



HE STARTED OUT AS AN INTERN, NOW HE IS A PARTNER

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As a young and energetic lawyer, Barbaros Karaahmet first started at Herrick, Feinstein, LLP in 1995 and worked there until 2001. Ten years later, he re-joined the company as a partner. Today Karaahmet, Co-Chair of Herrick, Feinstein, LLP's Turkish Practice Group answered our questions.

Could you tell us a little bit about your professional background?

I started my career in law in Turkey and graduated from Istanbul School of Law in 1993. After I finished my one-year internship in Turkey and got my Turkish license in 1994, I was admitted to NYU School of Law to receive my LLM (Masters of Law). In 1995, right after I finished my NYU Masters Program, I started working at Herrick, Feinstein as a foreign legal consultant.

Did you ever imagine becoming a partner when you were a former legal consultant at Herrick, Feinstein?

When I first started at Herrick, Feinstein in 1995, I thought it would be just a one-year assignment and eventually I would go back to Turkey to practice law with my family law firm. But then one year became two years, and eventually six years passed at Herrick. So in 2001, I left Herrick to set up my own practice. After ten years of running my own practice in New York, I re-joined Herrick and I am now a partner and co-chair of the firm's Turkish Practice Group. So, I guess you never know in life and you never burn your bridges.

What are the main differences between working for a boutique law firm versus a large one?

The differences between a boutique law firm and large one are almost too many to name. But Herrick is a breed apart. We have approximately 170 lawyers, which is considered a "mid-sized" law firm these days. That size allows us to combine large firm capabilities with a boutique firm culture, which gives our clients the best of both worlds. From a business perspective, it also allows us to be entrepreneurial and client-centric, where a larger firm might be more bureaucratic. For example, last year we opened our first international office in Istanbul. Most firms would not open in Turkey before they had an office in a major global capital like London. But we have deep roots in Turkey, and we recognize the great potential for U.S. and Turkish business interests today, and years from now.

Have you had any deals that you will never forget?

Recently I advised the Gulaylar Group in their acquisition of a 15,000 square-foot retail condominium in New York's diamond district. That's one of my most memorable deals. It took us two years from the first meeting until the opening of the mall, which was two weeks ago, and our client now owns and operates the largest jewelry mall in New York. As a Turkish-American, I am proud to be involved in such a signature project, so that's one of the deals I don't think I will ever forget.

What advice would you give to young lawyers who want to succeed in business law in the U.S.?

Naturally they have to be very proficient in English. They also have to appreciate the fact that Turkish laws and U.S. laws are completely different. I think a good international lawyer is the one who understands how American businesses are run and what the American business culture is, and also knows how to successfully navigate matters through the U.S. legal system.

How do you see the ties between Turkish and U.S. business interests in the future?

The U.S. remains one of the most, if not the most, attractive destination for many types of Turkish businesses to expand in. At the same time, Turkey is attracting a lot of interest from U.S. companies. Turkey has a young population, fast-growing urban areas and a much higher level of disposable income than in past generations. Because of that, real estate and retail – especially the food and garment industries – are two of the fastest growing industries. I think we will see U.S. investments in those industries grow, as U.S. businesses start to see successes from their recent expansion efforts in Turkey. And right now in the U.S., I think there are many opportunities for Turkish real estate investors, especially in New York and Miami. In terms of the food and beverage sector, Turkish food companies are still underrepresented. So there is a lot of room for growth in that area.

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