

2012 Top 10 30-Something: Ahmed Elganzouri

Interviews and Profiles



Assistant General Counsel

Age: 33

Proudest achievement: “This is more of a personal achievement, but obtaining my MBA. I was a litigator, but it was always a goal of mine to go back and obtain my MBA to obtain a better business perspective.”

Using business acumen

With a bachelor’s degree in finance, Ahmed Elganzouri always wanted to pursue his MBA. He kept the goal in his periphery during law school and while litigating for four years at a Chicago-based firm. Eventually, he started evening classes at the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business, and in an effort to marry his business and legal skills, he moved in-house at the American Dental Association. Elganzouri says his business background has helped him better serve his clients: “I can speak their language; I think like them in many ways,” he says. “Having that business perspective has helped me establish strong relationships, and so much of what we do in-house is based on relationships. It’s made me a better lawyer.”

But even with his knowledge, Elganzouri says he revisits ADA’s business basics frequently. Propelling initiatives forward based on best practice guidelines is appropriate, but is not always the best move for the association. “I have to think about what the clients are really trying to do — the ins and outs: What are they selling? What services are they providing?” he says. “If I can do that, I will be a much better advocate and adviser to the client.”

Elganzouri’s department leaders have encouraged him to use his expertise and step into the client spotlight, by appointing him a legal liaison to the ADA board of trustees’ Audit and Finance Committees. “I really appreciate that my leaders here take a chance on me. They put me in situations where I will be challenged and grow,” he says. In his liaison role, Elganzouri says he has learned about professionalism and presenting to and working with directors. As a manager of paralegals and administrative assistants, Elganzouri treats his staff the way he has been treated: “Even if I’m not 100 percent sure that they’re ready for something, I put them in a situation where they can try, and then I attempt to help them succeed.”

In addition to his work with senior business partners, Elganzouri has collaborated with the IT, HR and marketing and communication departments on creating ADA’s social media policy. “You can’t institute a major policy without involving other business units from the start,” he says. “A lot of things make sense from the legal standpoint, but you might learn that they are totally impractical when you talk to IT or marketing.” A series of meetings, during which each department discussed their ideas for the policy, informed Elganzouri’s drafting and revising processes. “It’s one of the more collaborative things I’ve done here, and it wouldn’t have succeeded without everybody’s input. Plus, working with them is something I really enjoy because of my background.”

ADA is not the only place Elganzouri applies his business dexterity. He has been a key member of ACC’s Chicago Chapter, serving on the board and playing an instrumental role on its finance committee by helping to draft the Chapter’s financial guidelines. Elganzouri also chairs the Chapter’s Diversity Internship Committee, which he says has refined his managerial skills. “Practicing all the little things you have to do when you represent an organization — networking with

hosts and sponsors, collaborating with very smart, sophisticated people — has made me a better manager,” he says. “And being on the board has allowed me to apply my MBA degree, because it’s forced me to make tough business decisions. It’s all been very rewarding.”

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