



## How to Find Time for Social Media Engagement and Be a Lawyer, Too (Pt.1)

Written on March 17, 2010 by Donna Seyle

Social Media has many parts, and is a topic entirely too big to capture in one blog post. So this will be a series of posts regarding social media engagement, and how it can promote your firm. **DISCLAIMER:** I am not a marketing professional, and don't intend to offer a professional marketing strategy here. This is a discussion of how to integrate social media into your work life, and to understand the value, both personally and professionally, of this new level of engagement that creates promotion for you and your firm.

I'm going to start with blogging, because I believe it is the cornerstone of social media engagement. In the legal community, there are several kinds of bloggers: those who blog as a publishing vehicle, those who blog for marketing purposes, and those who blend the two together. All are useful, and appeal to different audiences. But the one thing they have in common is they all take time.

Before you blog:

1. **Educate yourself.** Be prepared to spend some extra time up front to learn how to make your blog posts productive. The most useful and knowledgeable sites I have found are: [blogforprofit.com](http://blogforprofit.com), [remarkablogger.com](http://remarkablogger.com), [probblogger.net](http://probblogger.net) and [copyblogger.com](http://copyblogger.com). But don't get overwhelmed. You don't need to integrate all of the ideas they offer all at once. Start out using as much of their advice as you can, and grow from there.
2. **Create a strategy.** Be sure to define your target audience and determine the best way to reach them. Either research online or consult with a marketing coach to create your marketing strategy. There are lots of free and paid webinars available at the [International Social Media Association](http://International Social Media Association), [Social Media Today](http://Social Media Today), [MyLegal](http://MyLegal), and many more. Also check out my page [Social Media Presents: Free Webinars](#) to find listed marketing webinars.
3. **You don't have to blog if you don't want to.** In social media marketing, there are two different schools of thought about the necessity of blogging as part of your marketing strategy. Some believe you **MUST** blog, and that your blog is the basis from which the rest of your strategy spans out. Others believe that blogs are simply not necessary. Engaging and contributing in social media networks, along with other marketing strategies, is sufficient. Obviously, I'm in the first camp, and think blogging is the best marketing basis if you really want to get your message(s) out.
4. **Find the personal blogging style that works for you.** If you're a bullet-point kind of writer, that's the perfect format to use for marketing blogging. It's very popular and viral. People love to receive information in a quick and easy style, much like the [The Week](#) magazine (my husband calls it the ADD News). But if you like the analytic, in-depth approach, go for it. There's a large audience for that too, particularly in the legal industry.

OK, that's your upfront work. The time you've taken on those steps will enable you to develop a system. Developing a system in turn enables you to find time.

1. **Create an editorial calendar.** Decide how many times a week you're going to blog. Yes, that means one blog post per week minimum. Preferably more if you can manage it. Anything less than once a week disappates your momentum and loses your audience. In scheduling your blogging activities, start with publish day and work backwards. And don't try to fit in more than one blogging activity per day. It will become a huge chore and you have too many money-making activities to engage in each day.
2. **Finding topics.** Get into the habit of seeing everything as a potential blog topic. Think: what are my clients' concerns? What do they ask me on any given day? A question in a case you just researched may be valuable information to potential clients. Go to sites like [nolo.com](http://nolo.com), [Avvo.com](http://Avvo.com) and many others to discover what questions your potential clients are asking. Join [JDSupra.com](http://JDSupra.com) premium membership. Among the many, many benefits of membership, they will email you a list of "trending topics" in your practice areas that can keep you blogging for weeks. Often as you research, you come up with lots of posting ideas. Begin a folder in your document folder called "Blogging Topics" and record them there. Just get these habits on your harddrive (the one in your head). This takes less time than the time you waste hanging around the coffee lounge, with the side health benefit of cutting down your coffee consumption.
3. **Write an outline.** I know, I hate them too. Actually, I don't use them, and it takes me more time to write a post than I dare admit. But an outline does several things: it forces you to be specific about your topic, organize your materials and references so you know where your information is coming from, and approach your topic in logical sequence. An outline can take up to an hour, but it cuts your writing time in half. Do this at least one day before your editorial calendar says "write your blog post." And be sure to schedule this on your daily calendar.
4. **Write your post.** Take a breath. Then look at your outline. Start writing immediately. Use your outline title as the title of the post. You can always go back and change it if you think of a better one, or it doesn't quite capture the gist of the final product. But the point is to write. Take each line of the outline and expand. Once you've gotten to the end, go back and edit as necessary. This should take you no longer than one hour. Schedule this for one or more days before your publish date, and enter the time on your work calendar also.
5. **Check your keywords and test your links.** You need to do the SEO thing. Keywords, tags, SEO title and description are essential. Or, you can save yourself a lot of effort and join [ScribeSEO.com](http://ScribeSEO.com), which does all it for you. And don't forget those links, both inbound and outbound. Look at how many links I've included in this post. They were important to the content, but they're also important to the SEO. I just created all my links in 20 minutes.

So there it is, a maximum of 3 hours per week for the most labor-intensive part of your social media engagement. Requires some discipline and a little chunk of time out of a couple of days. Is it for you? Think about it!