

THE RIVAL



Eighty million dollars in annual revenue should have made him happy. Or at least not bitter. But Vince Green, the founder and CEO of Greenwich Consulting, would not be satisfied until his company was recognized as the number one technical consulting firm in the Bay Area. And on particularly bad days, he joked that he would be truly happy only when his competitor, Telegraph Partners, was dead.

It wasn't that Telegraph was much larger than Greenwich. In fact, from time to time Greenwich rivaled Telegraph's quarterly revenue (although its profits never seemed to do so).

More than the financial war, it bothered Vince and his staff that Greenwich couldn't seem to win any of the less tangible battles. Telegraph was always regarded as a darling of the trade press. Industry analysts fawned over them. Telegraph's clients raved about their services and even stood by them during difficult times. Though Greenwich certainly garnered its share of new business, retaining clients felt like a constant struggle. On the other hand, life seemed too easy for Telegraph.

And if this bothered Vince, then the battle for employees enraged him. Telegraph didn't have to work as hard or spend as much money recruiting good people. To make matters worse, there seemed to be a small but steady stream of employees leaving Greenwich to join Telegraph, but rarely did traffic flow in the other direction. And in those few instances when employees actually did leave Telegraph for Greenwich pastures, they rarely stayed more than a year.

Perhaps the most subtle but frustrating aspect of the competitive relationship that kept Greenwich executives awake and angry at night was the fact that Telegraph's CEO, Rich O'Connor, rarely, if ever, acknowledged Greenwich. Not during press interviews, conference speeches, or client presentations. And when a Greenwich executive occasionally met Telegraph's chief executive during an industry event, almost without fail he seemed genuinely disinterested in Greenwich and unaware of what his largest and most direct competitor was doing.

All of this would have been less frustrating had Greenwich not invested so much time and money learning about its rival. From interviews with former Telegraph employees to minor acts of legal corporate espionage, Greenwich had amassed as much knowledge about its competitor as about any of its own clients.

Still, none of the surveillance yielded anything that Greenwich could put to use.

Until now.