Managing IP

Trademarks

Why Gün + Partners is betting on independence after 40 years

Max Walters October 28 2026



Mehmet Gün and Uğur Aktekin discuss four decades of change in Türkiye's legal market, the firm's commitment to independence and the challenge of building an institution that can outlast its founders

Forty years ago, Mehmet Gün visited the London office of what was then Lawrence Graham, a firm of solicitors, while on a business trip from Türkiye.

"I was impressed by the way it operated and developed the ambition to create an institutional firm similar to those in developed markets," he says. "I had also realised the competitive advantage that IP rights gave to businesses, so I decided to develop a firm combining commercial and corporate work with IP."

It proved to be a pivotal moment not just for the lawyer himself but for the local IP legal market as well.

Gün + Partners, the firm Gün (pictured) founded and built, marked its 40th anniversary earlier this month. It is highly ranked across various IP disciplines and offers services in other connected areas of law, including data privacy, corporate and commercial law.

Lawrence Graham, meanwhile, operated independently for many years before merging with UK firm Wragge & Co in 2014 to form Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co. Two years later, it became Gowling WLG after a merger with Canadian firm Gowlings.

Unlike the firm that inspired him, Gün says he has retained his hunger for independence and embedded local knowledge, at least for now.

"It would be possible to sell the firm and allow somebody else to step in, but I am not interested in that. I want the firm to retain its dynamism," he tells Managing IP.

Günning for growth

The model Gün had encountered in London provided an early inspiration, but it was only as his own practice expanded that the need for a new structure became clear.

"By 2000, I realised it was no longer possible for me to manage the firm on my own. We needed to institutionalise. We drew on experience from the London market and worked with international and local advisers. Transforming the business into an institutional law firm took us about 10 years."



L-R: Uğur Aktekin and Mehmet Gün

The shift to an "institutionalised" structure, as Gün describes, was designed to make the firm less dependent on its founder and to provide a defined career structure and greater responsibility to those who could ultimately become its future partners and leaders.

With 50 lawyers and 15 partners today, Gün and his team appear to have done something right.

Now, despite some consolidation in the IP market (not least involving the firm he was inspired by), Gün is keen to stay independent.

He believes that local consolidation would be difficult because of a challenging market.

“Practices are not standardised, and firms have very different ways of operating. We have grown organically and, at least until the Turkish market is more stable, I believe we should remain independent.”

Independence does not mean isolation, Gün notes. If anything, it’s the opposite.

“We have extensive informal cooperation with leading firms in the US, Europe, Japan and other markets,” says Gün.

“Our value is that we are a trusted partner in Türkiye. We provide international partners with information about local developments, their investments and the wider market.”

Uğur Aktekin (pictured), co-chair of the IP practice at Gün + Partners, adds: “Firms of this kind were once difficult to find in Türkiye. There are more options today, but institutionalisation continues to differentiate us and helps position the firm to receive complex international work.”

The firm certainly finds itself in a competitive local market. Others similarly ranked to Gün include Deris, which is Tier 1-listed across the board for IP, and Moroğlu Arseven, a Tier 1 firm for trademark prosecution and disputes.

Gün adds that some Turkish firms have aligned themselves with foreign firms because they see that as a source of business.

For example, Esin Attorney Partnership is a member firm of Baker McKenzie and Özdirekcan Dündar Şenocak Ak operates in partnership with France-based Gide Loyrette Nouel.

Türkiye’s IP services sector also includes private equity-backed Abion, which has a presence in the country following the 2023 merger between Brandit and Ports Group and a subsequent rebrand.

However, Gün does not want to risk becoming reliant on another party: “Foreign firms have approached us about forming an association. My response has always been that I am interested in a 50-50 relationship, but not in becoming a minority.”

On the up

It’s not a surprise Türkiye has emerged as an opportunity for foreign firms.

The market in which Gün + Partners operates has changed considerably since the firm was established in 1986, when Türkiye was in the midst of becoming a more open, export-oriented economy.

Forty years later, the World Bank classifies the country as an ‘upper-middle-income’ economy, with GDP reaching $1.6 trillion in 2025, making it the world’s 17th largest economy.

One of the biggest changes both partners have noticed over the years is the emergence of Türkiye as a key part of what they call the “international IP community”.

“When I entered the profession, IP was only beginning to emerge [in Türkiye],” Aktekin notes. “I have spent my career in IP, particularly trademarks and copyright, and have seen how IP has developed and contributed to the country’s wider economic development.

“We primarily represent international companies and brand owners, helping them in Türkiye. As their activities expanded, the firm grew with them.”

Despite Türkiye’s growth, things are not perfect; both lawyers reference persistent problems with counterfeiting (Gün recalls a recent domestic holiday where he encountered a store called ‘Real Fakes’), and the fact that the patent registration system has not developed with the same speed and expertise as it has for trademarks.

A dedicated police force that helps tackle anti-counterfeiting and specialised IP courts have helped further boost confidence in the jurisdiction, Gün notes.

“Judges can develop expertise relatively quickly once appointed. The first generation of judges received extensive training through the EU. Today, less-experienced judges are sometimes appointed, but after a period of learning they can deliver good decisions. That is part of how Türkiye’s IP practice has developed.”

Four more decades

The 40-year milestone has also prompted the firm to look to the future, particularly if it is to become an institution that outlives its founder.

“My objective is to build the firm so that, when we are no longer here, its structure can be carried forward by the next generation,” says Gün.

“The firm’s value represents the accumulated contribution of many people who have taken ownership, remained with it, progressed through its career structure and become managers. We have developed what I believe is a fair system. The question now is how that system can survive beyond the lives of its founders.”

Aktekin says the business has tried to implement a proper career structure where somebody can join as a trainee and ultimately become a partner.

“Associates receive training, learn the fundamentals and progress into more senior roles before developing skills beyond technical legal work.

“As lawyers progress, they are given opportunities to build client relationships and lead teams. That prepares them to become credible partner candidates and means the firm’s future leadership can be developed internally as the business grows.”

Of course, no discussion on the future of a practice could be complete without mentioning AI.

Gün says the firm is developing AI-based solutions, including a module that searches IP office databases.

“It is helpful, but it has not replaced human contribution,” he says, stressing that the lawyer must remain in control.

“Our systems allow us to operate as a relatively compact firm and do more with fewer resources. That development will continue, even though none of us knows exactly where the technology will ultimately lead.”

He adds: “Legal education will have to adjust. Research that might take a trainee a week can be produced by AI in minutes, but accuracy remains crucial. An experienced lawyer should be able to identify where AI has made a mistake or hallucinated. AI can accelerate the research, but the lawyer must assess the results and produce the final work.”

Much has changed in Türkiye's legal market since Gün founded the firm in 1986, and the firm has changed with it.

Its challenge for the next 40 years is different: proving that the business model can successfully pass from one generation to the next.

Topics

News | Copyright | Patents | Trademarks | IP Offices | AI | Counterfeiting and e-commerce | Türkiye | Gün + Partners



Max Walters

EDITOR Managing IP

Max edits Managing IP’s news and analysis and oversees the team of reporters. He also helps chair and present the publication’s events, and commissions expert comment. He reports on all aspects of IP, particularly trademark and copyright matters in Europe.