

LWLIT AWARDS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT WINNER: AUSTIN T. FRAGOMEN, JR., FRAGOMEN, DEL REY, BERNSEN & LOEWY

BY ZACH WARREN

The [2022 Legalweek Leaders in Tech Law Awards](#) looks to honor innovation occurring in legal departments and law firms across the country. The group of honorees this year for the Legalweek Leaders in Tech Law Awards have demonstrated knowledge, skill and compassion, recognized by the peers and clients who nominated them. From innovation in litigation to exploring new research opportunities to transforming the way access to justice is handled, the contenders for these awards have shown that true change is not only coming to the legal industry, it's already here.

Alongside their entries, we asked the winners of these awards a few questions about their work over the past year, their penchant for innovation, and more. Here's what Austin T. Fragomen, Jr., chairman of the Executive Committee at Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy, had to say following his win.

Lifetime Achievement Award Winner: Austin T. Fragomen, Jr., chairman of the Executive

Committee at Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy

Reason for Win: Austin T. Fragomen, Jr. of Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy helped grow his firm from a U.S. immigration law practice to an international powerhouse with 4,300 employees providing immigration services in more than 170 countries, using his vision that technology and innovation would shape the immigration landscape to drive the firm's strategic growth and investment in technology for decades.

Law.com: What does being an "innovator" mean to you in the legal industry?

Austin T. Fragomen, Jr.: Being an innovator means rethinking every aspect of service delivery to optimize efficiency and the client experience. It's the combination of service delivery and legal knowledge that drives client satisfaction and ensures a positive employee experience. This belief has fueled our investment in technology to achieve the following goals: (1) produce applications and petitions through the



Photo by Photo: David Handshub/ALM.

Austin T. Fragomen, Jr, chair of Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy.

use of artificial intelligence and machine learning; (2) deliver knowledge in a usable form, giving clients the precise information they need; and (3) simplify the immigration experience for clients through providing them more employee-friendly features.

To further these goals, we are utilizing cutting-edge technologies, such as optical character recognition (OCR) to collect personal information and documents, robotic process automation (RPA) to file cases online with the government and APIs to receive information directly from the client.

Additionally, we launched Fragomen Technologies, Inc., a

subsidiary focused on the nexus of immigration law and technology, and acquired SimpleCitizen and Nomadic, bringing an enhanced workflow software to integrate with our case management system and a business travel solution based on technology-led processes.

How has operating a law firm changed between the time you entered the industry and now?

Technology has been perhaps the biggest driver of disruption in the legal industry. Technology has fundamentally changed how law firms operate. The legal industry has been notoriously slow to integrate and utilize technological advances in their firms and practices. As technology has become more pervasive in each aspect of our lives, its use in the legal sector has typically been regarded as a threat to the traditional role of lawyers.

However, as larger firms begin to embrace and invest in legal technology, the whole industry has slowly adapted to incorporate technological advances, potentially changing the landscape of the legal world. This is not because automation is replacing lawyers' jobs, but because the recent legal tech boom has made available a wide range of new tools and technologies that are changing both the business and the practice of law. Primary among them is AI, which is

significantly improving productivity and streamlining tasks for lawyers, as well as software facilitating the collection of information from clients in a digital format.

In the immigration space, technology has alleviated the tedious work of filling out immigration forms. Entering data once ensures accuracy and consistency. It has also allowed us to better service our clients. Online access to our case management system not only helps keep clients informed about their cases (which increases client satisfaction), but it also frees up time to devote to higher-level legal work.

What's the one thing you're most proud of over your time in law?

I am most proud of my work advocating to bring business into government decision-making. As the U.S. and other countries continue to enhance their immigration systems, I have long believed that there needs to be a partnership between government and business.

For many employers, the global competition for talent is essential to their success. Their competitive edge depends on their ability to access high skilled talent, where domestic shortages exist. Businesses seek immigration policies that are transparent, efficient and predictable, and that objective is best met through the

combined effort of the government and the private sector.

Upon graduating from law school, I served as assistant counsel to the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and International Law. During my tenure, I supported legislative efforts leading to Congress' passing legislation creating the L visa and expanding the H-1B visa—the first Congressional action in immigration focusing on the corporate sector's growing international business. I recognized the opportunity to create a corporate-based trade association to represent multinational corporations before Congress and the Administrative Agencies.

I have advocated for this increased partnership through my work as the chair of the Business Advisory Group of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), an inter-governmental consultative process where governments and others share national, regional and global experiences in migration and development. I have participated in meetings at the United Nations aimed at enhancing the dialogue between the private and public sectors regarding innovative strategies for labor migration policies and international skills mobility. I also authored a report on the business view of migration that was presented to more than 120 national governments.