

# An Innovative Campus Approach in New York

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

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Richard Rosenbaum is the Executive Chairman of Greenberg Traurig, a unified international law firm of more than 2,300 attorneys spanning 40 offices around the globe, and 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 intensely executing the strategies which have led to the firm's spectacular growth and unique culture across the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. He closely guards the firm's long-term core values while still aggressively navigating the 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. Over these decades, Rosenbaum's focus has always been the same: delivering extraordinary business results to its clients and a place for its talent to build their dreams, with a sense of urgency, efficiency and excellence, and maintaining a "GT family", living values of high ethics, respect, fairness, loyalty, merit and personal accountability which collectively create long-term relationships and lasting trust. He has always been willing to be the first to a new market, a new practice or a new way of doing business, did not follow the herd, and is well-known for giving more junior and/or diverse lawyers opportunities to quickly advance when earned based on hard work and merit. Rosenbaum is proud of his work in founding the firm's renowned and wide-ranging "Commitment to Excellence" program, which ensures that all of these values will remain core to the firm's daily practice and global brand for many years to come.*



Richard A. Rosenbaum

**New York is the largest among Greenberg Traurig's 40 global offices. Will you discuss your vision for the firm's new "campus" location?**

In January 2018 we announced a forward-looking plan to move the center of our New York regional operations to the state-of-the-art, conveniently located, yet-to-be-constructed One Vanderbilt project in Manhattan, as one of its first tenants. We envisioned a cohesive plan suitable for today, yet nimbly adaptable to coming changes in talent needs and technological advances. This new location will allow the firm to continue to be responsive to the priorities and expectations of our highly valued clients, which is always at the center of every strategic move.

Our plan is to be a leader by utilizing both "new law" space planning in this state-of-the-art and perfectly located building in concert with a combination of alternative nearby locations to provide the most efficient and effective overall solution for our clients and talent alike. Just as the majestic One Vanderbilt rose above Manhattan, New York and the world were unexpectedly confronted by a pandemic, forcing all the changes which I, and others, saw coming to be suddenly accelerated, almost overnight. Life as we knew it would never be the same.

**How quickly did you need to pivot?**

Greenberg Traurig wasted no time in adapting to the pandemic, strongly performing for our clients. As a firm we looked out for our lawyers and professional staff. As New York emerged from the worst of the pandemic, it was time to fine-tune the plan. The idea of utilizing One Vanderbilt as the center of operations remained on target.

**Will you summarize this new approach from Greenberg Traurig?**

We are bringing Greenberg Traurig closer to home. What we mean by that is while some of our lawyers may continue to spend significant time working at home for individual reasons or at One Vanderbilt, we believe that we can, in effect, have a number of folks working "remotely" while still being together with their colleagues. We believe that we can do so in an office setting closer to home with this approach. This also speaks to serving clients whose own lives have shifted during this period. By using long-standing and significant offices at the Graybar Building, and in New Jersey, Westchester, and

Albany, likely in expanded forms, along with locations being planned on Long Island, our goal is to accomplish these objectives in a way that works for our unique firm – close to our clients, respecting our people, adapting to change, and delivering excellence and value that clients appreciate.

The Co-Managing Shareholders of Greenberg Traurig's New York office agree:

**Ejim Achi**, *Co-Managing Shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's New York office and Co-Chair of the New York Corporate Practice, 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: "We feel that this approach facilitates flexibility and convenience while preserving opportunities for collaboration and camaraderie made most possible by being together, albeit in various settings."*

**Scott J. Bornstein**, *Co-Managing Shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's New York office, Co-Chair of the firm's Global Intellectual Property & Technology Practice, Co-Chair of the firm's Global Patent Litigation Group, serves on the firm's Executive Committee. He has deep patent trial*



*experience and has served as lead counsel in more than 100 patent litigations. He has broad experience in patent, trademark and copyright litigation, licensing, and general IP counseling for a wide variety of national and international clients: "We have always been on the cutting edge of change, and we are very excited that, even as we have achieved so much growth and success, we have not lost our desire to continue to seek optimal solutions for our clients, lawyers, and staff."*

**“The firm is known for anticipating change and not waiting for others or the latest marketplace trend. We did so with our holistic approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion from our very start, before diversity became a ‘buzzword;’ when we expanded our footprint in Europe, setting up in Amsterdam first, where other firms were not; when we introduced alternatives for those attorneys who wanted a different career path; with strong fiscal management years before the 2008 recession hit the legal profession; and now with this multi-location campus approach, among many other examples.”**

**- Richard A. Rosenbaum**

**What does this mean for your overall plan?**

We have fine-tuned our plan. We now will have an expanded and first-class conference center, a greater number of visitor regional offices, and greater utilization from our existing regional offices. This speaks to our core values and tradition of flexibility, individual empowerment, efficiency, and always putting the client first.

We are proud of the elevation of excellence, client service, productivity and absolute resilience shown by our entire team throughout the pandemic. While nothing replaces physically being together for our globally unified culture of family, mentoring and collaboration, much more flexibility was suddenly possible with this approach. So, when we saw a unique window of opportunity to execute a beneficial transaction that made sense for who we are as a firm, we nimbly moved and took full advantage of the situation.

**What do you see as the advantages to this campus innovation?**

We believe in being together. We created the Greenberg Traurig Getting Together Tour in the Mel on Wheels RV because we value our culture, personal development, collaboration, mentoring, apprenticeship, bonding, brainstorming and because we wanted to preserve and strengthen the Greenberg Traurig family.

Having a multi-location campus is about flexibility and about our talent. Clients come first, which means having the best and most diverse talent to meet client demand. Being flexible is key to doing so. For us, however, being “flexible” does not have to mean everyone sitting in separate homes except when in one underutilized, oversized location. This would tear down all of Greenberg Traurig’s core values and all the benefits of being together. With our approach, we can say that we have brought the office to them.

If you are a lawyer and want to be in an office that is close to home, but not working from home all the time, and remain part of a world class team, learning and growing, developing your business, being excellent, delivering best service, in the best and most collaborative environment, you thought you would either have to make sacrifices of some of those objectives or find another firm to do it, if there was one. That is no longer true if you are working at Greenberg Traurig.

Additionally, of course, it is about the clients. Client locations have become much more diversified; just read the morning news – especially in South Florida, Austin, Dallas, Denver, Atlanta, as well as the East End of Long Island. Many times, client principals move around over the course of the year.

As a client, you love that your law firm is in the heart of Midtown Manhattan in a state-of-the-art building, but you have relocated for all or significant parts of the year for a variety of reasons, including the impact of the pandemic – what can you expect? You might have thought you would be sacrificing your connection with the law firm that knows you because your ability to have in-person meetings with them or others on short notice, and be home in 15 minutes, was no longer possible. That is no longer true if you are working with Greenberg Traurig.

**How long will this transition take?**

We are literally adapting our firm in real time to serve our clients whose lives have also changed. They may be in Manhattan, might be in Westchester, might be in New Jersey, might be in East Hampton, might be in Miami or Austin or Denver or Los Angeles – and we will be there with them.

The bottom line is that we made it through a pandemic sitting in separate houses thanks to pre-existing structures and relationships, commitment, and technology. But a law firm is a “people business.” People are social animals. Therefore, to maximize excellence, collaboration, innovation, loyalty and value over the course of time, and mitigate the impact of isolation on mental health, we need to come together – this is how we keep the best of the past while adapting for the future. ●



*Greenberg Traurig Executive Chairman Richard Rosenbaum (left) and Chief Executive Officer Brian Duffy (right) moved into an RV on April 10, 2021 and embarked on a cross-country tour of the law firm’s 30 U.S. offices (and soon visiting its other offices). It was all part of a safe and fun way for the firm’s leadership to gather together with Greenberg Traurig attorneys and professional staff: the “Mel on Wheels Getting Together Tour.” The tour and the used RV are affectionately named in honor of Mel Greenberg, one of three co-founders of Greenberg Traurig, which started in Miami in 1967. The Greenberg Traurig road trip is a personal passion for Rosenbaum and Duffy, who mostly drove and lived in “Mel on Wheels,” and were joined along the road by other firm leaders. They see this as a crucial time to reconnect with their Greenberg Traurig family, reflect on the changing world, and safely socialize with attorneys and staff in cities nationwide.*