

A close-up portrait of Max Swetman, a middle-aged man with dark, wavy hair, wearing a grey suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark patterned tie. He is resting his chin on his right hand, looking thoughtfully off-camera. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong red glow on the right side of his face and hair.

LAW

# MAX SWETMAN

MANAGING PARTNER AT MG+M



Max Swetman, a managing partner at MG+M The Law Firm, is one of only a handful of attorneys in the United States who has a law degree and a master's in public health in epidemiology. So, when COVID-19 emerged in 2020, and its variants spread last year, he was uniquely positioned to not only keep his firm at the forefront, but was also able to help new and existing clients – some of whom employ more than 100,000 people – to manage the threat, too.

"The pandemic should not have, but did, take everyone, including me, by surprise," Swetman said. "Everybody was kind of mimicking what the news was saying, 'two or three months and then we'll come out of it.' And I said that that's not how a pandemic like this works. That's not what the earmarks of this virus tell me it will be."

Because of the nature of his firm's work, Swetman said switching

to working at home wasn't a big challenge for his attorneys.

"Although I sit in New Orleans, I do work all over the country and that's the case with all of our partners. We've always said that geography should be irrelevant, and because of that we had really solid infrastructure to support the shift. As a result, there was really very little in terms of hiccups with client relationships and servicing clients. To tell the truth, we obtained some pretty good clients because we were able to withstand the pressures of the pandemic. I don't think a whole lot of people picked up work during the pandemic, but we did."

Swetman said the biggest surprise during the pandemic has been the desire for business leaders to keep their people safe, first, and then to look for guidance on how to best keep their facilities running.

"This has been really difficult, I think, on everyone in the world. We're 20 months into it, and it's just a real morale killer. People had no idea how to respond at all, and things were changing so quickly."

While the advent of COVID-19 vaccines has helped to stem the tide of the pandemic, Swetman anticipates the virus will continue to mutate into variant forms.

"We are going to see another variant at some point. It's going to be something that scares us," he said.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to protecting businesses, he advises people to trust science.

"It's become so politicized, but following the science is what has saved every life that's been saved," he said.

"I've got clients that are conservative. I've got clients that are liberal. And I always say, 'If you want to do the best thing for your people, follow the science.' If for yourself, you want to do something else, it's fine. It's fine. But if you want to do what's best for your people in your company, follow the science."