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## **DISCOVERING A NICHE**

### **Miller man establishes business recovering electronic data for law firms**

*BY TOM RISEN  
MedIll News Service*

Through trial and error, Miller Beach resident Lee Neubecker found a nearly untapped computing opportunity -- recovering electronic data for Chicago law firms -- and built it into a thriving business that's taking in nearly \$2 million a year.

Neubecker's firm, Forensicon Inc., has 12 employees. Its specialty is electronic discovery for litigation, ranging from hidden assets in divorce cases to corporate espionage.

"A common example," said Neubecker, 34, "is that when an employee leaves for a job at a rival company, he might feel entitled to work he did, or information he had, access to. If he takes this company property with him, we are employed to re-create the database to find how much was taken."

Cameron Nelson, a lawyer at Greenberg Traurig LLP, said, "Lee is good at a targeted search with little time and expense looking for limited information ... Lee and his team are well equipped and trained, but it's efficiency and speed that's invaluable in selecting a forensics firm."

Nelson cited an example: A man suspected of being involved with defendants on trial for counterfeiting cigarettes and smuggling claimed he didn't know them, so Nelson subpoenaed his hard drive. The suspect had deleted all of his e-mails from his Yahoo account, but from the Web page template Neubecker recovered many saved e-mails to the defendants with titles like "Panama" and "Cigarettes" that proved the suspect had indeed lied.

Until 1999, Neubecker worked at Lycos Inc., but a trick of fate kept him from receiving stock options that would have been worth \$5 million when he left. So he started a Web design service, which suffered in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks. Nearly broke in 2002, Neubecker began to look at markets that resisted globalization and outsourcing to India. Starting with e-mail consulting for law firms, he found a strong opportunity growing in software forensics.

"There weren't many people in this kind of work back in 2002," Neubecker recalled. "Nowadays, there's more scrutiny to be accepted as an expert and they want to know what cases you've worked on ... It's more than just business cards, too, you need to know how to set up a clean room for the hardware. Right litigation service is specialized the same way a good surgeon is specialized."

The firm has a branch office in Milwaukee, which makes Neubecker wonder whether he should move the business there, or toward his home in Indiana, if the Illinois Legislature enacts Gov. Rob Blagojevich's proposed gross receipts tax, which has higher rates for businesses making more than \$2 million revenue.

He also thinks other tech companies might be tempted to leave the state.