



*The visa strategy and the business strategy must support each other—there are no shortcuts.*



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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

## Exclusive Interview with **SENA ŞAHİN & ÇAĞATAY ERSOY**

CAPITOL LAW PARTNERS: WHERE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE MEETS LEGAL PRECISION

*“The right legal foundation at the beginning can determine whether a business succeeds or struggles later.”*

By Sitki Kazanci

In today's increasingly interconnected world, where borders are fluid but legal systems remain complex, the role of a truly global law firm has never been more critical. In this exclusive interview, we speak with Sena Şahin and Çağatay Ersoy, the co-founders of CLP, a dynamic Turkish-American law firm built on the strength of two distinct yet highly complementary perspectives.

Their story is not just about professional success—it is about identity, resilience, and purpose. Shaped by experiences that span continents, cultures, and legal systems, Şahin and Ersoy bring a rare dual lens to their practice. From navigating the immigrant journey firsthand to mastering both the codified traditions of Türkiye and the case-driven framework of the United States, they have developed an approach that is both deeply strategic and profoundly human.

At CLP, law is not treated as a transactional service but as a critical foundation for building

lives, businesses, and futures. Whether advising entrepreneurs entering the US market, representing clients in high-stakes litigation, or guiding families through complex immigration pathways, their work is grounded in a clear mission: to provide not only legal solutions, but clarity, protection, and opportunity.

In this conversation, Şahin and Ersoy reflect on the formative experiences that shaped their paths, the vision behind their partnership, and how their firm is redefining what it means to serve clients at the intersection of business, law, and global mobility.

**Tell us about your early life, your family background, and the experiences that shaped who you are.**

**Sena:** I came to the US when I was ten and grew up in Connecticut. Back in Türkiye, my father was a teacher, but moving here meant starting completely over. Instead of just trying to get by, my parents reinvented themselves. They built new, successful careers from the ground up, and watching

what they were able to achieve in America completely defined my own standard for hard work.

Growing up, I was always navigating the space between two cultures. That feeling doesn't just fade away. It is actually what makes me a better lawyer today. When a client sits across from me who has uprooted their entire life to build something new here, I don't just sympathize from a distance. I watched my parents walk that exact same road, so I know exactly what is at stake for them.

**Çağatay:** I was born and raised in Istanbul, the son of a public servant and an accountant. My parents shaped me more than anyone else. My mother is the one who truly runs our family; she is a strong woman and a person defined by sacrifice and dedication. I believe I inherited most of my character from her. My father has one of the kindest souls I have ever known, and he taught me empathy through his actions. Between the two of them, I absorbed most of what became my

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character, and much of what I later tried to do as a lawyer traces back to the examples my parents set through their actions.

### What drew you toward law specifically?

**Cagatay:** Growing up in Türkiye, the law was not an abstract concept. You could see its consequences all around you, in whether families got fair treatment, in whether ordinary people had any recourse when things went wrong. I wanted to be on the side that helped. It was not a strategic career decision so much as a feeling that this was work that actually mattered. That has not changed.

**Sena:** For me it came into focus during my years volunteering with community organizations before law school. I kept seeing the same pattern: hardworking people, capable people, being shut out of systems they had every right to access, simply because those systems were designed in a way that required expertise to navigate. I wanted to be someone who could genuinely level that playing field, not just observe the problem.

### Cagatay, you studied both in Türkiye and the US, including at Columbia Law School. How did this international academic experience shape your legal perspective?

**Cagatay:** Studying law in two very different countries changed the way I look at almost every legal problem. In Türkiye, I had the honor of studying at Istanbul University Faculty of Law, the oldest and most prestigious law school. The system there works mostly from codified law. You start with the rulebook and apply it carefully to the case in front of you. That foundation gave me a discipline of mind that is essential to law.

Then came Columbia, an Ivy League institution and one of the most reputable law schools in the world. That experience highlighted a stark reality: the American system works very differently from the Turkish one.

In the US, the law isn't a strict rulebook; it is a living history built one case at a time. I studied this up close with giants in the field—including one of the Supreme Court's most-cited scholars and a federal judge who



*“Immigration is never just a legal process—it is someone’s future.”*

reviewed my work weekly. Being held to that standard permanently raises the bar for how you practice.

### Sena, having completed your entire education in the US from a young age, how does that background influence your representation of international clients?

**Sena:** My background provides CLP with a critical advantage: a native like understanding of the American legal landscape. It means knowing how an American jury thinks, how a judge will react to a specific strategy, and how to anticipate an opposing counsel's next move.

In the courtroom, effective advocacy isn't just about knowing the law; it is about reading the room. It is understanding how an American jury thinks, how a judge might react to a specific tone, and staying a step ahead of the opposing lawyer.

A lot of firms only handle the transactional

paperwork, but stepping into a courtroom is a completely different arena. My background allows me to navigate that environment naturally.

### Sena, before founding CLP, you practiced at prominent litigation and defense firms in the US. How did that experience shape your approach today?

**Sena:** Practicing at prominent national law firms was a demanding environment where I learned that even the smallest detail can decide the outcome of a case. That experience taught me to be meticulous and to always anticipate the 'other side's' next move.

However, I realized that in a large firm setting, the legal process can often feel cold and inaccessible to the people it actually serves. I wanted to take that high-level institutional discipline and bring it to a practice where we can be more present for our clients.

**What was the core vision that brought the two of you together as lawyers with distinct, successful careers and led you to establish CLP? What advantage does this partnership offer your clients?**

**Cagatay:** Honestly, the two of us are very different people. Our personalities, our backgrounds, even the way we came into this profession—none of it looks the same. On paper, we are two very different stories. But when it comes to work, we found something rare: a partnership that just clicks.

The vision for CLP was to build a firm where a Turkish-American family or business owner could feel understood without having to translate their needs to their lawyer. Because of our distinct backgrounds, we bring a dual perspective to every case. Where one of us sees a challenge from a corporate angle, the other views it through the lens of a litigator. That is the firm we set out to build, and it is the practice we are proud to be leading together today, side by side.

**What are each of your primary areas of focus, and how does each of you contribute to shaping the firm's strategic vision?**

**Cagatay:** At CLP, we divide responsibilities to play to our individual strengths. I lead the business immigration and corporate side of the practice. My role is to ensure the door to the US remains open for our clients by handling the strategy, securing the right visas, and structuring companies correctly from day one. I focus on ensuring full compliance so that entrepreneurs can begin their journey on solid ground.

Sena leads our lawsuits and contracts. With her experience in large national firms, she looks at every business move through the eyes of a litigator. She spots risks before they become expensive problems, providing the shield that lets our clients grow without fear.

**CLP is licensed to handle cases across multiple states and at the federal level. For a business or a family, what is the everyday advantage of hiring a firm with**

**that kind of reach?**

**Cagatay:** It gives our clients one-stop protection. Most small firms are limited to one city or one type of court, but CLP has the power to represent you in many different states and in both state and federal courts. That broad footprint not only saves you from hiring multiple lawyers, but it also shows the other side that you have the resources to go the distance.

**As a woman co-founder in a historically male-dominated field, what does building CLP mean to you, and what does that perspective bring to your clients?**

**Sena:** It means a great deal to me. For a long time, the legal profession has been male dominated, particularly at the partnership level where the real direction of a firm is

decided. To sit at this table as a founder is a responsibility I take seriously. I am proud to represent this for our community because I want young Turkish-American women to see that this path is open to them and that their perspective belongs in this room.

For our clients, I believe our leadership dynamic brings a different kind of energy to the practice. Çağatay and I built this firm as full equals, and that partnership defines our culture. We want every client to feel that they are in a place where they are not just being processed as a case but are being represented by a team that truly values their individual story.

**Your work spans business transactions, corporate structuring, litigation, trademark law, and immigration. Which**



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### area do you find most impactful today, and why?

**Sena:** We see our practice as a single ecosystem where business growth and immigration are inseparable. For instance, when a client hires international talent, we handle both the visa and the employment law to make the setup airtight from day one.

Handling lawsuits fundamentally changes how you look at the business side. It forces you to write every contract with a judge in mind. Because we know what a legal dispute actually looks like, we can spot the cracks in a business deal early on and fix them before they become expensive problems.

Still, immigration remains the most impactful because the stakes are human. A success is not just a piece of paper; it is a family staying together or a career secured. We look at this work through the lens of our own families' immigrant journeys, knowing firsthand what that dignity means. It is never just a case file to us.

### Many of our readers are entrepreneurs. What legal advice would you give Turkish professionals or investors looking to establish or expand their businesses in the US?

**Cagatay:** First, know that the US remains one of the absolute best and most viable markets in the world for investment. The opportunities are very much still here.

But my most critical piece of advice is to talk to a lawyer before you make your first move. We frequently see entrepreneurs who sign leases or form companies, only to realize their corporate setup has accidentally ruined their visa options.

Your business structure and your immigration status are completely inseparable. The American dream is alive, but to achieve it, you must build it on a solid legal foundation from day one.

### How do you see the legal profession evolving over the next 5–10 years, particularly in light of globalization, artificial intelligence, and automation?

**Sena:** The legal profession is changing



faster than it has in a generation, and we see that as a massive opportunity. At CLP, we actively invest in AI and automation to create a smoother, more user-friendly experience for our clients.

By letting technology handle the heavy lifting—like routine document review and research—we can deliver faster, better client service. It frees us up to focus on what actually matters: high-level strategy and giving the kind of nuanced, human advice that a computer simply cannot provide.

Beyond technology, globalization is shrinking

borders. The lawyers who succeed in the next decade will be those who can seamlessly navigate multiple legal systems, languages, and cultures. That cross-border agility is exactly the foundation we built CLP on. ■

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