

Top Twenty Social Media Rules for Engagement

1. Your firm's malpractice insurance may [eventually] require a policy. A qualified individual or an attorney who is insured against omissions should write that policy.
2. Know and follow the ABA and the applicable states' Bar Rules and Codes of Professional Conduct as concerns commercial speech and client confidentiality.
3. Don't give legal advice. Speak about the issues of law generally and factually.
4. Go to privacy settings FIRST when signing on to a new service. Default settings are often WIDE OPEN.
5. Identify yourself—name and, when relevant, role at your law firm—when you post on the social Web.
6. When you discuss the law firm or law firm-related matters, write in the first person. Clearly state that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the law firm. The firm's traditional media policy should apply.
7. Individuals are personally responsible for the content they publish on any form of user-generated media. What is published will be public for a long time—protect your firm's good reputation. Cache is a reality. Google has a long-term memory.
8. Content that is published to any website (blog) that is related to the work you do, or related to subjects associated with firm clients, partners or staff, should use a disclaimer.
9. Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws.
10. Don't criticize the judiciary in any way.
11. Don't provide confidential or other proprietary information.
12. Always secure permission to publish or report on conversations that bear the assumption of privacy or are internal to the law firm or its clients.
13. Don't cite or reference clients, partners or suppliers without their approval.
14. Generally speaking, all references, where possible, must link back to the source.
15. Respect audiences. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory—such as politics and religion.
16. Be aware of associations in online social networks. If identified as an employee or partner of the law firm, ensure the profile, connections, and related content is consistent with how you want to present yourself with colleagues and clients.
17. Don't instigate fights. If you post inaccurate materials and learn of it, be the first to correct your own mistakes. If possible, do a strike out of the error, don't delete it, and give credit to the individual that contributed the correct information. (Social Web Etiquette)
18. Let your overall goal be one of adding value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective; the law firm's brand is best represented by its people, what you publish may reflect on your law firm's brand.
19. Do not use the firm logo without permission from the marketing department.
20. Launch your new policy within the context of an educational session. Every employee of the firm should participate-in person, via video, Web seminar or podcast. Keep a video presentation on hand for new employee orientation.