

Noted LA attorney facilitates deals of a certain size, scope



By Brian Cox

No matter its size, subject matter, or complexity, “a deal is a deal” for Bob Baradaran, managing partner of the Los Angeles law firm Greenberg Glusker LLP.

“You either know how to negotiate with other people to solve problems and get deals done or you don’t,” he says.

Over the course of his more than 25-year career, Baradaran has represented clients in countless multi-million-dollar real estate transactions, including negotiating a development agreement of a \$1.6 billion luxury hotel and condominium project in Beverly Hills. He has handled the sales of several professional sports franchises, including the Oakland Athletics and the Los Angeles Clippers, and advised the soccer team San Jose Earthquakes in the construction of a new stadium.

At the same time, he has guided clients through divorces, business breakups, and helped them buy or sell private planes.

Baradaran says it is the variety and range of the deals that has kept his practice interesting and why he still enjoys it.

“I think my best skill set is to be able to negotiate to a resolution and it doesn’t matter whether it’s a piece of real estate or a corporate transaction,” says Baradaran. “It’s more about trying to find common ground between two counter-parties and getting to the finish line in an orderly way.”

Born in Iran, Baradaran’s parents came to Los Angeles in the wake of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 when Baradaran was 7. He quickly adapted to his new environment and has lived, studied, and worked in LA ever since.

A graduate of the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business where he studied finance and business economics, Baradaran followed his parents’ advice to get a graduate degree. Law school seemed a practical next step, even though he was not certain at the time that he would practice.

At the USC Gould School of Law, Baradaran discovered he liked it. An internship with a 9th Circuit Court of Appeals judge provided him insight into the appellate process, but led him to conclude he wasn’t interested in a career path leading to the bench. His second summer, he clerked at Sidley Austin, a multi-national law firm with approximately 2,000 lawyers in 20 offices around the world. The experience set him on his course.

He joined the prestigious firm after law school and started out in litigation, which he came to realize was not appealing to him.

“I found litigation very engaging and interesting and fun if you’re actually going to be a trial lawyer as opposed to a litigator where you not going to be in the courtroom,” he says. “My personality was more suited to negotiating and getting deals done rather than getting up each morning and always being in an adversarial dispute.”

Among the many lessons he learned in those early years that have stayed with him and influenced his approach to advising clients is that avoiding the cost, distraction, and uncertainty of litigation is nearly always preferred.

“I try to avoid litigation for all my clients as much I can,” he says. “Because at the end of the day, you’re going to sit across a table and resolve things.”

In 1998, deciding to shift his practice away from litigation to more transactional work, Baradaran made the move to join the Real Estate Group at Greenberg Glusker as a second-year associate.

Over the next two decades, Baradaran developed his law practice to serve as outside general counsel to numerous companies, funds, family offices, and high-net worth entrepreneurs in the real estate, hospitality, sports, technology, and entertainment industries.

In 2010, he began serving on the firm’s Management Committee, and four years later he was named managing partner at the age of 42, becoming only the fifth managing partner in the firm’s history.

Founded in 1959 with only three lawyers, Greenberg Glusker now has 105 attorneys — but still only one office, a point of identity and a reflection of the firm’s philosophy.

“We’re very collegial and I think our folks like spending time together and enjoy working with each other,” says Baradaran. “We try to develop a culture that is the right balance between running the firm as a big family and a business.”

The firm is designed to serve individual clients’ needs, however varied they may be. While the firm represents many institutional clients, the majority of its client base is middle market companies, family offices and high net worth individuals, entrepreneurs, and high-profile celebrities.

“Our clients are high-net worth individuals – family offices, middle market companies – where the principal decision-maker is on the phone with us,” he says. “As a result, they want more

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experienced lawyers that are not only excellent practitioners but are also able to give sound business advice.”

That is why the firm is leveraged two-thirds partners and one-third associates. In addition, Greenberg Glusker’s clients prefer continuity in their representation, which is why the firm strives for low turnover and seeks to hire people who are interested in long-term careers.

“I try to recruit people who want to build a career here and stay for the long term, as opposed to just a job that will pay them well until they hop to another firm after a few years,” says Baradaran. “That translates into consistency of teams representing our clients so that they’re working with the same people in the same office who have been working on their matters for many years.”

The firm’s clients want sophisticated legal work without overrepresentation, which is why the firm usually has only one or two people on any one matter.

“Even the sizable matters we handle, many times on our side there will be two or three lawyers and on the other side there will be 10 or 15,” says Baradaran. “That’s the different type of client service, different value proposition on fees, and different type of involvement our clients expect.”

To ensure continuity and reliability, the firm has a formal mentoring structure in place to nurture young lawyers. The program is designed to allow lawyers to communicate directly with a mentor and mentors are closely involved in the attorney’s development. The aim is to prepare the younger lawyers to become excellent lawyers in their area of practice, build a practice of their own, and be ready to take on leadership roles.

“The founders of our firm and the generation ahead of me were very actively involved in transitioning clients and leadership to the next generation,” says Baradaran. “They were forward thinking and generous in understanding that a firm of our type and size needs to transition to the next group of attorneys, if it’s going to survive.”

Baradaran says he has learned from prior leadership that managing the firm is not about today, tomorrow, or even this year — it’s about how to run and structure the firm so that it’s healthy 10 or 20 years from now.

“It’s not how much money can we make this year,” says Baradaran. “Maximizing profit is not even in the top three priorities that drive me or our management team. It’s more about what makes sense long term.”

As a younger attorney, Baradaran didn’t initially envision becoming involved in firm management. He grew into the role.

“Managing people and motivating people, it’s never boring,”

he says. “What I try to do is surround myself with people who are smarter than me and who can help me execute on what needs to be done.”

Baradaran met his spouse, Natasha, when he was 18. The couple married six years later and now have two daughters. Isabella, 21, is a senior in college studying art history. Olivia, 17, is a senior in high school who has expressed interest going to business school. Natasha runs her own design company that makes furniture and textiles. Her work fuses European design traditions, Middle Eastern arts, and the laid-back luxury of Los Angeles living.

Hanging on the wall in Baradaran’s office is a Rauschenberg print that his wife bought for him at an auction. On one table he displays a soccer ball signed by the Manchester United team and a desk monument commemorating the \$2 billion sale of the LA Clippers. There’s also a framed photograph of his daughters and another of him skydiving – the day after he passed the bar.

As he looks down the road and considers the future of the legal business, he expects artificial intelligence to have a meaningful impact. He says remote working will continue to change the practice of law, for the better and the worse. He also has a sense that younger lawyers will be far more receptive to moving between firms.

“I think people are more apt to moving around and finding what they like instead of being more patient about how their career progresses over an extended period of time,” he says.

Despite evolving technological and societal influences, he expects the firm to maintain its focus and its commitment to organic growth.

“I think our firm is designed and structured ideally to cater to the type of clients we serve,” he says. “We’ve found our sweet spot. It’s worked for us and it’s a good model going forward.”



Attorney Bob Baradaran is pictured with his wife, Natasha, and their two daughters, Isabella and Olivia.