

Marketing Special Feature

Legal marketing in a Web 2.0 world



SECKLER

By Stephen E. Seckler and Vanessa DiMauro

Twitter, LinkedIn and other forms of social networking are getting a lot of attention these days. But if you are not sure how to integrate these tools into an overall marketing strategy, you are in good company.

Social networking is such a new phenomenon that the rules of engagement are still being written, tested and rewritten. In the meantime, if you care about building your law practice, you don't want to be sitting on the sidelines. Getting involved online should become part of your overall marketing effort.

So how can you make effective use of these tools? For starters, it is important to understand that the fundamentals of marketing professional services have not changed.

In order to lay a good foundation for generating work for your firm, you still need to:

- develop a niche;
- find ways to build your reputation around this niche; and
- spend time building trusting relationships with potential clients and referral sources.

While Web 2.0 can help in this effort, it is no substitute for getting out of your office. Web 2.0 does not obviate the need to pick up the phone and find out what your existing clients are up to; rather, it is a way to extend the conversation and keep it going over time.

Blogging and tweeting alone will not establish you as an expert, but these tools can help reinforce your reputation.

Here are 21 tips to get you going:

1. Start looking at what others are doing. Find some blogs to follow. Choose subject matter that is of interest. To find law-related blogs, check the [American Bar Association Journal's Blawg 100](#). Use Technorati or some other blog directory to search for blogs by subject. Log onto Commoncraft.com to see free instructional videos about social media.

2. Set up some "Google Alerts" that notify you when keywords appear on websites or blogs.
3. Sign up for a Twitter account and start following individuals who cover interesting subject matter. Once you identify a few people to follow, check who they follow (to identify other potential "Tweeters" to add).
4. Be a passive follower for starters. Understand the cultural norms of each medium before you jump into the fray (i.e., so you don't come across as a "foreigner").
5. Figure out your goals for using social media. Over time, this will help you decide which tools are best for you.
6. Commit 15 minutes a day to monitoring and eventually participating in your chosen social media channels. To read a lot of blogs, consider using an RSS reader like the free one provided by Google.
7. Sign up for a LinkedIn account, and invite your contacts to link to you.
8. Make sure that you create a good profile for yourself before inviting in your contacts (e.g., emphasizing those areas of expertise you want to promote).
9. Your profiles in LinkedIn, Twitter and on your firm's website should be consistent, professional and aligned with your firm's marketing strategy/message.
10. Keep all your online profiles up to date and post periodic updates on social networks to help maintain your visibility (note: this may help reporters find you).
11. Post comments on other people's blogs. If you start blogging, you can continue to do this in order to drive traffic your way.
12. Don't get overly commercial (e.g., focus on relationship building, and look for ways to be helpful).
13. Join discussion groups on LinkedIn or join a private online community designed especially for lawyers, such as Martindale Connected. Participate steadily.
14. If you blog, make sure to post relatively frequently. Quality is important, but quantity is almost as important; you are not writing a brief.
15. Find opportunities to turn virtual relationships into real relationships. Invite someone you meet to coffee (or call them on the phone if they are too far away).
16. Recycle across media (write an article for a speech, send it to your contacts by e-mail afterwards, link to it on your blog, tweet about it, etc.). You never know who is paying attention to which "channel."
17. Don't abandon e-mail. It is still a good way to send messages to specific individuals.
18. Be interesting, entertaining (in an appropriate way) and have a point of view. People have short attention spans.
19. Measure your results and evolve your strategy based on outcomes. Use Google analytics and other measurement tools to evaluate what is working.
20. Be patient. Social media success takes time and persistence. Participate for at least six months before expecting significant returns.



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21. Be aware of your ethical responsibilities (e.g., don't inadvertently create attorney/client relationships or reveal client confidences), but don't let this awareness create paralysis. Marketing is the opposite of practicing law. Lawyers ask: "What might go wrong?" Marketers ask: "What opportunities might I create?"

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