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LOCAL BLOGGERS SPREAD LATEST WORD ON DELAWARE LAW

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Of the DLW

Editor's note: This is the second article in a series examining legal blogs started by Delaware lawyers or with strong connections to the state.

About a month ago, Francis G.X. Pileggi of Fox Rothschild was pleased to see that an entry on his 'Delaware Corporate and Commercial Litigation Blog' was referenced in the online law section of The Wall Street Journal.

As well as being referenced, Pileggi does quite a bit of referencing, supplying links to the blogs of law professors such as Stephen Bainbridge of the University of California at Los Angeles and Larry E. Ribstein of the University of Illinois College of Law, both of whom often write about Delaware law.

In turn, the professors provide links to Pileggi's blog and often note his summaries of Delaware cases.

Such is the snowballing nature of the blogosphere, where analyses of cases and issues can be spread to an ever-widening legal community with no geographic boundaries.

'It's one of the most professionally rewarding experiences that I have had,' Pileggi said.

Vice Chancellor Leo E. Strine Jr. of the Court of Chancery called Pileggi's blog very useful, 'where a diligent member of the Delaware bar provides a very timely synopsis of the cases that come out. That often inspires the academics to muse about the impact.'

Pileggi isn't the only one providing such a service. Law firm Morris James posts timely summaries of significant cases on three blogs: the 'Delaware Business Litigation Report,' the 'Delaware Patent Litigation Report' and the 'Delaware Business Bankruptcy Report.' These blogs also have links to the opinions.

Edward M. McNally, a partner at Morris James who edits the blogs, said clients sometimes mention them, and sure enough, other blogs reference the work.

'The thing about this blogging business is that it sort of becomes an alternative universe,' McNally said.

While such exposure is nice, McNally said it's hard to quantify how visits to the blogs --; which now number about 4,000 per month --; translate into business.

Internally, however, it is easy to see the benefit.

'The discipline is good for us,' McNally said, adding that it makes the lawyers read and analyze important cases more quickly.

'For internal purposes, it has made us a better law firm,' he said.

McNally also said he is a consumer of blogs, having set up his workstation for easy access to all the sites he uses. He noted, however, that he takes what he reads with a grain of salt.

'Blogs tends to stress immediacy as opposed to thoughtfulness,' McNally said. This is what he guards against in editing the Morris James blogs.

'I make sure it is not inaccurate,' he said.

When Morris James first started its blogs in the summer of 2006, it intended to assign the summaries to associates, but this has changed as the sites matured.

'The blog summaries tend to be very short. That's inherent in [the] nature of blogging,' McNally said. 'What's important is to get the holdings right and put each case in perspective. That perspective requires a fair amount of experience and background.'

The associates who were assigned cases in the beginning were quite conscientious, McNally said, researching the case law in order to gain some insight. In the end, it simply took up too much of their time.

Now the more experienced attorneys handle it. For example, McNally himself summarizes all Chancery Court decisions. He has been practicing in corporate law and business litigation for 35 years.

Both Pileggi and Morris James' are clients of LexBlog, a Seattle company that offers all needed services for professionals who want to start blogs, including consulting, design, hosting and marketing.

Kevin O'Keefe, the president and founder of LexBlog, said his business has more than doubled since he started the company about four years ago.

'We are pushing 450 blogs with a thousand authors,' he said.

O'Keefe has a blog himself, aptly named 'Real Lawyers Have Blogs.' Many of his clients are lawyers and law firms, and he said he thinks the phenomenon will continue to grow.

'I think we are still in the infancy of online networking,' he said.

According to a report compiled by LexBlog, as of March, 53 firms among the AmLaw 200 were blogging, producing a total of 110 blogs. That represents 36 percent growth over six months.

'Most of them are using it to enhance their reputation as a thought leader,' O'Keefe said. 'They tend to be well-spoken in the niche area of law they represent so it certainly is an effective marketing tool.'

At the same time, O'Keefe added, lawyers are finding blogs are a good way to improve their practice by staying abreast of developments as well as networking with others that have expertise in their field.

'It certainly can enhance their practice both in marketing and the quality of services,' O'Keefe said. 'To blog effectively you are entering into an ongoing conversation and referencing what other blogs may have said.'

With the blogosphere growing so quickly, O'Keefe thinks the next sea change could come from new social networking applications.

'We can use existing technology and begin to harness it in different ways to connect people for effective dialogue,' O'Keefe Said.