

# NAMWOLF

## To Solicit Or Not To Solicit – That Is The Question

Joel Stern, CEO, NAMWOLF

What I like most about this position is having the opportunity to talk to in-house legal groups around the United States sharing my experiences with NAMWOLF first as in-house and now in this role. While each meeting is a bit different, a recurring question is, “How can I find law firms that can do our work in practice areas and cities where I need legal help?” While there are many answers to this question, what has surprised me a bit is how helpful it is to in-house counsel to have NAMWOLF help find member attorneys through the anonymous solicitation process we have increasingly used over the past year. In this edition of the Newsletter, I would like to explore the anonymous solicitation process and why it has proven beneficial for both our law firms and in-house counsel.

Whether an in-house attorney is active with NAMWOLF or not, almost all are interested in better understanding whether our law firms can meet their specific needs either by practice area or city. There are several ways for in-house counsel to get information about our firms including looking at our Corporate Counsel Guide, using the Member Firm search feature on the website, asking other in-house lawyers for references, asking other NAMWOLF law firms for recommendations, and attending our meetings and Expo. In addition, in-house counsel are increasingly utilizing the NAMWOLF Team to help perform due diligence for in-house via solicitations. In this process, we either reach out to all of our firms, firms located in specified cities or use the Practice Area Committees to identify potentially appropriate firms.

In-house counsel have repeatedly told us that they like the solicitation process since it saves them time when NAMWOLF staff conduct preliminary due diligence to help “sort” firms that can do what in-house wants. This is true for both our active in-house counsel and for legal groups who are not involved with us but are interested in learning more about us. They often like the anonymity of the process since they can get the information they are looking for without announcing it to the world. In-house attorneys ask for these types of solicitations typically under two circumstances: (1) They have an urgent need for legal help and want to see who within NAMWOLF can do the work or, (2) They are looking at opportunities to use NAMWOLF firms and want to do more casual exploring of the firms so they have the information ready when a need arises.

We have been doing an increasing number of solicitations over the past year precisely because of the positive feedback on the process. We try to make it easy for our law firms by only asking for the minimum information necessary for in-house to get what they want. These are not requests for voluminous amounts of information. Typically, we will only ask if the law firm has the requisite expertise necessary in a specific practice area in a particular city.

One of the questions our law firms ask most frequently is, “Do these solicitations work?” The first question that needs to be addressed is how are we defining “work?” From the in-house counsel perspective, the answer is an unequivocal “yes.” They get useful information from NAMWOLF quickly and efficiently in a usable format which they can then disseminate to others in their legal group. It helps



them either with an urgent need, or more long term need. Many of these companies are doing their best to find opportunities to use our firms and this information makes it easy for them to do this.

From a macro law firm perspective, the answer is also “yes.” Every time we identify qualified firms we are putting these firms on the in-house radar when prior to that, they most likely were not. The time and effort to complete the request is not material and the benefits could be great, either in real time or in the future. However, the real question law firms are asking is, “Do these solicitations lead to work for our member firms?” The answer to this question is also a clear “yes.” Renecca Allen tracks all solicitations and follows up with the requesting party. We ask whether the information was useful, whether they have interviewed any of our firms and whether they have engaged any of our firms. We know that many of these solicitations have led to both interviewing and hiring. As a matter of fact, a company contacted me as I was writing this article to let me know it had engaged one of our firms to defend a significant product liability matter. Also, sometimes the information gathered is reviewed by in-house and stored for future reference. In these instances, the decision to interview and/or engage is months away from the original request. Finally, we know that some of the requestors have reviewed the information and used that information to set up interviews at the Expo or other parts of our Annual and Business Meetings.

In addition, NAMWOLF firms have started using the solicitation process to find other NAMWOLF firms to refer business to and we hope this trend continues. Business to our firms comes from many sources and one of the most important sources is the member firm to member firm reference. We need to continue to focus on cross-marketing efforts and use mechanisms like this.

In closing, the NAMWOLF team is focused on doing anything we can do to make it easy for in-house attorneys to consider and ideally hire our firms. The solicitations fulfill a very real in-house need. We are seeing this both from our very active in-house members as well as legal groups that are just taking a peek at our organization and its firms. If you are in-house and want to use the solicitation process, please let me know and we will get you connected to a network of enormously talented attorneys. If you are a law firm and need a law firm reference, please work with us and we will get you a list of firms that meet your needs.