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Slick new oilsands cross-selling strategy

The oilsands sector may be at a standstill, but an Alberta law firm is optimistic that a new push for legal business from the Fort McMurray resource will pay off.

“For the few of us that have been involved in different aspects, if there is a slowdown, we view that as temporary,” says Ron Kruhlak, a partner and head of the oilsands law committee at McLennan Ross LLP’s Edmonton office.

The firm is launching a marketing campaign focused on a new web site, www.oilsandslaw.com, aimed at highlighting its practice groups that can handle some of the key legal issues facing oilsands companies: labour, occupational health and safety, environment, litigation, and corporate commercial activities. The idea is to scoop up more business by cross-selling to companies it already deals

with on its other services. “This gives us an opportunity to indicate to an oilsands developer that we have expertise in this other area,” says Kruhlak.

The move comes as the recession puts a new spin on the legal challenges oilsands companies face. On labour, for example, the scenario has gone from one of trying to hire as many people as possible to one of cutting workers and reducing lucrative bonuses and allowances. “Certainly, when projects are being suspended, you’re dealing with issues there regarding reductions to the workforce,” says Kruhlak.

McLennan Ross has a long history in the sector, starting with the early days of oilsands development in the 1970s. It then went on to handle some major files. It was only recently that the firm saw the potential in packaging its expe-

rience into a new brand, one that will include seminars as well as publications on legal developments in the sector. “It’s just taken us this long to recognize that collectively, we have a significant amount of experience,” says Kruhlak.

In launching the new campaign, the firm is taking advantage of a platform called Brainshark, a tool that allows marketers to create a video presentation with audio voice-over. So far, it has created one video about the firm and the new site, but Kruhlak says it will expand on that with presentations about legal issues affecting the oilsands as well. Particularly helpful is the fact that the platform is fairly easy to use, meaning the firm can make the videos in house. “It’s very slick,” Kruhlak notes. “The cost is pretty reasonable.”

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