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GCC Profile

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By Kenneth Davis

When he was a law student at Brooklyn Law School, Gil Goldschein never aspired to work at a big law firm and one day make partner. Instead, he wanted a legal career that would allow him to be more directly involved in the company he represented and have more of a firsthand perspective on the matters he handled. And a career as an in-house counsel seemed to fit the bill.



"I wanted to work in-house for the reason that I wanted to be closer to the action," Goldschein said. "I wanted to be part of the day-to-day excitement of projects. Being in a law firm, you're several steps removed from the action, and I wanted to be right in there, a part of it."

As General Counsel and Senior Vice President, Business and Legal Affairs, for Bunim-Murray Productions (BMP)—creators of the seminal reality show *The Real World* and a slew of other top reality TV shows—Goldschein works at the company's epicenter, and he loves every minute of it.

"I like the fact that no two days are the same," he said. "And every day, there are new and exciting issues that present themselves, and it's an extremely fast-paced environment and industry, which is something that I truly enjoy being a part of."

Goldschein joined BMP in 2001 to start up its business and legal affairs department. But for all practical purposes, he's been acting as general counsel since first joining the company and has streamlined the legal aspects, as well as the development, production, and post-production, of all BMP projects. He oversees all business and legal affairs for the company, including those pertaining to *The Real World*, *Road Rules*, *Making the Band*, *The Simple Life*, the Emmy Award-winning *Starting Over*, *The Real Cancun* (the first-ever reality movie), and other various projects. An adept multitasker, Goldschein oversees as many as 10 programs at various stages of production throughout the world at one time. He was officially named general counsel in 2005.

Goldschein discussed some of the issues he handles on a regular basis as general counsel:

"I handle all the negotiations, whether it be with broadcast networks, cable networks, on-camera talent, or producers," he said. "I oversee and manage outside counsel, litigation matters, employment issues, insurance matters... basically any agreement."

Goldschein said one of the biggest deals that he handled was the negotiation of MTV's five-season pickup of *The Real World* in early 2005. Although he's not 100% positive, he said that it could be the "largest TV deal in television history."

And it's the largest pickup order in MTV history.

"It's a five-year pickup," Goldschein said. "Generally, shows get picked up season to season, but to be able to do a five-season pickup in one deal was definitely a very big deal that was unprecedented."

He also negotiated the 22-episode pickup of BMP-produced *The Bad Girls Club*, which debuted last month on the Oxygen channel. He said it was the largest one-season pickup order in Oxygen's history.

Goldschein said that being a member of the debate club during his freshman year of high school triggered his interest in pursuing a legal career.

"I was very involved in the debate club and thoroughly enjoyed the art of debate and zealously advocating a certain position," he said. "At that point and time is when I truly wanted to do that as a career."

Goldschein studied communications at Yeshiva University in New York, graduating in 1996. He then entered Brooklyn Law School. In his third year, he interned at Universal in its motion picture legal group. After graduating in 1999, he worked at Universal for a short time before joining the William Morris Agency in 2000. Goldschein said he worked in the business affairs department at the agency, where he negotiated deals and handled a variety of other business matters, including new media agreements.

He said working at William Morris, which is the largest diversified talent and literary agency in the world, was tremendously helpful in terms of familiarizing him with all the studios and network production companies in town and how

they operate from a business standpoint.

"The plan was to learn as much as I could," he explained. "What I learned at Universal was [that] being at a particular studio, you learn what all of their forms look like and how their particular business works. And then I realized that I wanted my next move to be at an agency, because at an agency there is a whole variety of different clients and different aspects of the business; and at the same time, they do work with every single studio, network production company in town, and I thought [...], 'Now I can learn how everybody in town does work.' [...] And I figured that was the best place to truly learn really what's going on in the entire industry as a whole."

Goldschein left William Morris in 2001 to join Bunim-Murray Productions in Van Nuys, CA. He explained why he chose to work as in-house counsel for BMP:

"Bunim-Murray were creators of the reality genre as we know it," he said. "And at the time, reality TV was still sort of the Wild West, and I welcomed the challenge and the opportunity to work in that environment and thrive in it."

Goldschein advised law students who are interested in pursuing in-house careers to persevere and network.

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Play soccer and hang out with my children.

Q. What CD was most recently in your CD player?

A. My Chemical Romance.

Q. What was the last magazine you read?

A. *Fortune*.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *The Sopranos*.

Q. Who's your role model?
A. My dad.

"They need to network with as many people as possible and persevere despite the challenges that they may face associated with breaking into in-house," he said. "Because, as we all know, it's extremely competitive. They have to make sacrifices to get wherever they want to be in whatever industry they want to be in. Personally, I moved across the country, away from family and my comfort zone, in order to pursue my dream of becoming an entertainment lawyer. They also need to research both the people and the actual field that they want to work in [...]. Meet as many lawyers as possible in that industry of interest."

He added that working at a law firm is not always the best launching pad for an in-house career.

"If they know they never want to be a partner in a law firm and never want to be that type of lawyer, I wouldn't necessarily say, 'Go to a law firm,'" he asserted. "You know, it's really working backwards. You need to ask yourself, 'What is my ultimate goal?' and then 'How do I get there?' Working at a law firm by definition does not guarantee you the ability to gain an in-house position."

Goldschein was born in Detroit, MI, and said he grew up in the New York/New Jersey area. He's been married for seven years to an attorney who practices family law. They have two children: a two-and-a-half-year-old son and a seven-month-old daughter.

Goldschein discussed the professional goals he would like to accomplish in the next few years:

"I'd just love to continue expanding my role within the entertainment industry," he said.

On the Net

Bunim-Murray Productions

www.bunim-murray.com

William Morris Agency

www.wma.com

Brooklyn Law School

www.brooklaw.edu