

SENIOR LAWYER SPOTLIGHT

Gabriel Dejarden



Contributor: Kelly Blount, 2023-2024 YIN Senior Advisor and Jimmie C.Herring, Jr, 2023-2024 YIN Vice Chair

In this edition, we feature an exclusive interview with Gabriel Dejarden, a Partner at ECIJA Dominican Republic.

What is your current role? What does that mean day to day?

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to engage with you and your readers. As a former YIN Co-Chair, I have very fond memories of the committee. I am currently a member of ECIJA's 16-member Executive Committee, the highest governing body in our law-firm, which is a Swiss Verein. I share this role with my function of Co-Managing Partner of our firm's Dominican office. As a member of the Executive Committee, I help shape the firm's overall strategy, business planning and integration efforts. Moreover, I have been tasked with various specific responsibilities overtime, which have included searching for candidate offices to join ECIJA, and the organization of the firm's last annual partners' meeting together with Alejandro Touriño, Managing Partner of our office in Madrid. The latter assignment involved extensive collaboration with Madrid's Business Team given that the meeting was held at their offices. At present this role includes the appointment to a subcommittee of the Executive Committee in charge of fostering relationships with law firms in the United States. With respect to my Co-Managing Partner duties, these involve overseeing business intake procedures and planning, supervising HR, IT, Marketing and Compliance matters, as well as handling the firm's international relationships.

How long have you been involved with the ABA and in what capacity(ies)?

I have been involved with the ABA since 2010. Our participation started as a conference delegate, and eventually evolved into us becoming a steering committee member, vice-chair of various committees, liaison to external organizations, Chair of YIN for 3 years, Chair of the Cross Real-Estate Committee for 3 years, Deputy Liaison Officer, Deputy Vice-Chair and currently deputy to the Chair Elect of the Section.

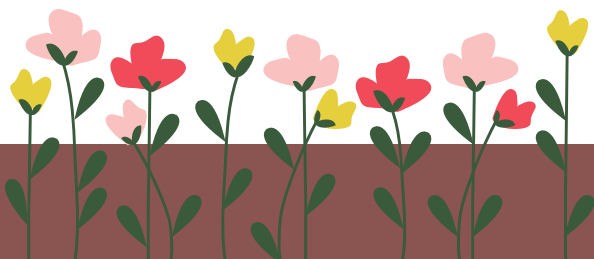
You cover a wide range of legal areas in your practice. Which is your favorite? Why?

I am indeed passionate about various areas of the law. If I have to narrow them to my ultimate favorites, I would choose Real Estate, Corporate, Labor and Financial Services Law. These practices allow me to be in close contact with the financial services industry, an area which I am passionate about and wish to keep current with. I feel that these areas have helped me sharpen my strategic thinking and creative skills, enabling me to design better ventures and structures, which one enjoys seeing grow and be completed overtime. As you know, the successful completion of a project brings new jobs to a country and often involves the transfer of new know how, which ultimately supposes local innovation which drives further growth and overall well being in a jurisdiction. We feel very fortunate to be part and contribute to this virtuous circle in the DR, which, in a way, becomes part of our personal legacy, and allows us to give back to the society that has opened so many doors for us.

What would you describe as a challenge or opportunity in cross-border practice?

Language barriers, different legal, economic and cultural realities, operating in different time-zones, among others, are all challenges that a cross-border legal practitioner must learn to navigate to effectively advance the interests of his/her clients. Some of these challenges can be "tamed" through self-improvement and study in a particular area. Such efforts to self-educate should not be limited to reading legal books and training, but I also believe it should also involve purposeful travelling and keeping up to speed with the most novel developments in other disciplines relevant to one's practice. In my particular case, this involves keeping up to date with the latest international developments in accounting, anti-money laundering, tax and financial matters.

Moreover, certain challenges for a cross border professional can be effectively handled by partnering with a professional in another jurisdiction which not only is highly competent, but also shares your firm's values and vision of the profession. To reach these professionals, one needs to forge formal alliances (becoming part of an international law firm, a network of firms, etc.) or be part of bar associations, such as the ABA, in which you will meet the same.



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As a student of law is this where you thought you'd end up? If no, what did you see yourself doing as a lawyer?

If you could share one piece of advice with your law student-self, what would it be?

No, actually. At the beginning of my career, I thought I would become an arbitration practitioner. I was involved as a student in the Willem C. Vis Arbitration competition and went on to prepare my JD and LLM graduate papers in arbitration law. This is an area, that I indeed still like, but as time passed and I was exposed to other areas of the law, and I realized that my true passions lied elsewhere. I would thus encourage all law student and young legal professionals to find ways to be exposed early in their careers to as much areas of the law as possible, so that they can identify where their true legal interests lie. When your skills and passions meet, you will not feel you are "working" a single day of your life!

If you could share one piece of advice with your law student-self, what would it be?

To start business development activities such as attending conferences, writing articles, etc. as early as possible.

What hurdles have you faced in reaching where you are today?

I have faced challenges to strike an adequate work-life balance. To overcome such issue, I try to focus on what matters to me the most in life, plan my vacation and down time well in advance, and have worked to include regular exercise in my weekly routine. I find that I am more productive and efficient and thus a better leader as a result.

If you could do anything else professionally, what would it be?

I would probably be a financial services professional, an airline pilot or a historian. I have always loved the intricacies of how businesses work, and financial services professionals have a window, like few other experts, into understanding and shaping the same. A pilot, because I am still marveled about the miracle of flight and everything that revolves around the travel experience (meeting new places, people, etc.). A historian because it has always been one of my passions from a very early age to read this type of books and visit sites with a rich historical heritage.

What advice do you have for young lawyers interested in your field?

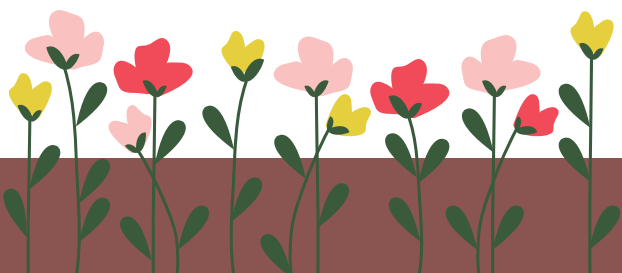
To get proactively involved as early as possible in their career in bar association activities related to their field. Through the same, you will be learning to perform your job better, making a contribution to the improvement of the profession, creating new relationship networks which are key to building a book a business and perhaps even have some fun at the same time!

What was your biggest takeaway from teaching graduate students?

When you teach you definitively share your knowledge and experience but also learn exponentially when preparing your classes and by engaging in discussions with each of your students.

What is the most rewarding part of your current role?

I get to encourage the creation of new leaders, help individuals and business grow and be successful and interact with people of many different backgrounds from all around the world, from which I learn a lot.



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What's your secret for work-life balance?

I will sum it up as: being consistent and organized and while also being adaptable when the circumstances require it. I am convinced that to achieve such balance, you need a method and/or routine that works for you and periodically evaluate it based on the results you are achieving.



From L to R: Enrique García, Gabriel Dejarden and Cecilia Barrero.

What are your favorite books - personal and/or professionally oriented?

Diplomacy by Henry Kissinger, Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey and Tools of Titans by Tim Ferriss.

In one word, why do you do what you do?

Inspiration.



Mo Syed and Gabriel Dejarden in DC..

