



Morris, Manning & Martin Advising Clients on Privacy; Privacy Issues Affect Almost Every Business in America

Atlanta (August 9, 2001) – Recent and proposed legislation, as well as rules and regulations governing privacy, will impact almost every business in America. Atlanta law firm Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP has formed a new practice group focused on privacy and information security to enable its clients to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Information Age, while meeting obligations to properly use and protect sensitive personal data.

The multi-disciplinary Privacy and Security Practice Group provides solution sets for the variety of privacy and security issues that face today's businesses. Partners Chris Peterson in Washington and Jim Butler in Atlanta will co-chair the group, which includes 20 attorneys. The group is divided into special interest groups (SIGs) devoted to general domestic issues, international business, healthcare, financial institutions and insurance, and information security.

"With today's technology, personally identifying information can be collected, manipulated, profiled, shared, and, unfortunately, mishandled in the blink of an eye," said co-chair Jim Butler.

"The convergence of the online and offline world has brought both risk and the potential for great reward," Butler adds. "Bringing together our considerable resources and talent in the areas of privacy and information security to serve our clients more efficiently made sense."

"Almost every business will be impacted by privacy regulations," said co-chair Chris Petersen. "Privacy is becoming a core corporate function."

Petersen adds that competitive pressures will impact privacy policies as well. "People may choose their business partners based on how that partner handles information," he says.

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The Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act imposes privacy regulations on financial institutions, while the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) has far-reaching impact on the healthcare business, as well as those doing business with healthcare companies, including providers, vendors, and patients. The European Union, as well as Canada and countries in Asia and South America have recently adopted privacy laws and regulations.

Individuals and companies directly or indirectly involved in the healthcare industry need to immediately focus on educating themselves as to their legal obligations under HIPAA, and addressing these obligations in the next 20 months, according to Sidney Welch and Kimberly Greaves, co-chairs of the Health Care SIG. Otherwise, they risk being overwhelmed by the task of achieving compliance, shut out of the marketplace, and subject to liabilities.

Although the cost of compliance has been estimated to exceed \$8-\$40 billion dollars industry-wide, healthcare providers and companies alike will find that this task allows them to fold existing resources into a practical framework that works for them. Implementation of this framework is critical to their success.

The International SIG concentrates on identifying and interpreting foreign legislation, rules and regulation for clients doing business overseas. "As the barriers to foreign trade have diminished, clients have found it makes economic sense to extend the reach of their businesses outside the boundaries of the United States, where the use of information can be more restricted than clients expect," says Julie Spaeth, coordinator of the International SIG. "Our job is to make sure that there are no surprises in the privacy arena."

The Privacy and Security Practice Group is currently serving more than 35 clients in a variety of industries. Peterson brings a unique perspective to the group as former counsel to the Health Insurance Association of America, while Butler provides policy knowledge and experience not often found in Atlanta as Director of Public Policy for the US Internet Industry Association and member of the President's Export Council Subcommittee on Encryption.

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Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP

Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP (www.mmmlaw.com) is involved in a sophisticated commercial transactional and litigation practice. Morris, Manning & Martin has been advising clients on technology business issues for more than twenty years. The firm enjoys national prominence for its role in the technology, healthcare, real estate, corporate financial/securities, and insurance industries. In 1999, the firm handled more IPOs than any other firm in the southeast, and was 9th in the nation when ranked by dollars raised. It also facilitated more than \$580 million of financing for its clients during 2000, including 9 of the top 25 venture capital deals in the southeast, and represented clients in mergers and acquisitions worth more than \$7 billion.

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