

An inventive approach to intellectual property

Employees and clients alike can sense StoneTurn's unique commitment to efficiency and empowerment

by Zach Baliva



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CHRISTOPHER MARTINEZ

Cofounder and Partner

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HQ	Boston, MA
FOUNDED	2004

StoneTurn comprises experienced accountants, economists, and consultants to provide behind-the-scenes advice, deep financial analysis, and full-service dispute resolution support to corporate and individual clients alike.

Christopher Martinez can trace his interest in intellectual property back to Luke Skywalker. While the Colorado native was getting his CPA certification, he started working for Lucasfilm and Industrial Light & Magic in the Bay Area. There, he saw firsthand how the company behind the iconic *Star Wars* franchise was creating value through the films' characters and licensing out various properties.

The experience sent Martinez on a fact-finding mission. He hunted down all the books, mentors, and resources he could find on the subject of intellectual property. He then began consulting and taking on roles of increasing importance within companies like Deloitte & Touche and AT&T over a period of 10 years, during which he became one of the nation's top intellectual property (IP) experts.

He was working with AT&T to set up its IP holding company and commercialize IP when three of his former Deloitte & Touche colleagues came to him with an idea. They wanted to start their own consulting firm. Martinez was intrigued. In the spring of 2004, the four of them left their respective positions and started StoneTurn Group.

StoneTurn was built to be a different kind of consulting firm. "Profits are important," Martinez says, "but we wanted to focus not just on dollars and cents, but on the quality of the work." He and his partners believe that the narrow focus on billable hours held strictly by the big firms gives them a short-term advantage while StoneTurn can win loyal and long-term clients through a measured approach to consulting.

A decade removed from its start, StoneTurn has grown to include eight offices (seven in the United States and one in London), 12 partners, and 72 employees. Martinez describes the growth as methodical

Trade Technology

As a leading and progressive firm, StoneTurn seeks ways to leverage new technologies into its services. Here are some unexpected ways various industries can use technology and consulting services together.

Litigation

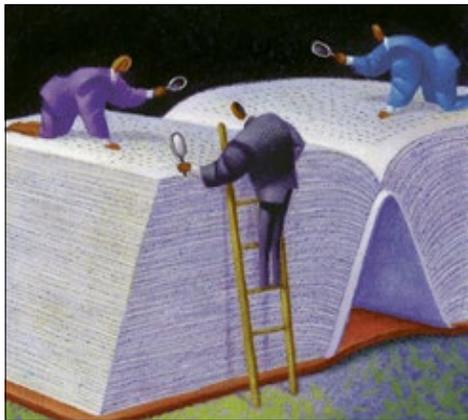
StoneTurn's digital forensic specialists set up predictive models to help clients screen for certain behaviors within organizations that may signal embezzlement or other illegal activities.

Criminal Cases

StoneTurn can back up servers, hard drives, cell phones, and other devices and maintain them with a clean chain of custody so that copies of these drives maintain integrity if they must be turned over to law enforcement.

Consumer Analytics

Information organized by the firm's data analytics group helps clients predict market behavior and look retroactively at trends to gain a competitive advantage.



and steady. Over the past 10 years, he's held fast to one word that continues to define the atypical firm: expertise. "Most firms back up the bus and unload as many high-paid consultants as possible. We act more like a SWAT team, bringing in select, high-level people instead of throwing many inexperienced people at the problem and later sending an outrageous bill," he explains.

While other skilled and proficient partners have broadened the firm's reach, Martinez continues to leverage more than 25 years of experience in IP matters. He advises companies concerning the management and commercialization of their intellectual assets based on knowledge and capabilities gained from his years as vice president of knowledge ventures for *Fortune* 50 company AT&T. *Intellectual Asset Management* recently included Martinez on its list of respected experts in economics and named him among the top patent damages experts on its Patent 1,000 list.

Additionally, Martinez helps companies settle intellectual property disputes and is in high demand as an expert witness. Some people can communicate to a jury but don't have a true mastery of the subject matter, he explains. "We as a firm, and me as a person," says Martinez, "actually have a deep understanding of our subjects and have learned the trade of being a good witness."

StoneTurn's carefully built atmosphere has allowed partners and colleagues to flourish and become industry-leading practitioners. While big firms overwork employees, Martinez and his founding partners take a different approach. "We felt like we could empower people and make this a better place to work," he says. "I had to keep 20 people busy to justify my existence when I worked at a large firm, but that's not the case here." While the big firms ask their employees to generate 1,900 (or more) billable hours a year, StoneTurn dramatically reduces that number to avoid burnout and turnover. Instead, Martinez encourages his associates to set three significant professional development goals each year. Some seek a new certification, some learn a language, some gain experience in a new area of the practice, and others author industry articles. As a result, StoneTurn

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Group's attrition rate is approximately less than half that of the industry.

StoneTurn Group's leaders have created a company built on more than the bottom line—and it's a company that attracts and retains employees. "I could have stayed in the mainstream, driven the bus, and brought home pots of gold ... but my cofounders and I wanted to create a place where we could offer our clients the best possible solutions and our coworkers great opportunities," Martinez says. Today, StoneTurn is growing in its own calculated way. Martinez says they turn down work that's not in the firm's "sweet spot" but still increase head count by about 10-15 percent each year. Having honed their skills over more than a decade, Martinez and his colleagues have built a working alternative to the traditional big consulting model. ■



STONETURN
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