CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

Greenberg Traurig, LLP

Creating a law firm culture that embraces technology and innovation

Often the pace within law firms and a don't-fix-what-isn't-broken mindset complicates stepping back and thinking about new firm approaches to more efficiently and effectively deliver legal solutions in an increasingly competitive environment. While many firms struggle with this inner tension, others are making change a key strategic focus by design, integrating technological innovation within the firm's culture. With a host of different vendors, new and old, vying for the firm's limited time and attention for an opportunity to demonstrate their products, it is tempting just to table and retable these discussions. But that risks missing out on something that could make an important difference to the firm, to its people, and to its clients.

Anaqua spoke with international law firm Greenberg Traurig, and specifically **Alexandra Holt (AH)**, Associate, as well as **Joel Feldman (JF)**, Vice Chair of the Trademark & Brand Management Group, both based in the firm's Atlanta office about their new technology taskforce they've established at their firm.

How did the task force come to be set up, what is its composition, and how does it work?

AH: We used to decline many technology pitches because we didn't specifically allocate time for demonstrations and discussions and we were satisfied with our current technologies. Then we thought: Why aren't we systematically exploring and evaluating the different technologies that are out there? Why aren't we giving people a chance to show us what their technology is about, so we can be more intentional in the technological solutions we incorporate within our trademark and brand management legal services? We took the view that, if we're open to new technologies, we're more likely to discover something of value, something that makes us more efficient and that helps us stand out more to our clients; whereas, if we close the door from the get-go, we're never going to know what opportunities we might have missed.

JF: Previously our approach had been very ad hoc, typically on an office-by-office basis, so our Trademark and Brand Management Group leadership felt it was important to establish a task force to organize and formalize our processes when evaluating new trademark-related technologies. Part of the rationale for having younger attorneys run the task force was that these attorneys have no emotional connection to legacy trademark-related technologies. But, more importantly, young attorneys are typically very comfortable with new technology and more vested in the selection of these technologies because they use them on a day-to-day basis for the types of trademark and brand management tasks they perform.

It's been an important evolution in the way we look at the technology needs of the Trademark and Brand Management Group. We work with some of the most-innovative companies in the world. We should innovate just like our clients do. Building bridges with trademark-technology vendors gives us a voice in how those technology solutions are developed; we've found that vendors are very receptive to our input.

What are the key criteria the task force looks at when assessing new technologies?

AH: Greenberg Traurig has a commitment to excellence. So the first and foremost criterion is that the technology must be accurate and support our delivery of best-in-class legal services to our clients. Secondarily, we look for technologies that make people's lives easier – we want something intuitive and user-friendly – and that provides demonstrable and measurable value to our clients, whether it's a cost savings or better work product. We're not looking at technology for technology's sake or choosing something just because it's new and exciting. It has to meet our criteria and rigorous quality standards. So, when we do choose a new technology, it's a significant step and the practice knows it's been vetted and it meets our standards.

JF: It is interesting that the disruptors almost always focus on price, but they cannot prove that their technology is as accurate or better than the technology we'd be replacing. We tested some of the newer trademark search and watch tools, for example, and we were just not satisfied with the accuracy – even with some of the supposedly major and highly sophisticated new platforms. They were close to our existing products, but not the same or better. When you're at a big law firm, price is a factor, but accuracy is the most important factor – no one here is going to be impressed with someone saying, "We saved $100, but missed something."

You mention the cost of new technology to the practice being a key consideration. How do you look to recoup that cost?

JF: When we've gone through the vetting process and we've identified technologies that we want to adopt, there are still challenges in terms of recouping costs and fairly allocating them either internally or externally. That's what the leadership team is tasked with figuring out.

At the end of the day, a lot depends on the cost. A technology tool that is several hundred dollars is easier to absorb than a technology tool that is tens of thousands of dollars. Likewise, transactional pricing is easier to allocate than subscription pricing. But there is a bigger picture to consider here too. If the technology is going to enable an associate or paralegal or anyone at the firm to be more available to our clients, then there's an intangible benefit to that. We want to make sure that our professionals are doing things that add value to the client while developing their professional skills and expertise. We would prefer not to have people manually doing tasks that can just as easily be automated.

How do you think the task force reflects Greenberg Traurig's broader innovation culture and approach to embracing new thinking?

AH: Across the firm worldwide, we pride ourselves on our culture of innovation - and it runs deep in everything we do, as does our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Greenberg Traurig believes that diverse viewpoints produce smarter ideas for the firm and our clients. Everyone has a seat at the table, no matter how young you are or what your title is. You're very much encouraged to be yourself and speak your mind, and this is fully embraced by the firm. I think the task force is a great example of this, both in terms of its composition – being made up of young attorneys – and the fact that our opinions and recommendations are going to be valued and acted upon.

For some law firms, creating an openness to innovation - let alone establishing and embedding an innovation culture - is still an uphill battle, in large part due to the perceived drain on resources, particularly time. Meanwhile, firms like GT – who have already embraced innovation and change as a key driver in their business – are continuing to find ways to innovate for the benefit of the firm, its people, and its clients.

Greenberg Traurig *(GT) is a major U.S. law firm with a strong international presence. For GT, innovation is more than just talk, it is in their DNA and underpins the firm's core strategy of delivering enhanced client experience. GT's Global Trademark & Brand Management Group is one of the largest international trademark prosecution, portfolio management, licensing, litigation, and counseling legal practices in the world. In keeping with the firm's innovation culture, the practice set up a task force of young associates to investigate and evaluate new technologies that the firm might wish to adopt.*

ANAQUA®

Boston
31 St. James Avenue
Boston, MA 02116, USA
+1 617 375 5808

London
c/o WeWork 184 Shepherds Bush Rd
London W6 7NL, UK
+44 (0)20 7100 2990

www.anaqua.com