

A Lawyer's Guide to Social Media

By Jessica L. Berger

At first glance, the idea of managing a Twitter account, writing a blog, and managing a LinkedIn account can appear overwhelming, confusing and dispensable. It is easy to think that time is better spent billing and relying on more traditional marketing techniques than entering into the world of social media.

Yet, attorneys need to remember they can benefit from social media, and its perks are not something to be ignored. Social media has a low cost and enables attorneys to quickly connect and network with a large audience. Digital profiles and postings allow attorneys to not only market their law firms, but also their practices and, more importantly, themselves.

Gaining a large following on social media takes time and effort. But the time devoted to social media can result in new clients and a resourceful network. Notably, a recent study of AmLaw 200 conducted by LexBlog found that law firms with blogs made \$1,000,000 more in revenues than law firms without blogs. Although coincidence does not imply causation, attorneys may want to rethink how they manage their time and consider allocating a portion of their day to social media.

These **10 tips** will help ensure that your posts reach the right people in a timely fashion:

1) Ask tech-savvy attorneys for help. Tech-savvy attorneys at your firm can teach others and set-up social media accounts. These attorneys can assist you in finding people and organizations to connect with and to follow. And these tech-savvy attorneys can oversee your law firm's official social media accounts.

2) Post interesting and relevant information. Promote your firm by Tweeting and posting about your attorneys' recent publications and speaking engagements. To find relevant legal news, set-up Google Alerts and review headlines and court decisions that relate to your practice area.

3) Post to the appropriate social network. Be aware of who follows your postings on various social media outlets and then select the appropriate site to post your thoughts. If you want to share an article that you read in the Wall Street Journal, sites like Twitter or LinkedIn are appropriate. If you want dinner suggestions, Facebook is best. Remember, if the post is relevant to more than one social media outlet, then you may want to post in various places.

4) Frequently post. To get more people to click on your posts, Tweet 5 to 10 times a day and post on Facebook 1 to 4 times a day. The frequency of posting is discussed in depth at <http://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-metrics-improve>.

5) Post at the right time. People use different social media outlets at different times of the day. Recent studies have found that the best time to post on Twitter and Facebook is during weekday afternoons and that the best time to post on LinkedIn is during rush hour (7 to 9am and 5 to 6pm). To learn more about timing your posts check out <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-best-times-to-post-on-each-major-social-network-2013-5>.

6) Interact with followers and readers. A recent compilation of studies published by the Nieman Journalism Lab at Harvard University concluded that users build a stronger presence on social media outlets when they engage with their followers. Thus, just like clients who want to promptly hear from their attorneys after sending an e-mail, followers and readers like to interact with the authors that they follow.

To interact with your audience, respond to their comments and ask them questions. On Twitter users can even interact with each other with live chats. Live chats are similar to chat rooms, and they allow users to gain insight to a particular topic. You can promote the chat beforehand and then at a designated time give it a hashtag (#), which makes the live chat searchable by other users.

7) Embrace hashtags. Hashtags have always been part of Twitter and now are a part of Facebook. Hashtags allow you to combine activity across many social media outlets. Additionally, hashtags make it easy to start a conversation with anyone who is interested in a topic and attract new users.

8) Become mobile friendly. Readers and followers need to be able to easily navigate through your posts. The invention of the smartphone allows people to access the Internet from anywhere, and the smartphone is becoming increasingly popular. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project found that as of May 2013, 56 percent of American adults use smartphones and 34 percent of American adults own a tablet computer. To learn more about creating a mobile friendly blog read <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-make-your-blog-mobile-friendly/>.

9) Combine facetime with social media. The virtual world will only get you so far. Real conversations with real people in a real room are essential to establishing and maintaining relationships. Utilize sites like Meetup to find people with shared interests and plan an in-person event. Invite followers to lectures and networking events. Encourage old contacts to follow you on social media, and after meeting a new business contact, connect with them on social media and write them a personal message.

10) Conversational tones. Finally, ditch the legalese, and instead write in a conversational tone that will be easy for everyone to understand.