

# Paradigm

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF PRIMERUS LAW FIRMS

WINTER 2014

*The Power of Primerus*

---

*How Does Primerus Help You?*

---

*Current Legal Topics:*

*North America • Europe, Middle East & Africa  
Latin America & Caribbean • Asia Pacific*



# How Does Primerus Help You?

We frequently hear success stories about how Primerus is helping members and their clients. It might be how Primerus helped a client find a quality attorney when they needed legal help in a new jurisdiction – and the client now relies on Primerus as their go-to source for outside counsel. It might be how a Primerus continuing legal education (CLE) offering changed the way a client does business. Or it might be how Primerus has linked attorneys from around the world who are trying to transform the legal profession of the future.

So we're sharing those stories with you – directly from the mouths of the people we serve. We asked members and clients, "How does Primerus help you?" On the following pages we share what they said.



Robin F. Lewis, member

**Making Connections Around the World**



Brian Wagner, member

**Partnering With Quality Firms**



Reinier Russell, member

**The Power of a Quality Brand**



Peter Barr, client

**Helping Inside Counsel Find Quality Small Firms**



Elizabeth Robertson, client

**Finding People I Can Trust**

# Making Connections Around the World

*Robin F. Lewis is a real estate attorney for the Primerus member firm Mandelbaum Salsburg in West Orange, New Jersey. She recently completed a term as Chair of the Primerus Business Law Institute of North America.*

During my seven years as a member of Primerus, and most recently as Chair of the Primerus Business Law Institute (PBLI) of North America, I have seen countless valuable connections develop among Primerus firms around the world. These personal connections are the most important way Primerus has helped my firm, our clients and other Primerus firms.

At the recent Primerus Global Conference held in October 2013 in Asheville, North Carolina, we welcomed Primerus members from around the world. Many international members also attended the Primerus Business Law Institute Symposium in June at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. Members from the North America Primerus institutes traveled to Barcelona, Spain, last spring to attend the Primerus International Conference sponsored by the Primerus Europe, Middle East and Africa Institute. It's exciting that so many Primerus members are now travelling internationally to meet with each other throughout the year. There's no doubt that it's important to all of us to build bridges with our international partners to find areas where both referral sources and personal relationships can develop. Strengthening those ties will benefit everyone involved with Primerus.

While my firm, Mandelbaum Salsburg, does not look across international borders on a daily basis, we do have a number of clients doing work in international

markets and believe it is very important to know that the global connection is there for them. In the U.S., we have had the opportunity to partner with fellow Primerus firms on numerous occasions, which has been a very important aspect of our Primerus membership. A perfect example of this is one of my own clients, a real estate owner with properties throughout the U.S. With this client, Primerus has been my go-to source for several years. If she had an issue in Delaware, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas – the first thing I did was call Primerus. I have found all of the firms we have worked with to be very helpful, and my client loves the fact that we have the ability to assist her anywhere with quality representation at a reasonable rate.

Our firm considers our affiliation with Primerus to be a long-term relationship, one that takes time to grow and develop. We are excited by the connections and opportunities it has yielded thus far, and we look forward to seeing where it goes in the future.



## Partnering With Quality Firms

*Brian Wagner is a litigator with the Primerus member firm Mateer & Harbert in Orlando, Florida.*

Mateer & Harbert is a mid-sized, full service law firm located in Orlando, Florida, that services the interests of clients throughout the State of Florida. Being a Primerus member has expanded our firm's geographical boundaries and allowed us to serve our clients' legal issues that arise outside our own state. Our clients enjoy the lower legal fees and client-centered responsiveness of a mid-sized firm combined with the worldwide coverage of a large international law firm.

We have forged strong relationships with fellow Primerus member firms,

specifically Smith Debnam in Raleigh, North Carolina. Our relationship with the Smith Debnam firm is a classic example of how the Primerus model is so successful. Not only do our two firms have a strong business relationship of both referring and receiving cases, we have also teamed up to give presentations on issues such as Enforcing Foreign Judgments and Fraud Involving Equipment Leasing and Financing Transactions.

This partnership has allowed us to meet the legal needs of our clients who have business outside of the State of Florida and outside the U.S. And because of the strict guidelines Primerus has for admission and retention, we feel very comfortable working with fellow Primerus firms.

I have even deeper confidence because I have personal relationships with so many fellow members established through Primerus events, webinars and practice group calls. In fact, when I travel to other cities for business, I make a point to visit with the attorneys at the local Primerus firm in that particular city.

Because of our involvement in Primerus, our clients can rest assured that if they have a legal issue that arises in another jurisdiction, our firm can introduce them to one of our valued partners in Primerus who shares our commitment to providing the best possible legal representation for our clients without sacrificing value.

# The Power of a Quality Brand



*Reinier Russell is the managing partner at Russell Advocaten, a Primerus member firm in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He is a member of the Primerus Board of Directors and the Primerus Quality Assurance Board.*

We have experienced tremendous benefit from the Primerus brand showing our clients that we are part of a global legal family that is there for them if they have legal needs anywhere in the world.

We have put the Primerus “P” logo on items including peppermints, pencils, matchboxes, stationery, business cards and flags outside our office. We have memo cubes on our conference room tables that show the Primerus “P,” and people often ask about it. Our clients are very interested in learning more about Primerus.

The global focus of Primerus is very important to them. It gives our clients comfort knowing that if they have legal needs anywhere in the world, we can help them with a referral. For example, one of our clients had a legal problem in California. We connected him with Primerus member firm Neil, Dymott, Frank, McFall & Trexler in San Diego, and within 24 hours we had a discussion paper on the matter. The client is now working directly with that firm for other cases.

As a member of Primerus’ Quality Assurance Board, I believe it’s critical to maintain the highest of quality standards among our membership so that we can easily promote and rely on one another as if we were colleagues in the same firm. As an attorney, the relationships and experiences I have had through Primerus have benefited me greatly. I have learned a lot about the legal profession around the world, and I now have a much broader picture on how the profession will evolve in the future.



## Finding People I Can Trust

*Elizabeth Robertson is Chief Litigation Counsel for Crawford & Company in Atlanta, Georgia. She is also a member of the board of the Georgia Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC).*

I became involved with Primerus because of my role as the Vice President of the Special Programs Committee of the Georgia Chapter of the ACC. I worked with Primerus staff to plan the Primerus Business Law Institute Symposium in June 2013 at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. In April 2013, I also attended the Primerus Defense Institute Convocation in Boca Raton, Florida.

As a result of getting to know Primerus, I hired the Primerus member firm Zizik, Powers, O’Connell, Spaulding & Lamontagne in Boston to handle a case. I have been very pleased with the quality of legal services provided by Mr. Zizik and his staff, their responsiveness to my company’s needs and their professionalism.

What I like about Primerus and its member firms is that they offer an excellent alternative to the mass market large firms. Sometimes you need a law firm that has more flexibility in management and that offers a better value. I also like that you know what the organization stands for and that they have a strict

vetting process for quality before admitting and retaining a firm. From what I have seen, the Primerus network is a good place to go for high quality legal work and good value.

Also, one of the most important things I look for in outside counsel is someone I can trust. Based on my interactions with Primerus attorneys and positive feedback from other clients, they are very genuine and aligned with the interest of my company. At the PDI Convocation, a Primerus attorney gave opening remarks and shared that, just weeks before, he had witnessed the horrifying events that took place at the Boston Marathon. He concluded his presentation by encouraging Primerus members to call one of their clients when they returned to their offices the following week just to ask them how they can help them – whether personally or professionally. He said that lawyers ought to be in the business of doing good. I don’t often hear this type of perspective expressed at professional events and found it very refreshing. Knowing that someone is committed to doing the “right thing” is an important factor that I consider when making a decision about who to partner with on a case. Ultimately, I want someone I can trust and whose conduct reflects my company’s values.



## Helping Inside Counsel Find Quality Small Firms

*Peter Barr is General Counsel of Rack Room Shoes and Off Broadway Shoes, headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina. He is a past president and a founding board member of the Charlotte Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC).*

When I first learned of Primerus at an ACC National Convention a few years ago, I was very supportive of the concept of bringing together high quality small to mid-sized firms to help in-house counsel like me find great lawyers for reasonable fees throughout the country.

It is not uncommon for the in-house bar to hire a very large national firm with a well-known name to handle legal matters, based on the theory that the in-house attorney is doing everything he or she can by “hiring the best.” I believe that the better approach is to find the appropriate lawyer for the appropriate case, not based on firm size or name recognition, but based on ability. If, as general counsel, I do that well, then I

can honestly say that I hired the best at a significantly lower cost.

In my career, I have found smaller firms to be a tremendous resource. A decade ago, I was managing litigation for what was a Fortune 500 retailer with over 5,000 stores. I had success working with small insurance defense firms with excellent trial lawyers that were significantly less expensive than large firms. You just can’t beat the expertise that you get from trial attorneys in small or mid-sized litigation firms.

We recently retained a Primerus attorney for a commercial lease dispute and received an incredible value. Our Primerus attorney represented us ably through discovery, depositions and settlement. The case settled on favorable terms and our legal expenses were very low.

Primerus’ continuing legal education (CLE) offerings have been a tremendous benefit to me. In fact, they are some of the best CLEs I attend. Their CLEs are never boring and are always informative and include practical advice and clear lessons. That’s one way that I know

Primerus attorneys are good trial lawyers – they can clearly present CLEs in an entertaining manner.

In September, I attended the Primerus Defense Institute Insurance Coverage & Bad Faith Seminar in Chicago. The Primerus lawyers presented a mock trial on a commercial litigation matter. It was wonderfully entertaining and informative. Moreover, I took away not only clear and convincing evidence that these Primerus attorneys are very good at what they do, but also important information and advice that I will use in working with my internal clients.

At the Primerus social events, I have found the members to be stand-up people who get along well with one another. That good rapport among the Primerus attorneys tells me I can be assured that a Primerus attorney in one city will refer me to someone they know well and trust in another city. That rapport, along with my experience with these attorneys, tells me that I can rely upon the Primerus network of law firms.