

The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel®

Volume 9, No. 11

© 2001 The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel, Inc.

November 2001

LawPeriscope: A Law Firm Search Tool For Corporate Counsel

The Editor interviews Gary Rindner, President, Periscope Ventures Corporation.

Editor: What is LawPeriscope?

Rindner: Law Periscope is a dedicated law firm search engine and online directory for locating, researching and evaluating the 300 largest law firms in the United States. From our website, which is at www.lawperiscope.com, corporate counsel can retrieve a succinct law firm profile, and then quickly research a particular practice area, attorney, branch office or legal topic from a primary, current source- the law firm's website. Law Periscope eliminates the need to search all over the internet for this material and allows users to compare law firm resources and capabilities. The service is free to users.

Editor: Would you summarize your background and why you started LawPeriscope?

Rindner: I started practicing law about 20 years ago as a corporate attorney with Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft in New York. Since 1990, I have been working in-house, the last seven as general counsel for a multinational financial services company.

During the last five years, I often used the Internet when identifying and retaining law firms for my company. As one means of researching these firms, I browsed their websites and evaluated their expertise and capabilities relating to my particular needs. I was impressed by the vast online resources posted by these firms but frustrated by a time-consuming and inefficient search process, as well as an inability to compare



Gary Rindner

firms with available search tools. I realized that there was need for a dedicated website that would help in-house lawyers locate, research and evaluate law firms. That was the motivation for starting Law Periscope.

Editor: Why did you call it LawPeriscope?

Rindner: The origin of "LawPeriscope" as a name came from the critical equipment on a submarine that allows the crew to navigate. With a periscope, you scan the horizon and zoom in on what interests you, much like LawPeriscope allows you to do with respect to law firms.

Editor: How does LawPeriscope work?

Rindner: From our website, you can quickly retrieve profiles on any of the 300 law firms by simply entering a firm's name

or its initials. Our "Advanced Search" page lets you retrieve firm profiles on the basis of practice area, office location, office size and keywords, so you have numerous opportunities to sift the information and find firms that meet your criteria. You can also use our "Attorney Search" feature to find biographies and other information on particular attorneys at any of these firms.

Editor: Tell us about the firm profiles.

Rindner: The profiles for all firms are in the same format and provide comparable information such as firm size, branch office locations and size, practice areas, publications and seminars. There is no other service on the Internet that provides a similar overview of this many firms.

From each profile, you can link directly to the firm's website. For example, you can retrieve a list of firms that have expertise in aviation law and then quickly review each firm's practice area description from its profile. You can do the same if you are looking for representation in a specific location. With this resource, corporate counsel can save time by narrowing their search and only contacting those firms which meet their legal needs. If a company only works with a limited number of law firms, as is often the case, counsel can research each firm's expertise before deciding which firm to contact.

We link to the firms' websites because law firms' websites are now excellent and timely sources of substantive information on the firms' practice specialties. Almost every firm's website includes a directory with detailed backgrounds of the firm's attorneys. Overall, these websites contain substantive material which can be accessed most efficiently through LawPeriscope.

Law firm websites are also great

Connect with LawPeriscope at www.lawperiscope.com

resources for staying current on legal developments. Newsletters, client alerts, bulletins and articles are posted on these websites and can be located through Law Periscope. Even when I was not looking to retain a law firm, I informed myself about current legal developments from law firm websites that posted material on specific practice areas such as e-commerce or intellectual property.

Editor: How does the Attorney Search feature work?

Rindner: The "Attorney Search" feature only searches law firm websites to find the information that you wish to review. If you need information about a specific attorney, you can enter his or her name on LawPeriscope and retrieve the attorney's biography, as well as articles he or she may have written and seminars in which he or she has participated. You can even use this feature to search for other information from the law firms profiled on LawPeriscope.

With LawPeriscope, there are no extraneous results since our search is limited to law firm websites and does not take you all over the Internet. If you use a general search engine, you will always obtain tremendous amounts of irrelevant information. Online law firm directories will provide you with a static document describing the attorney's background. Biographies posted on law firm websites are the best source because they are current and may link to more detailed information such as representative experience, practice area descriptions and publications.

Editor: How much information does LawPeriscope capture?

Rindner: By covering the three hundred largest law firms in the U.S., LawPeriscope includes information about more than 2,000 office locations, over 5,000 publications and newsletters, over 8,000 practice area descriptions and more than 100,000 attorneys. An enormous amount of information can be accessed through the profiles on LawPeriscope.

Editor: Can LawPeriscope help you find law firms with which you may not be familiar?

Rindner: Yes, you can also retrieve profiles on firms you do not know by using our Advanced Search page. For example, if you

required a firm with offices throughout Texas, you can find such firms easily through LawPeriscope and determine if they have the necessary expertise by scanning their profiles.

Editor: Does LawPeriscope list law firms' clients?

Rindner: Each profile contains a "Clients" section. About half of the firms include on their sites lists of representative clients that can be accessed from the profile. We believe corporate counsel would like to see more client information on websites.

Editor: With LawPeriscope, can you learn about cases that the firms have handled?

Rindner: Websites vary in the substantive information that they provide and many list representative transactions and litigations. Based on the hundreds of hours we spent looking at the websites and profiling firms, we find more firms are including better information such as detailed practice area descriptions, lists of matters handled, including case names and jurisdictions, and cross references to the attorneys involved in those cases. With LawPeriscope, this material is much easier for users to retrieve.

Editor: Can law students use LawPeriscope?

Rindner: Yes and they do. We have been in touch with almost all of the accredited law schools in the U.S. and many link to our site from their websites.

Editor: What do you include in the "Other Features" section of a profile?

Rindner: This usually links to sections on firm history, management, technology, training, recruiting, community service and pro bono activities. We also identify firm affiliations such as consulting practices and investment-related businesses or specialized websites. We can highlight any unique aspect of a firm's website that would be hard to find unless you already knew about it.

Editor: What type of feedback do you receive from users?

Rindner: Through the "Contact Us" form on the website, we have received positive

feedback from users impressed by the site's easy navigation features and extensive search capabilities. They also like the idea of concise profiles with links to the firms' sites because it lets them evaluate each firm themselves.

Editor: Does LawPeriscope benefit the law firms?

Rindner: There are two primary benefits. First, our profiles and search engines direct existing and potential clients to law firm websites by identifying relevant material on the website.

Second, we also include a "Snap Survey" at the bottom of each profile. The user can quickly evaluate the law firm's website and make suggestions. Firms can also include our "Snap Survey" on their websites. We would compile the information from those surveys and provide the firms with feedback to improve their websites. By completing an independent survey, we believe that users are going to be more candid than if they respond directly to the firm. We will also be able to help law firms compare their websites to those of a peer group of law firms.

Editor: Can you find billing information on LawPeriscope?

Rindner: At this time, not many law firms include billing information on their websites, so it is not on our profile. If in-house counsel express a desire for that type of information and firms post it on their websites, then we will include it on LawPeriscope. One of our goals is to obtain feedback from in-house counsel on how to improve law firm websites and share it with law firms. We believe that there is tremendous potential for expanding the value of these websites.

Editor: What is the biggest challenge facing Law Periscope?

Rindner: Our biggest challenge is making corporate counsel aware of the capabilities of this new and innovative Internet resource. Counsel are already visiting our site seeking basic law firm information such as size, office locations and practice expertise. We are trying to inform counsel about the distinctive features of Law Periscope, which are not otherwise available on the Internet, so that its full potential can be realized.