

Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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Are Social Media Consultants Really Necessary for Law Firms?

The short answer?

Yes.

The slightly longer answer? It depends - on the firm and its strategy, and on the consultant.

Let's talk about firms and lawyers first - some people have claimed that lawyers need consultants to explain social media tools and how to use them, while others have claimed that lawyers can figure out these tools themselves.

And that's where the "it depends" comes in. Lawyers are well-educated, intelligent individuals - they've graduated law school and passed the bar, haven't they? So they can certainly figure out these social media tools. It's not rocket science.

The better question is, *should* they spend the time doing so?

And that's where a consultant can come in - or the firm's marketing professionals. Someone who has taken the time already to learn about these tools, understands how to leverage them to develop relationships and potentially create new business, and keeps up on the ever-changing technology can distill the information for an attorney who is new to the medium and help them figure out how to use the tools and engage in a relatively short period of time.

A lawyer's time is better spent serving their clients and developing new business than learning tools that their marketing staff or a consultant has already taken the time to understand.

Additionally, a consultant can help an attorney identify what their strategy for these tools should be. Social media can be fun, it can be a time-suck, it can be educational, it can be useful for developing professional relationships, it can be useful for developing personal relationships. So it's important to figure out at the outset what you want to achieve so that a) you can identify which tools are best used to meet those goals and focus on those and b) you can streamline your efforts so that you're not doing "drive-by marketing" (aka marketing willy-nilly) without any results.



Now on to consultants. There are a lot of people out there who refer to themselves as social media "gurus" or "experts." These people scare me a bit, because social media is so new and ever-changing, so how can anyone really be an expert?

Yesterday, [a friend of mine on Twitter](#) mentioned reading a blog post (which turned out to be satirical), suggesting that people increase their "klout" score (a score which measures your influence across social media) by "stay[ing] away from people who aren't important," on Twitter and following 400 people a day, waiting a week, and then unfollowing them.

Despite this post being satirical, it seems that more than one person responded that they knew a "guru" teaching this kind of social media usage. Lawyers, if this is what you're seeing out there, I understand why you'd be reticent to work with a social media consultant.

But let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater, okay?

How can you tell a good consultant from a "guru" or "expert" (aside from whether or not they use these terms in their Twitter profile)?

1. **A good consultant will want to understand YOUR firm and YOUR practice area:** Everyone is different, everyone's goals are different, so a consultant who really wants to help you move your business forward will want to identify what is going to be a fit for YOU. They won't just want to hand you a cookie-cutter solution.
2. **A good consultant will identify where YOUR clients are:** There are a LOT of social media tools out there - Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Martindale-Hubbell Connected, Plaxo, and on and on. A good consultant will help you identify where your clients are conversing and encourage you to focus your efforts on these platforms - even if the answer is none of the above. Social media isn't right for everyone.
3. **A good consultant will show you how these tools are just a new medium for the marketing you've always been doing:** I've heard time and time again that lawyers miss the days when word of mouth marketing was the way that they developed business. This is still the case. Social media just takes word of mouth marketing online to a wider audience - it works the same way, just using technology. A good consultant recognizes this.
4. **A good consultant will talk strategy:** When I first started using social media tools a few years ago, I just jumped right in. I'm still not against this method of learning the tools, but it's more useful if you have a lot of time on your hands. A good consultant who understands your firm and practice area, as well as your goals, will help you work out a strategy that is efficient and suitable, so you don't have to spend an inordinate amount of time learning and using the tools available to you.

These good consultants exist. I promise. I actually know a couple of them.

Deciding whether you or your firm needs a social media consultant should be done on a case by case basis, but it CAN be useful. Don't let the naysayers out there scare you.

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