

# Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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### Webinar Re-cap: Social Networking Strategy & Blogging with Kevin O'Keefe, LexBlog



The ILN has offered a webinar series to our members for the past two years, and in 2010, we're offering a three-part series on social networking. Wednesday kicked off our first webinar in the series, "Social Networking Strategy & Blogging," with [Kevin O'Keefe](#) of [LexBlog](#).

After a short introduction from ILN's Executive Director, [Alan Griffiths](#), Kevin treated the audience to an overview of social networking strategy and blogging. He shared his experience with getting involved with the internet and what it has meant for him, in order to give the audience some context for the presentation and the benefit of his experience.

The bulk of Kevin's presentation focused on how lawyers can be successful using social networking tools and why good lawyers tend to gravitate towards using these types of tools. He began by talking about how few people trust advertising - only 14% - and most law firms on the internet are advertising with their websites.

He added that a website is necessary for law firms as one point of contact, but said that it doesn't do much for the firm's word of mouth reputation. He likened it to bringing potential clients to see a billboard and expecting that to encourage them to hire their law firm. For this reason, Kevin said that using social networking tools to drive traffic to the firm's website is not an effective use of the tools.

In today's world, people are getting most of their information not from newspapers, but from people they trust both offline and online. Kevin suggested that lawyers need to be thinking "how do I become trusted as a source of information."

He made the point that people don't join sites like LinkedIn and Facebook to have information pushed at them, so he cautioned the audience not to be a distribution source, which people would see as offensive and not valuable or helpful. Instead, he said that they should be looking for what would be helpful to their audience instead of just talking about themselves.

One of the main reasons to use social media is for professional growth. Kevin said that if he asked the bloggers in the LexBlog network what the biggest surprises about blogging have been, they would say that it takes time

and the growth that they've experienced and what they've learned. They read more, they engage with more thought leaders and meet wonderful people in their area of the law.

Kevin added that the best lawyers don't have a problem getting work - they don't have to market themselves. But professional growth is as important, if not more so, than marketing and business development. The ability to network and meet more people than you could meet otherwise, to nurture relationships with existing clients are the great benefits of using the social networking medium for business development growth.

Although there are many questions about tools, Kevin said that talking about them is irrelevant. He likened it to telling lawyers which car to drive to networking events and said that principles are more important than tools. He focused on the following key principles:

1. **Engage:** It's all about building relationships with people - this is how work comes in. How do you engage through a blog post? Let your clients and prospective clients know that you're listening to them and that you're responding to the things that keep them up at night.

Also engage with influencers by referencing them and their stories in your blog posts. Do that with reporters and other bloggers. This leads to building relationships with them, which leads to them seeing you as a trusted source and then using your name and information to help build your reputation as an information source. Kevin pointed out that it's much more influential to see someone else's endorsement of trust and to get those, you have to engage the influencers.

2. **Networking:** Kevin recommended networking in focused ways instead of trying to network with everyone. One of the ways he recommended doing this is through an RSS reader. He said 15% of people in the US use RSS readers because they're too busy to get information in other ways.

He doesn't believe that it's too complicated and said that if a lawyer can use LexisNexis, they can use an RSS reader. LexBlog can train lawyers to use them and find the right information, or they can Google "What is a Google reader?" For busy people, an RSS reader is a time saving way of consuming content. Kevin also suggested that lawyers monitor their own names.

3. **Relationships:** As I have said before, [it's all about relationships](#). Kevin said that years ago, telephones used to be in the back of law offices and only young kids were the ones using them. But the senior lawyers began to use them to build and maintain their relationships. Social media tools are no different.

He likened it to pool balls on a pool table - you don't know which ones will go in, but you have to knock them around until one does.

4. **Word of Mouth:** Kevin said that there are good lawyers who use Twitter, and used the example of a lawyer in his sixties, who began using Twitter as a way to keep up on cycling. He started to connect with cyclists and they turned into potential clients. He built relationships with them and at the same time, built a word of mouth reputation.

Kevin pointed out that directories, email alerts and websites are not building relationships with people. He said that when people are sitting around a conference table talking about their internet presence and business development, they never talk about engaging and listening better. They talk about web stats. But word of mouth reputation is what's important.

5. **Strategy:** Building a word of mouth reputation this must be done with a strategy - if a lawyer is going to network, he or she needs to think about how to engage clients and potential clients, as well as influencers like bloggers, authors, and conference coordinators. For example, blogging about an event in your industry and sharing it with your readers in order to add value is blogging strategically.

6. **Social Media Equity:** When using social media, Kevin said it's important to be thinking about how you build social media equity. To earn this, he said you give of yourself and share the things you see. He said it's not about pushing blog posts out through Twitter. Automatically updating Facebook and LinkedIn through Twitter is the opposite of building social media equity.

Instead, it's about sharing information. People will then come to appreciate that you're a trusted resource on the information that you're sharing. Then a blog post you write might be on Twitter because someone in your network shares it. It's much better when someone else shares your content. Once people trust you, it's a small step to being hired.

Kevin again emphasized the importance of listening. He said that blogging takes a lot less time when you listen. It's not an every day activity, and it's okay to get only two or three blog comments in a month. The important thing is listening, building relationships and having other people share your content. He said that sharing information is a great way to blog and shows that you stay up to speed on the issues that matter. Sharing information also demonstrates to clients that you're thinking about them, when they think you're not. It also gives them the ability to share your information. Kevin emphasized that social networking is about having a conversation and that updates on the law alone don't provide value. The goal isn't to become the definitive source on something; it's to engage, offer value, become known, develop a reputation and develop relationships. To do this, you have to go to where the people are. When you're invited somewhere, you don't say no, we don't go out. You go.

Kevin said that the great thing about social media is that no one knows what they're doing. He said that he's just a guy thinking about how to use this for business and he measures his success by how many people he can help, not how many visitors he gets to his website.

He told the audience not to be afraid of the tools and wait for the bar to pass regulations about them. Just get out there and offer value.

Kevin said that the tools that they want to think about using are the ones that offer the most value. His suggestions in order were:

- **An RSS reader:** It's your ears to what's going on.
- **LinkedIn:** He said that LinkedIn is way underutilized and attorneys should be joining groups, answering questions and using the search function to look people up by title and zip code.
- **Blogging:** The key to this is FLEE: Find (the right audience), Listen (to questions and influencers), Engage, Empower (them to share information)
- **Twitter:** Don't use this to share your own information, but share other people's information. Kevin's been able to develop a network of 9,000 followers on Twitter because they trust him to share information.

Kevin challenged the audience to be leaders and not followers. In order to do this, you'll have to try some things out and just be a leader.

He added that LexBlog is able to do more detailed webinars for law firms if they're interested. At the end of the webinar, there were a few questions from the audience. The first two were whether Kevin would recommend that a firm have individual blogs, or law firm blogs and how lawyers can manage their work and do all of this social media work.

To answer the first question, Kevin said that there isn't a right or wrong way to blog. There are some group blogs that law firms have that are very successful because individuals bring together the interests that they have. He added that bloggers are cited individually most of the time and said that there are also very successful blogs written solely by one attorney.

In terms of time management, Kevin said that it depends. Social networking doesn't need to be an every day activity, but in the beginning, it takes more time. He said that it worked the same way for him, figuring things out over time. He said that bloggers can do amazing things in three to four hours a week or less. About 40% of blogs are updated once a week, and using an RSS reader saves time in getting information.

There was another question about whether firms should blog in multiple languages. Kevin said that there are bloggers out there doing this, and that it makes sense in some cases.

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