

Peggy “Darth Privacy” Eisenhower Celebrates Firm's 10th Year by Giving Back



Oct 22, 2015



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Courtney Gabrielson

Nonmember Contributor

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“I’m not quite sure how it got to be 10 years to begin with,” says Peggy Eisenhower, CIPP/US, author, lawyer, “Darth Privacy” and owner/founder of Privacy & Information Management Services (PIMS). It’s the global privacy firm’s 10th birthday this month. Eisenhower decided to celebrate 10 years in business through philanthropy, donating to 10 U.S. nonprofits of her choosing.

“I wanted to give back,” she said.

She hunted for 10 organizations across the country that, like her own, were global in perspective while firmly rooted in their local community.

“I wanted to find nonprofits where my clients were located ... that reflected the different priorities that the people I work with have,” she said, eventually choosing organizations like Oxfam in Boston, MA, Project Innocence in New York and the Bat Conservation International in Texas. “I just hope it was a way to give back and say thank you.”



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While others would spend the milestone throwing a party and hunting for high-fives, Eisenhower doesn't have time for that.

“Everything’s just so busy,” she said.

It wouldn’t quite be a landmark celebration without just a teensy bit of reminiscing, however. For that, Eisenhower goes back to the beginning, telling the PIMS origin story with such nonchalance it’s easy to think that the transition from privacy practice leader at Hunton & Williams to architect of a successful, now decade-old organization is an uncomplicated and near-effortless achievement.

Near the beginning of her career the privacy field, she said, the EU's Data Protection Directive "was in effective but wasn't yet inactive. The very end of '98." The lack of available privacy laws and resources made it a "great time to start a privacy firm," and the siren call of

And that was that.

Her focus?

“I love the international stuff,” she said. That said, her organization does more than honing in on just global data protection, doing a mix of cyber, breach notification, business processing and general compliance work. It's the business processing that gets her especially excited: “I’m a fabulous business processor.”

While her overarching privacy philosophy—which inspired [her site's title \(http://www.privacystudio.com/\)](http://www.privacystudio.com/)—has long been that “privacy is an art, not a science,” Eisenhower still makes time to tackle clients’ business-processing problems with the inquisitive, unrelenting attitude of a scientist. “I want to know, How does it work? Can we build it?” she said, laughing, “I’m like the ‘Bob the Builder’ of privacy.”

While there's much to be said for staying alive in the same industry for a decade, even with a dedicated and passionate energy, the privacy world is nothing if not constantly changing. Her secret to staying consistent is, in part, her practicality, she said.

“I think that’s why people love me—I’m grounded in business,” she said. “I am very process-oriented—I know what clients can do and clients can’t do.”

When talking PIMS's accomplishments, however, she is loath to bask in self-adulating platitudes. Instead, she name-drops colleagues—and even competitors—from the privacy field that she feels have been inspiring, helpful and supportive, highlighting especially the “all stars” she works with in her day-to-day who do “fabulous work.”

And she's equally passionate about her clients.

“I’m not an overly modest person, generally, but I found (I was named the) National Law Journal Cybersecurity Trailblazer—I just don’t pay attention,” she said. “But what really touched me ... was that I was nominated by a former client of mine. The fact that she thought of me in that was just ... I didn’t have to win it. But the fact that she nominated me was phenomenal.”

What keeps her satisfied? Client satisfaction is high on the list.

“I really feel like I made my clients happy,” she said. “I feel like I made the world a better place because my clients take my advice and use my advice,” she says, adding that a lot of her success has been because of the collaborative nature of the field, citing a Chinese proverb: “The rising tide raises all boats.”

“I’ve been lifted. We’ve all lifted each other up,” she said. “The secret is I have good friends.”

What does the future hold? “It’s really hard to imagine. I’m really happy with what I’m doing,” she replies. She is sure of one thing—she hopes to pay it forward in an industry she is quick to repeatedly refer to as collegial by encouraging privacy up-and-comers with wisdom and guidance. “I’d like to help leave a legacy of good mentoring,” she says.

“I’m really satisfied,” she continues. “It is like the least sexy career in the world ... but it suits me.”

Pease International Tradeport, 75 Rochester Ave.
Portsmouth, NH 03801 USA • +1 603.427.9200