on a global scale. Moreover, it is our responsibility as lawyers to continue to work diligently to create a more diverse, just, and unified society.

What advice do you give to young people interested in a career in law?

My daughter entered law school this August. I tell her what I have told many before: Embark on this journey with passion. This career is not simply about financial rewards or prestige; it requires a deep commitment to making a difference, advocating for others, and upholding the law. Earn your clients' trust by maintaining the highest ethical standards. As Abraham Lincoln once said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” Let your passion be the foundation upon which you build your future.

Remain nimble, keep learning, and stay informed. The legal landscape is constantly changing, influenced by new legislation, technological advancements, and global events. Your ability to adapt will make you a more effective and resilient lawyer. The lives you touch – whether a powerful CEO or a vulnerable individual in need – can be transformed for the better. In all the long hours, keep in mind that success is not a destination; it is a journey that must be earned every day. But also find time for your family, your friends, and yourself. Network and work collaboratively. Success is found in unity.

My advice to future lawyers mirrors the principles that have driven our firm's success. Hard work and teamwork yield remarkable results. As an Ethiopian proverb states, “When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion.” At Greenberg Traurig, three Miami attorneys came together years ago, and our united efforts have transformed our firm into a leading legal global powerhouse. ●