



(Poached) Egg on Your Face?

Does your firm Web site list associates' bio and contact data? **By Monica Bay**

The *National Law Journal* recently reported a disturbing trend: many law firms are “cloaking” associates, placing only cursory contact and biography data on Web sites. The purported motive: to prevent headhunters from stealing talent.

Said Richard Raysman of Brown Raysman Millstein Felder & Steiner: “We’re really not anxious for people to start poaching our associates. We don’t want to facilitate that.”

Reed Smith counsel Denise Howell, who writes *Bag and Baggage*, was one of many bloggers who skewered the new practice, suggesting that firms should worry more about creating a “great place to work” than fret over whether associates can

be reached without going through a receptionist.

On *The Common Scold*, I addressed a different nuance: how treating associates like second-class citizens perpetuates the law firm caste system, and ultimately undermines client service. So we decided to review the Web sites of the top 10 Am Law 100 firms — to see if a client could find direct e-mail addresses and phone numbers, a full biography, a picture and an educational summary for associates. The results were encouraging: six of 10 earned a B or higher grade, and many firms that scored poorly are already reconsidering their policies. Here’s our report card: (All firms were invited to comment.)

1. Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. Grade: D

Lists areas of practice and education, and office contact info, but no direct e-mail or phone data.

2. Baker & McKenzie. Grade: C

Lists direct e-mail, and practice area, but no bios. Pamela Ulijasz, deputy global press officer, says only partners get bios, because they are the correct people to assist clients, media, etc. Plus, “the logistics of keeping 2,000 [associate] CVs up-to-date would be an enormous task,” she says.

3. Jones Day. Grade: A

Full bios, a photo, direct e-mail and phone contacts. Cherie Olland, global director of business development and communications says: “There has always been a general recognition that associates have colleagues, clients and clients of the future who may want to contact them.”

4. Latham & Watkins. Grade: D

Lists education, but no practice areas or other bio data. No direct lines or e-mail — to protect lawyers’ privacy and keep listings consistent across offices, explains Despina Kartson,

chief marketing officer. But Latham will review Web site data presentation, within the context of data protection and data privacy protocols, to be sure the site remains “an effective and powerful marketing channel.”

5. Sidley Austin Brown & Wood. Grade: A

Full bio, direct phone and e-mail links and office contact data.

6. Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw. Grade: B

Direct e-mail and phone, very truncated bios, some photos. Says James Tancula, partner and co-chair of the associates committee: “We feel the best way to retain and attract good people is not to hide them, but show them off.”

7. White & Case. Grade: A

An excellent template includes photo, full bio, practice area, office contact information, direct e-mail and phone, languages spoken. Contact data can be downloaded. Associates and partners are treated equally, and a direct phone line is listed unless the lawyer requests that the general number be

provided. “It’s most important ... that our clients can access our lawyers whenever they want, regardless of where those lawyers are in their career,” says David Koschik, executive partner of the New York City office.

8. Weil Gotschal & Manges. Grade: B

Photo, direct phone and e-mail, and education data. Some associates have bios. Offers a “quoting article” link and “printable version” option. Executive director Robert Singer says Weil plans to add practice areas, and may soon post bios for all associates.

9. Shearman & Sterling. Grade: C+

Lists practice group, office, education, direct e-mail and phone. Very minimal. “We are in the process of a complete revamp of our external site,” reports Jolene Overbeck, chief marketing officer. “It will be very different, very soon.”

10. Kirkland & Ellis. Grade: A

Photo, direct e-mail and phone, full, printable bio including court admissions and bar memberships. **LFI**