

Your Personal Brand vs Your Corporate Brand – Added Clarity for Legal Marketers

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During a lecture I recently gave to a group of aspiring entrepreneurs at New York's City College, I spoke with the students about creating their online platforms, being responsible for their online personalities and managing their reputation.

In the conversation I had with them, I spoke about how they can start to build their on-line reputations as an entity within their chosen professions, well before they're ready to enter the work force. I also talked to them about the risks involved, and the responsibility they have in managing their reputations as responsible business people, and I wanted to talk about the issues of *co-branding* here as well.

Let's take a look one of my favorite legal bloggers, author, IP attorney, and principal of Houchin & Associates, P.C. , Kevin Houchin. If you review Kevin's [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) pages or his blog, [The Business of Creativity](#), you'll see a distinct dichotomy between Kevin Houchin the individual and his law firm, Houchin Law. Kevin's personality is evident all over the place, and how much the people following him appreciate it.



I asked Kevin a couple of brief questions about his experiences using social media:

How has your methodology of incorporating your personal and corporate brand impacted your business?

I've been blogging for years, which has created dozens of new clients because my Web site is more helpful than most attorney sites – it's not all about me and how smart I am (like most lawyer sites) – it's about them and how helpful I might be to them in their situation.

I've been told that I was selected specifically because I'm not pictured in the corporate style – that I come off as human and approachable. My target clients like that. They like that I'm a normal guy that happens to be a lawyer instead of some stuffed shirt sitting in paternalistic judgement of how dumb they must be to have gotten into a situation where they need my help.

From Blogging to Social Media

LinkedIn hasn't really brought me much, but you have to be there - it's just not my niche and I don't have as much fun on that site personally. It's like a corporate job fair and I never liked those in real life...

Facebook has deepened my relationships with friends, colleagues and clients around the world, and has brought me into contact with several clients.

Twitter blows the roof off things! *It's speed networking on crack.* It provides access to people that would otherwise never return a call or email. In the 7 months I've been on Twitter my reputation has flourished and my network has increased incredibly. Twitter is directly responsible for at least a dozen new clients – probably more.

Now things are getting integrated, so it's hard to tell what created what, but Twitter has led directly to new client contact, several PR opportunities including speaking, writing, and interviews and those PR events lead to more clients. The forward to my most recent book was written by a Twitter/Facebook contact and that has led to some really wonderful friendships and opportunities. The results have truly been "priceless"!

Have you gotten any negative feedback your fellow legal marketers?

No, they want to know how to do it themselves, but usually they aren't willing to put themselves out there.

There's nothing more personal than a person

The social web thrives on personality and authenticity, ie: mixing a "personal touch" with a professional service. When Kevin talks about life and business on his blog, it makes him not only a person, but a qualified attorney with a fulfilling personal life and commitment to humanity.

The Road To Co-branding

I realize that for some legal marketers, the idea of the melding of our personalities with the companies and brands we work for is really scary. Which means you'll need to figure out how the balance works. In it's simplest form, the phenomenon will look like "co-branding," two brands coming together toward a common goal.

As you spend intimate time in this space (I am a full time employee for Critical Mass) the dance is delicate. It requires an understanding that the arrangement can be mutually beneficial along with a comfort level of the space

Will there be risks? Of course there will, and Kevin brilliantly puts these concerns into perspective:

Lawyers live and work in a world saturated with the fear of what could go wrong. Our ethics rules are ultra-conservative, and many lawyers live in fear of some obscure ethics violation, so they're afraid to share their lives.

Additionally, I think many lawyers live in fear that people will find out that they don't know everything – they're not as smart as they like to make people think and that being found human, fallible, and something less than all-knowing will hurt their business, when in fact, the opposite is probably more true.

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Kara works with legal marketers to create a more clearly defined focus and distinctive business strategy that will provide them with a competitive advantage for new business, higher reputation recognition, and enhance their ability to attract, win, and retain the clients they really want.