



In Profile

Featuring

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Every month, *Lawyer Monthly's* In Profile: An Interview With... feature speaks to experienced lawyers to find out about their work, any recent changes within their practice area, what motivates them and the challenges they face. This month, we speak to Mehmet Gün from Gün + Partners in Istanbul, Turkey.

You have recently published a book on Advocacy profession in Turkey. 500 copies of the first edition have already been finished. Congratulations! Apparently it is the first of its kind; please tell us about it.

It took almost five years to write the book. I went through 3,000 pages and distilled down to only 500. The reason for me was to share my experiences both in life and in the legal profession. I wanted to shine a torch for the many, many thousands of young Anatolian children striving to overcome their boundaries through education and hard work. I wanted to share my own example that no matter how severe the conditions may be; anyone who works hard enough, anyone who is patient and determined can overcome all shortages and succeed in whatever they want to achieve in life.

My second reason to write the book was to share my humble experiences in turning a small law firm starting from scratch to reaching the position it is today as a premier firm within a period of 25 short years. I

wanted young fellow professionals to learn from the lessons that I learned through hardship during these 25 years. Every year, around 4000 law students graduate from around 100 law schools in Turkey. Around 2500 of them apply to our firm for a statutory trainee position. There are only eight positions available for trainees. Vast numbers of young lawyers turn to the legal profession with no experience and nowhere to gain professional skills. I want to be an example for those and I wanted to share my experiences with them through this book. I spent a great deal of time in my book explaining the types of difficulties one faces when practicing law, setting up a law firm and institutionalising it. I bring the reader to the conclusion that progress in the legal profession and delivery of good legal services to the client is possible and sustainable only if it is institutional.

The last part of my book is about the general legal judicial environment in Turkey. This is where I share my experiences of real life judicial matters in Turkey with my conclusions for some solutions as well

as sharing the comparative experiences between Turkish and some foreign justice systems.

Altogether my book has become a sociological witness to the transformation Turkey has been going through from a third world country toward a first world civilisation despite all the shortages and difficulties we are facing. It would give the reader a good idea about the culture of Turkish society and the business community.

You have been leading an NGO named Better Justice for the last five years how did it start and why?

I believe I am indebted to my society to share the wisdom I have developed during my practice over the last 30 years. I can see that Turkey would benefit immensely if the current problems and inefficiencies of the Turkish justice system were improved. First and foremost, I believe that Turkey should adopt modern rules and mechanisms for full disclosure of facts and evidence. This would considerably increase out of court

settlements, reduce the workload of judges in the conduct of legal proceedings, and increase efficiency which would then increase compromises. Turkish society desperately needs honest disclosure and the admission of facts that would be the basis of any compromise. Modern rules forcing parties to disclose facts and evidence without a judge's intervention will bring about natural compromises.

There are many areas for improvement and reform that the Turkish judiciary needs. The Better Justice NGO will work to develop solutions to those problems and seek to obtain consensus from different stakeholders. In a way we aim to make Better Justice into a Think Tank working towards a full reform in judiciary.

You have extensive experience working within the Life Sciences; what are the key challenges faced by your clients when involved in these industries?

The main challenges are the lack of sufficient transparency on the regulatory side. This affects our work considerably in almost all related fields. As there is very little information on the regulatory process for pharmaceuticals and devices we cannot obtain relevant information and advise our clients appropriately as well as not being able to challenge administrative decisions. We are also experiencing difficulty in enforcing IP rights effectively. We have been able to challenge the Ministry of Health to disclose some level of information about MA applications which helped to improve planning of legal activities. The same goes for reimbursement and pricing of drugs.

What motivated you to enter the legal profession?

For me, it was never really a conscious

decision to become a lawyer. I had started my training to become a primary school teacher. Due to a change in the law I had to take university exams and I chose disciplines other than teaching. Based on my exam results I was placed in a law school. From the moment I was placed in law school I was determined to become a lawyer. I enjoyed the greater challenges that lay in law - this set me on the path to where I am today.

What do you find frustrating about your work?

One aspect of my work that I have found frustrating has been about the value of recognition for my hard work by the courts. The Turkish justice system is overloaded and the hard work that lawyers put in to legal proceedings get wasted mostly. I would say only 10% of value I put in my legal work has been properly recognised. Also the judiciary isn't very open to change or to ideas on how it can be improved.

What do you find most rewarding?

The most rewarding aspect of my work has been through my ability to act as a role model for the younger generations. I am lucky in that I am invited to speak weekly at top universities, when I arrive the halls are packed with students eager to learn from my lessons and use it to develop themselves. To be able to be a role model for someone is a truly rewarding experience.

What would you change about the Turkish regulatory framework if you had the power?

If I could change the Turkish regulatory environment I would seek to make it more transparent. I would like to see stakeholders become more aware of the law, the administrative procedures, acts

and decisions and the impact they have on their businesses. I would really like to see more stakeholders get involved in the administrative procedures.

Because we don't know how to talk to each other we have become a litigious country. Through greater transparency and public involvement in administrative decision-making process will become peaceful and communicative. However involving public requires a simpler and more effective justice system.

Professionally, what would you say is your biggest achievement?

I am self-made man and I managed to get myself educated from a remote village in Turkey. However my biggest achievement would be my firm. I started it from scratch and I turned it into one of the largest institutional law firms in Turkey. This has been my single biggest achievement. My firm is my legacy and I hope it will continue through others who have followed and learnt from my lessons.

What would you still like to achieve from your career?

I would like to see my firm grow through equity partnership and expand further offices in Turkey's economic centres. I would like the high level of ethical practice producing high quality service at international standards that has been established here maintained.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I am a principled man; I want people who I inspire never to be afraid to talk about the truth. That is my fundamental belief. I strive to always offer an ethical and good value service to all our clients. **LM**