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TRAILBLAZERS

CYBERSECURITY & DATA PRIVACY

ALEXANDER H. SOUTHWELL

GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER LLP



PIONEER SPIRIT Alex Southwell first became involved with cyber issues as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of New York. "I was on duty and a child exploitation matter came in. From there I wound up doing a series of child exploitation cases." In one case, he faced a "virus defense" where the defendant argued he wasn't responsible for the computer's content. "That got me interested in the intersection of technology and law." His interest expanded when he started teaching and then went into private practice.

TRAILS BLAZED At the beginning of the "advanced persistent threat" era, when network intrusions became more sophisticated, Southwell represented a prominent executive search firm that faced a serious cyberattack. "We were able to quickly get a handle on what occurred and ultimately got the client's systems locked down and secured. We managed the fallout and got the client through the crisis." Data breaches today are getting more notoriety, which has led to congressional hearings and multiple class actions.

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS Southwell sees two trends playing out. The first is how the field develops as new technologies emerge. "You never know what new disruptive technologies will emerge, but the law will often be a step behind." Uber, and the regulatory and legal issues it has faced, is an example. The second issue is the global scope of the issues and conflicts that arise. "The bad guys don't follow political borders. Someone can be anywhere in the world, and that can lead to challenges in terms of conflict of laws."