

Introduction

This guide is the product of discussions among more than 75 in-house counsel, including during the In-House Counsel Panel session at the 2014 NAMWOLF Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. The guide reflects their recommendations for how in-house counsel can best strategically develop and grow the use of NAMWOLF member law firms by in-house law departments.

The Benefits of Using NAMWOLF Firms

DIVERSITY

Working with NAMWOLF law firms enables corporations, governmental organizations, and non-profit organizations to increase their diversity spend and benefit from the value diversity brings.

PROVEN TRACK RECORD

In-house counsel at more than 100 NAMWOLF member corporations regularly use NAMWOLF member law firms. To be admitted to membership in NAMWOLF, law firms must have in-house counsel recommendations from at least three Fortune 1000 corporations for which they have provided legal services.

APPROVED AND RECOMMENDED BY IN-HOUSE ATTORNEYS

In-house counsel represent the vast majority of the NAMWOLF Admissions Committee. This committee manages the NAMWOLF law firm admission process in which each law firm applicant is assessed. Through this process, the NAMWOLF Admissions Committee determines which law firm applicants are forwarded to the NAMWOLF Board for further review and approval. This vetting by other Fortune 1000 (and equivalent) companies and government entities assures the quality of NAMWOLF law firms.

EXPERTISE

NAMWOLF firms typically have specialized knowledge/expertise in their chosen field(s) that is evidenced through professional awards and recognitions, professional association memberships and offices, presentations, articles, seminars, client testimonials, and references.

VALUE AND EFFICIENCY

Large law firms tend to overstaff and shift work to less experienced attorneys. NAMWOLF firms tend to run leaner with work being done by appropriately experienced attorneys.

COMMUNICATION

NAMWOLF firms maintain high standards of direct and prompt personal communication with clients.

LOYALTY

NAMWOLF firms tend to be more loyal than large, traditional law firms that may represent a company one day, and sue it the next.

COLLABORATION

NAMWOLF firms have developed alliances through which they can provide one another with practice area expertise and resources in more than 45 jurisdictions around the country in a cost-efficient and effective manner.

Introducing NAMWOLF Member Firms to Your Law Department

There are many ways to start and develop your law department's utilization of NAMWOLF member law firms:

- Invite the NAMWOLF CEO, Joel Stern, to make a presentation.
- Use the NAMWOLF starter kit.
- Have in-house counsel from other companies that have used NAMWOLF member firms talk to your law department.
- Have a NAMWOLF firm make a presentation or provide a CLE.
- Send in-house counsel to a NAMWOLF event.
- Give NAMWOLF a brief description of practice areas or issues of interest to your company and ask NAMWOLF to identify member firms that can meet those needs when you need them. Alternatively, review the NAMWOLF directory and identify NAMWOLF firms with practice specialties in locations meeting the company's needs, and circulate those firms and specific attorneys' profiles to in-house colleagues.
- Periodically circulate within the law department NAMWOLF announcements and newsletter articles on topics and member law firms relevant to your law department's practice groups.
- In the NAMWOLF newsletter, there are stories shared concerning successes companies have had working with NAMWOLF firms.
- Use the NAMWOLF Linked-In Group on which in-house counsel can connect and share information.
- Look for matters that present good opportunities to use a NAMWOLF firm. With every new matter or issue requiring outside counsel, consider whether it can be an opportunity to work with a NAMWOLF firm.
- Invite one or more NAMWOLF firms to perform a free training class or seminar (whether by way of a conference call, webinar, training materials, or in-person), or to draft a short article for your in-house group based on new issues relevant to the in-house group.
- Where there may be a connection based on relevant practice specialty or even common social or personal interests, arrange introductions for NAMWOLF firms that you have used successfully to one or more of your in-house colleagues. The introductions can be in person or can easily take place via conference call or email.
- Tell NAMWOLF staff about your successes with NAMWOLF firms so that they can use the information when they talk to other companies' in-house legal teams.
- Let your in-house leadership know of your successes with particular NAMWOLF firms.
- Let your in-house leadership know of other companies' successes with NAMWOLF firms.
- Company policy permitting, provide an endorsement based on your personal experience; for instance, on a NAMWOLF attorney's/firm's LinkedIn profile or offer to do so on a NAMWOLF firm's website.
- Create a formal or informal internal committee with representatives from across the law department's different practice groups who are committed to diversity.
- Get the commitment of in-house law department leadership to support diversity in the law department spend.
- Engage the corporate supplier diversity procurement team to develop relationships with NAMWOLF firms. Help the company meet its supplier diversity spending goals.
- Establish metrics to set company goals and measure the company's advancement of its expenditure of legal fees on minority and women owned law firms.

No Barriers to Using NAMWOLF Member Firms

Some common misconceptions and institutional practices should not create false barriers:

- **NAMWOLF member firms should not have to meet a higher standard** – If you would not dispute the same conduct by a large, traditional law firm, NAMWOLF firms should not be penalized either. NAMWOLF firms’ conduct should not be required to meet a higher standard.
- **NAMWOLF member firms’ rates should not have to be lower** – NAMWOLF firm owners generally come from the largest, most prestigious law firms. Their rates should reflect their experience, expertise, and the value they bring. NAMWOLF firms’ rates often may be somewhat lower because they typically provide more cost-efficient legal services. Work is performed by experienced attorneys, matters are appropriately staffed, and there is generally less overhead. NAMWOLF firms are also typically more open to flexible fee arrangements and fee structures.
- **NAMWOLF member firms are not too small or lacking in a deep bench** – NAMWOLF firms range in size from as many as 150 or more attorneys to as few as three attorneys. The typical NAMWOLF firm has seven to 30 attorneys. Smaller NAMWOLF firms typically focus their practice on areas of specialized knowledge and expertise for which the quality of attorney work, not the number of attorneys, is paramount.
- **Preferred/Approved Counsel and Panel Lists should not operate as a bar to using NAMWOLF member firms** – As Walmart and other Fortune 1000 companies have recognized, there is a clear business benefit to utilizing women or minority owned law firms. See “Uninvited: Counsel Lists and How They Limit Minority and Women Owned Law Firms’ Access to Legal Work” at:
http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.namwolf.org/resource/dynamic_blogs/20140930_140620_24683.pdf.
In fact, according to research conducted by The Hackett Group, companies that focus on supplier diversity generate 133% greater return on investment than companies that do not. See “The Hackett Group: Supplier Diversity Does Not Drive Increased Costs” at:
http://www.thehackettgroup.com/about/alerts/alerts_2006/alert_08172006.jsp.
Such companies also make \$3.6 million more for every \$1 million they spend in procurement operation costs. Thus, focusing on supplier diversity delivers an average net gain of \$2.6 million over every \$1 million spent on supplier diversity procurement costs. *Id.*