

NAMES IN THE NEWS

The kingpin of Internet infidelity

MOVES

■ In Toronto **Deborah Grieve** joins *Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP* as a partner in its business reorganization group. She was previously with *Blaney McMurty LLP*. **Justin Fogarty** and **Renée Brosseau** have been poached by *Davis LLP* from *Bennett Jones LLP*. Both join Davis' business solutions and restructuring group. Fogarty is now a partner and co-chair of the group, while Brosseau is an associate.

■ In Vancouver four associates have joined *Harper Grey LLP*, including: **Natasha Morley**, **Emily Williamson**, **Daniel Reid** and **Megan Kammerer**.

LAW FIRM NEWS

■ *Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP* is set to become the first Canadian law firm to open offices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The firm is also set to open an office in the Kingdom of Bahrain this fall. Blakes has formed an exclusive association with the firm of **Saud Al-Ammari** in Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Firm clients see the Middle East, particularly countries part of the Gulf Cooperation Council, as an area of growth, according to a press release. Leading the firm's Gulf initiative is **Dan Fournier**, who is currently a senior partner in the Blakes energy and finance practices. Fournier will chair the Gulf initiative, and Al-Ammari, who will be joining Blakes as a partner, will be the managing partner of the offices in the region.

APPOINTMENTS

■ Judicial appointment season is in full swing once again. New Brunswick (**Bradley Green**), Newfoundland and Labrador (**Michael Harrington**) and Manitoba (**William Johnston**) all announced one appointment. While Quebec (**Nicholas Kasirer**, **Martin Dallaire**, **Manon Savard** and **François Huot**) and Ontario (**Scott Campbell**, **Martin James**, **Wendy MacPherson** and **Helen Pierce**) announced four appointments.

MICHAEL RAPPAPORT TORONTO

Divorce lawyers may believe they owe a debt of gratitude to Noel Biderman, the CEO and founder of The Ashley Madison Agency, an online dating service for married/attached people with the tagline "Life is short. Have an affair." But Biderman insists that, "Ashley Madison probably saves more marriages than it breaks up." In an interview with *The Lawyers Weekly*, he goes so far as to call it a "marriage preservation tool," observing that "infidelity rates are higher in Japan and Europe, yet their divorce rates are lower than in North America."

Biderman, a native Torontonian, who describes himself as a "monogamous," "family guy," who is married with two young children, argues that "infidelity is part of the human condition." He maintains that the alternatives to using his site are far more destructive, citing "escort agencies" and "workplace romances."

Before launching The Ashley Madison Agency in 2001, Biderman studied economics at the University of California, earned a law degree from Osgoode Hall Law School of York University and worked as a professional sports agent for a few years.

After the dotcom bubble burst in 2000, Biderman noted that one of the few survivors was online dating sites. Furthermore, he found out that about "30 percent of members of single sites weren't actually single." He was struck by a business opportunity: a personal site that catered to members who "we're attached, but searching for something on the side."

Before turning his vision into a reality, Biderman ran the idea by his then fiancée, now his wife, and friends and family members.

It took Ashley Madison five years to reach its first million members, growing chiefly by word-of-mouth. Today, the site



Noel Biderman

boasts 4.5 million members across North America. About 70 percent of Ashley Madison's members are male. Biderman says that the typical male member is around 30 to 40 years in age, has been married for seven or more years and feels a physical intimacy void. In contrast, female members tend to fall into three categories

, according to Biderman. The first he labels "the desperate housewife." The second he refers to as, "the mistress," elaborating that

they tend to be "single women who want dinners out, trips abroad, but are not after the white picket fence and kids." The third group is the fastest growing segment: "newlywed women, who are disappointed that marriage didn't live up to expectations."

Lawyers make a respectable showing in the ranks of Ashley Madison's members, with about 1.34 percent of male members claiming to be part of the legal profession. "Law is a difficult profession. If your work is

» Got news?

Contributions to *Names in the News* can be e-mailed to names@lexisnexis.ca

Name: Noel Biderman
Law school: Osgoode Hall Law School of York University
Called to the Bar: 1997

Career highlights:

2001 Founded The Ashley Madison Agency

2006 Ashley Madison reaches one million members

2009 NBC and CTV reject Ashley Madison television ads for the 2009 Super Bowl, but many other networks agree to air the commercial

stressful and your home life is unsatisfying, that's a recipe for infidelity," Biderman explains. He adds, that members of the financial profession, bankers, accountants, etc., far outstrip lawyers on his site.

Ashley Madison's stellar growth has been fuelled by cheeky advertising on cable TV, in print and online. And Biderman has not been shy to court controversy to promote his site, even starting an Affair Guarantee Program (an "affair to remember" in 90 days or your money back). He has offered a free lifetime membership to Katie Holmes, published an open letter to Eliot Spitzer in the *New York Post* and aired provocative ads showing a couple in the throes of passion, with the tagline, "This couple is married... but not to each other."

For some his controversial site and cheeky advertising campaigns go too far. Microsoft's MSN search engine has banned key words leading to the Ashley Madison website. And NBC and CTV rejected his ads for the 2009 Super Bowl (ESPN, CNN, FOX News, Bravo and TLC agreed to air the commercial, though.)

Perhaps, with his ongoing media battles, Biderman might yet generate work for lawyers. ■

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