

Podcast: #WhyMcGlinchey? Lateral to Leadership with Shaun Ramey

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The process of joining a new firm as a lateral can take many different forms, and in some environments, can preclude an attorney from a leadership track. In some firms, leadership is based on longevity and seniority; in others, the size of an attorney's book of business determines their candidacy for leadership. In this episode, Director of Talent Acquisition **Margeaux Roush** speaks with Nashville attorney **Shaun Ramey**, who joined the firm and transitioned into office leadership and membership of McGlinchey's executive Policy Committee within five years.

Margeaux Roush: I am Margeaux Roush, director of Talent Acquisition. Today I am joined by Shaun Ramey, Managing Member of our Nashville office. Hi Shaun, how are you?

Shaun Ramey: I'm fantastic. How are you, Margeaux?

Margeaux Roush: Very well, thanks. Today we wanted to talk with Shaun about his path of coming into McGlinchey as a lateral in 2018 and what his experience has been like throughout the last four or five years here at McGlinchey. We are very excited and happy about the fact that Shaun is a leader within the firm. He has led us through several leadership transitions and has had a very active role and voice in the growth of the firm. So we want to focus on what it's like to be a lateral coming in and being able to have a seat at the table.

So Shaun, why don't you tell us a little bit about your recruiting experience? I know we started back in 2016.

Shaun Ramey: Yeah, so I've been practicing for about 22 years in total, the first 17 of which were with the same firm based out of Birmingham, Alabama, where I practiced for the first 14 years, and then three in Fort Lauderdale. At some point, I was at a point in my life where my family wanted to move to Tennessee, among other things, and it was just time to make a move.

When you first come into a new situation, you can easily get left on an island, particularly if you're physically in an office where you're the first person there, physically.

We had some discussions with McGlinchey at that time. I knew [Chris Bottcher](#), who is the Managing Partner of the Birmingham office, and was my former partner. In fact, he and I used to have next-door offices back in 2000. We started the same week, in fact. Although Chris is an old man, he's got about four more years on me.

Shaun Ramey: So, in any case, I had reached out to him, and we had some discussions. And at that time, we were talking about, McGlinchey didn't have an office in Tennessee but did have one in Fort Lauderdale. So we talked about Florida, and I said, well I really appreciate it, but I'd really like to make a move to Tennessee. So things didn't work out the first time, but eventually, at some point it made sense for McGlinchey to open an office in Tennessee. I was already practicing in Tennessee at that point. And everything was fine and dandy, but when McGlinchey came calling, it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up, to basically be on the ground floor opening the office, and working on a much larger scale, as we'll talk about.

Margeaux Roush: Excellent. You know, one of the things that I have found interesting about your path here is your leadership through our transitions. We had a number of transitions once you were hired. We had the death of a Managing Member who managed a number of our offices. We had some departures; we had COVID-19. Tell me a little bit about how and why you felt motivated to step into some of those leadership roles.

Shaun Ramey: I guess one thing that was surprising at first was how quickly McGlinchey seemed to want me to step into leadership roles, to be honest with you. Our former partner, Mark New, who was in our Jacksonville office, really wanted me to assist with the Florida operations. And very quickly, he had me going down to Florida every month, Fort Lauderdale specifically, and he would come down and meet me and introduced me to the team. And I started working with the team real quickly, and we had a lot of transitions there as far as getting to know those folks. We gelled pretty quickly, really good folks, good quality attorneys, good friends. And then, through that and because of various client relationships, I got involved at later times with other offices.

For example, right before COVID-19, we needed some help in New York City. So I was up in the New York City office for a good week helping with some things there and really got to know the troops there. Another great group of attorneys. It was frankly flattering to be asked to go up there during a special time to help out and assist, whereas in other places I've been, you don't get there that quickly, if you will. But McGlinchey, right or wrong, decided it was the time right out the gate and had me traveling to various offices and work with different groups and departments, too.

Now, as I assist with a lot of recruiting for the firm, I understand the role of ensuring you don't leave anyone on an island. This is also a way of getting to know their skill sets and getting to know what they can do and getting them more integrated, right away.

Margeaux Roush: That's great. And everything that I've heard from the attorneys that have worked with you is that because you have been in so many different offices and working with people in Texas, California, New York, or Florida, it's led to a very well-integrated practice. People are very comfortable coming to you. We are ensuring a consistency of treatment of our clients across those offices. Having you be able to take that role on very quickly, particularly because Mark New was spread so thin. So having you step in so quickly and then after

his passing and then the New York transition, all of those things just kind of happened naturally, and you really did excel in that particular role.

Another thing that we wanted to talk about is how you decided that the firm's growth and future were something that you were really invested in, because people lateral in all the time. And you come to a firm, and you need to figure out where you fit, or you're not sure what you want, or you're not sure where the future of the firm will go. But I feel like you made it your mission. You were almost motivated to find out some of those things so we could grow in the right way. Can you talk to me about some of your motivations for that?

Shaun Ramey: Yeah, sure. A lot of it's almost a symbiotic relationship. Since I felt like the firm wanted to invest in me, I wanted to invest in the firm. And some of the things I learned more now that I've been with the firm for about five years now, is for example, when you first come into a new situation, you can easily get left on an island, particularly if you're physically in an office where you're the first person there, physically. And what I've learned was the firm didn't want to leave me on an island, which is why, part of the reason they had me coming to Florida, getting to know the attorneys in both our Florida offices and our Birmingham office and other places. Now, as I handle a lot of recruiting and assist with a lot of recruiting for the firm, I understand the role of ensuring you don't leave anyone on an island. That, as part of the interviewing process, we are reaching out and having our laterals get to know different attorneys and practice groups. And it's not just a, hey, is this a cool person or not? This is also a way of getting to know their skill sets and getting to know what they can do and getting them more integrated so that when that person starts, right away, as happened here, within the first few days, I had folks sending me corporate real estate projects because they knew I had a certain experience in that from my interviews. And we didn't have to wait until I'd been with the firm for a year and someone realized, oh hey, Shaun does corporate real estate or commercial real estate too! So the firm's been great about doing that, finds that very important.

Another thing that's a little different to get used to is, and a lot of this is just time, my original firm was mainly a Birmingham firm. We had 80 attorneys in Birmingham and about 120 elsewhere in Alabama. Here at McGlinchey, we're currently at about 140 attorneys but in about 17 different offices. The effort it takes and the things we do to make sure that you feel that know those 140 attorneys, even though you don't see them every physical day when you walk down the hallway. We do that through a lot of Zoom meetings, we do that through a lot of cross meetings. I'll meet a lot of my partners in Charlotte to visit a client or another city. We'll sometimes have virtual meetings, sometimes virtual social events, whether that be things involving kids or happy hours, and things like that.

So I understand the importance of making sure you integrate everyone across that group. I think the firm does a fantastic job of doing that, because, for example, our clients are nationwide. In fact my department, Financial Service Litigation, is about 60 attorneys all the way across the country. So I need to know exactly what's going on in California as much as I need to know what's going on in New York City and Cleveland, Ohio. So, I think I rambled on a little bit there, Margeaux, which I have been known to do, but there you go!

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Margeaux Roush: I think you hit the high points. So one of the benefits of you being focused on our growth and culture and embracing change, particularly through the last several years of COVID-19 and leadership transitions. One of the things we have focused on within the firm is empowerment. You are currently on our Policy Committee, you work on our Strategic Growth Committee. You head up an office and have a significant role in one of the largest practice areas in the firm. Were you surprised that there was no real threshold of financial input? That you didn't have to have a million-dollar book or didn't have to be the biggest producer to have a seat at every single one of those tables?

Shaun Ramey: Yeah. I found out real quickly that — attorneys have a lot of different skills. Some are great transactional attorneys, some are great litigation attorneys, some are great client developers, and some are great at running a business. What I found very interesting was that McGlinchey wants people, particularly on its Policy Committee, which is our form of an Executive Committee, for those who don't know, to have people with experience and interest in running a business and vision for running the business. I was very surprised to find out it wasn't just the top business producers being the exclusive people on that committee. In fact it's a committee comprised of big business producers and also some of the newer partners. And it's also spread around; I'm in one of the smallest offices, where New Orleans and Baton Rouge are larger offices, as well as Cleveland. But it's not, the Policy Committee's not completely made up of those areas.

So yeah, I was very surprised because a person's idea for what is good for the firm isn't terribly dependent upon their book of business. They may have a lot of experience, which got them to that, but that's not an exclusive way to look at it. And I think it's important to diversify your group. So you have people with different kinds of books, and different practices, different geographical backgrounds, and different ages. And the firm's done a great job of doing that. And yes, I was extremely surprised that we do it that way. I think it has a lot of strengths and a lot of benefits for the firm.

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Margeaux Roush: I definitely agree with you on that point. One of the really cool benefits of some of our leadership committees is that you have certain leadership committees that really focus on, can you sell to a client? You have other leadership committees that are, can you sell to a lateral, to help them want to join the firm? We have other committees like cross-selling, can you sell to your partners to help them make you want to connect with each other and work on a client together. And the Policy Committee is a nice coming together of some of those different aspects. You've definitely got salespeople on there, you've got client developers on there, you've got cross-sellers on there. I think you have a really nice mix. So the messaging and the forward-thinking future of the firm, I think, is well seated there with that kind of perspective.

Now I have just one more question for you: What was the thing that makes you stick? What's the thing that makes you want to be at McGlinchey, focused on leadership, wanting it to grow? You've been at other firms; what is the thing that made you want to come here and stick here and make this investment of all of your personal time and effort to get to leadership?

Shaun Ramey: A great question, one that probably changes over time, to be honest with you. As far as joining the firm, originally, for my business practice, it was by far the smart thing to do. Financial services litigation is something that McGlinchey is just nationwide fantastic at. I knew it was something I couldn't pass up. Where in the past, for example, I've sometimes chosen a firm because I like the people, right? You want to like the people you work with. That wasn't necessarily why I chose McGlinchey. What was surprising once I got here, was how much I liked the people! And how quickly that changes. But honestly, when I first came on board, I didn't want to have a position, necessarily, one way or the other with the people, even though I knew some people like Chris Bottcher, and Mark New, I knew him before.

But I real quickly got to know the folks and was like, these are really good people. [Mark Edelman](#), who's on our policy committee, and one of our partners up in Cleveland, had said to me that when he decided to join, he said, "these are just really nice people. These are really good people."

And I think it's important to diversify your group. So you have people with different kinds of books, and different practices, different geographical backgrounds, and different ages. And the firm's done a great job of doing that.

And over the time that I've been here, the five years, I learned how good people are at what they do, and how driven everyone is here. You don't have a lot of people who are just here to collect their paycheck. They seem to be interested in growing things. There's a sales culture here, a growth culture, which is a little different from other things I've sometimes seen. Maybe because the firm has invested so much in me, I'm interested in growing things and being able to learn so much, whether that be how we do things financially, how we recruit people, how we do business development, or how we client develop.

The more you're involved in those things that don't involve just billing an hour, the more you're interested in it, the more you'll stick around, because you're not here just for the paycheck. You're here for the growth of the firm and the growth of yourself.

So, that's what gets me going. I love the business aspect of it. I love the business of running a firm. I love the business of the law and trying to connect all these different types of people – people who have different political backgrounds, different religious backgrounds, and of course different geographical backgrounds, people on the east coast to the west coast. And trying to set up meetings that keep them all happy, which is not as easy as you think. So that's what keeps me around, honestly. Every single day is different, and there are a lot of people who depend upon me, and I depend upon a lot of people. And I think that it is helpful to have that need and to be needed. So anyway, once again, kind of a rambling answer to your question, but that's what keeps me around. If I could put it into a single extremely long monologue, that would be it.

Margeaux Roush: I think one of the things that's really cool that you bring to the table, and I honestly believe it's one of the things that made you bond with some of the people here, is your music taste and talking with people. And to touch on your personal situation, you really do have strong music connections, and you have a lot of the soundtrack of your life kind of plays through a lot of your connections with people here at McGlinchey. The move to Nashville was obviously somewhat motivated by getting your wife, (musician) India Ramey, in the city where she wanted to be so that she could thrive and grow. What benefits do you see, as far as your friendships with people through that music connection? Everybody here has different eclectic music tastes, but have you found any special connections through some of that?

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Shaun Ramey: Ha, I don't even know where I would start. I'll give you a great example: [Kat Schnack](#), a credit union specialist. She loves dark wave-type music. That's one of my many passions, and I figured that out really quickly through a conversation. [Brian Baudot](#) plays drums; we talk a lot about the Rolling Stones and things of that nature. [Mikelle Bliss](#), up in New York, she's more of a Deadhead, Phish fan, and also does singing as well. The fact that the firm is based out of New Orleans, I mean, it's amazing. So I always try to start up conversations with people about music. It's not what everyone likes, but it creates a nice little bond. And it feels like home, you know? We have a lot of different people who play different things. I'm all about it, let's get the Super McGlinchey band together. Ironically, as much as I love music, I don't really play much of anything. I used to play guitar, and then I moved to Nashville. I don't know if you know this, but the people here are professionals. So my talents are not as appreciated here.

Margeaux Roush: Well, I know that one of our bonding experiences was you sending me your Americana playlist, because I went to school in Nashville and wanted to hear what was on your playlist. And you have all of these playlists, and it's been funny for me to watch the connections that you've developed with people over music, like Kat Schnack. Or you'll have a conversation with [Anthony Rollo](#) about music, or you'll have a whole back and forth about 15 emails with a candidate about taking them to see music venues or seeing live music and finding that as bonding. So that music piece is a nice personality bit that goes back to liking who you work with, and learning from and connecting with the people you work with.

Shaun Ramey: You know, the firm's based out of New Orleans, right? I mean, that's not just an accident. We also have our largest conference in New Orleans. As I told my wife, "I have to go to Jazz Fest for something. The firm wants me to go to Jazz Fest. I think I might be at the right place," I believe was the exact thing I said to her. But you're exactly right. It's clients, friends, and witnesses; people have different tastes. It's always fun when my clients come here. We finish a deposition, and then it's time to show them some music, whether taking them honky-tonking down Broadway or ending up in some small punk rock club where you run into a Judd (true story). That's the beauty of the firm, and we have different aspects of it. Cleveland, the home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. It just seems to be built into McGlinchey's DNA. And I think that's a great and unique aspect of the firm.

As I told my wife, "I have to go to Jazz Fest for something. The firm wants me to go to Jazz Fest. I think I might be at the right place".

Margeaux Roush: I think it's cool how something that, we talk about is the stars aligning to make things work, and bringing it back full circle. Part of the reason we couldn't make things work in 2016 and 2017 is that you'd already made up your mind that you wanted to get to Nashville, and that was the path you guys wanted to take. It took us a couple of years to get there, but once we did, the synergies that have grown out of it, whether it's friendships or music or client development or candidate recruitment, it's just really cool. That was a sticking factor for us, and once we were able to overcome that, things have really come together. Watching you grow into all of these leadership opportunities that, I don't think you had any intention at the outset that all of those

would come along so quickly. It's been really fun to watch. We're lucky to have you in all those leadership positions, and I think that we have a great future with you helping guide the firm's future.

Shaun Ramey: Well, I appreciate it. I appreciate y'all hiring me, you know. Thanks.

Margeaux Roush: This wraps up our episode of More with McGlinchey. This has been our first episode of the path of Lateral to Leadership, touching on #WhyMcGlinchey. Thank you so much for your time today, Shaun.

Shaun Ramey: Thank you.

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