



**Ernesto Velarde Danache**  
 IR Global's exclusive advisor for Tax (Law),  
 Immigration & Energy Law in Mexico since 2022.

## Life in the fast lane: Ernesto Velarde Danache has been practising law for 40 years – and has no plans to slow down any time soon

When Ernesto first set up his eponymous law firm in Brownsville, Texas, he wanted to start small. He'd previously worked for a large firm in Mexico but made the decision to go solo in 1989 – and he's never looked back.

"Deciding to go solo was one of the best decisions of my professional career," he admits. "I started my office in Brownsville with just a secretary and a typewriter."

Although very few people had heard of the place, Brownsville was an ideal location to set up his representative office in the US. It was close to the border for his clients from the US and Canada who were eager to do deals in Mexico – and it was also close to his offices in Mexico.

That was 33 years ago and since then he has built the business up gradually, adding lawyers to accommodate the growing workload the firm receives. Now, he has 11 lawyers covering most aspects of law and has helped more than 400 companies set up in Mexico.

The firm has also opened an office in central Mexico, located close to the capital, which gives clients access to many of the industrial parks in central Mexico.

By remaining relatively small compared to many of his competitors, the firm still has a slim operating structure that allows decisions to be made quickly, enabling greater access to partners and saving clients' money.

"We can compete with the big firms because we are much more agile – and cheaper," Ernesto says. "We now have specialists in labour and employment, defence and civil defence, transactional corporate work and immigration."

### **Based in Texas; licensed in Mexico**

While the firm is based across the border in Texas, it is only licensed in Mexico: "At the time we opened, we were more visible and reachable for US and Canadian clients by being based on the US side of the border.

"From our Texas office to my office in Mexico it's about 15 minutes including the international crossing. We have a special permit to come back and forth because otherwise it can take two to three hours each time."

Ernesto's client list includes a host of international businesses, particularly in the industrial sector, which set up operations on the Mexican side of the border. He has substantial Real Estate law experience, and is a Mexican Notary Public specialised in industrial transactions. "Companies come to Mexico with the intention of exporting to the US," he says. "Instead of paying US wages and benefits, they form companies in Mexico. When they do that they then come to us to help with the incorporation process.

"Typically, we present the options of different types of companies that we have in Mexico, such as limited liability corporations, and help

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our clients to decide which one is best for them. Then we start the incorporation process and guide them through it.

"For instance, if they are looking for land, we advise on whether to buy or rent and conduct the due diligence, check on the environmental condition of it, the real estate limitations, and such like to make sure they you don't get into trouble.

"We also advise foreign companies on Mexican traditions, laws and things you do and avoid doing in Mexico. Some people, for example, say 'in Germany we can do this'. But I tell them this is not Germany; Mexico is a very different culture."

#### Rapid communication

As the firm often deals with overseas clients, communication is vital, and one of Ernesto's core principles is to be direct and communicate regularly with clients to ensure they are always up to date with what is happening.

"We respond to communications the same day – and we're proud of that," he says. "Every call, every email, every WhatsApp communication will be answered; it doesn't matter where I am. They may have to wait a few hours, with the difference in the time zone, but that's what we do. We offer that kind of support to our clients, and our clients tell other people who are looking for Mexican lawyers."

#### IR Global

To help boost the firm's profile and extend the message of what it can offer to international clients, Ernesto signed up to IR Global earlier this year to help with networking. He has already been to networking events in Washington, Zurich and Barcelona.

"I need to network to help the firm," he says. "I'm sure IR Global will help with this. I joined people for dinner and cocktails at an event in Barcelona (October 2022), so I'm doing everything I can.

"My people generally don't like networking, so I'm the one that has to go and do it, but I like meeting people."

#### Together as one

While they tend to eschew networking, Ernesto's staff are dedicated and loyal – several have worked with him for more than 20 years – and he values loyalty very highly: "I'm tough with my people, but I try to be fair. I take care of my people in the sense that I ask them how they are, I follow up with them. I offer my help.

"We work as a team. I'm working with all my staff, every day on the phone, zoom calls and so on. I encourage them to participate in consultations with my clients.

"Since I am the most experienced one, we always discuss how to approach a particular issue. And they know sometimes, even though they may have the answers, they want to double check with me to make sure."

Ernesto has some 40 years' experience under his belt, so there isn't much he hasn't seen or dealt with. It is something valued by staff as well as clients: "I can respond to almost any questions in a phone call whether it is customs, corporate, real estate..."

#### Healthy in mind and body

Not that you would know Ernesto has been practising law for 40 years – he's 62 years old but looks like he's in his late 40s. He exercises for 45 minutes every morning on a Peloton bike at his home. He's also careful about his diet: "I eat what's right and stay away from those foods that are not good for you," he laughs.

Ernesto also enjoys exercising his mind and reckons he reads about 25 hours a week. He has an LLM from University of Cambridge, speaks four languages and studied at a language school in Bournemouth, England – a city that still holds nostalgic memories for him. His favourite books are huge historical novels and works of non fiction. He has read many of the classics including Tolstoj, Dostoyevsky and the like.

Indeed, such is his love of literature that he's had a cabin built to accommodate his books: "In the pandemic, I read more than 100 books. By reading so much, I have learnt about and understand many things and many cultures, and I love it."

In the past Ernesto was also a popular talk show host on Mexican TV in which he grilled high-ranking Mexican politicians, federal judges, bishops and the like.

"It was very successful and people who wanted to run for office would come on the show, knowing that it could help their career – or possibly destroy it," he smiles.

Nevertheless, Ernesto preferred to focus on the law and believes he'll be fine to keep working for many years to come.

"I think I can keep working for another 10 years or more if I have the health," he says. "But I have delegated many things except the responsibility before the clients and the communication with the clients. I'm not retiring anytime soon. Some of my friends are retiring right now, but it's not for me – I have too much energy."

Any other dreams? Ernesto sighs: "I'd love to go back to Bournemouth one day. I had a really good time studying there. "I was last there in 1981, so I think it may have changed quite a lot since then."

I think he's probably right.

**ERNESTO  
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