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Promote your practice through social media

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Online identities are becoming increasingly important in the Web 2.0 world in which we live, along with the need to understand how to use social media to promote a law practice and manage online identities.

The Internet no longer is a quaint phenomenon, but rather an integral part of our daily lives, and the lives of our clients. People turn to the Internet for information, advice and social connections.

Career counselors were among the first to recognize the importance of responsibly utilizing social media and social networking to further one's career. They continue to be at the forefront of the movement.

The Rochester Institute of Technology's Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services, for example, recently hosted a program for alumni that focused on social networking and managing online identities. At that presentation, I served as moderator for a technologically astute panel of knowledgeable local professionals: Juli Klie, president of Veritor LLC and co-founder of Digital Rochester; Greg Taylor, the managing partner of Excelsior Search Partners, a recruiting firm; and Steven Tylock, author of "The LinkedIn Personal Trainer."

A number of the panelists said they believed a LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) presence is the cornerstone of a professional online identity. Others, myself included, recommended the use of other types of online social media platforms, such as Facebook (www.facebook.com), Twitter (www.twitter.com) and blogs. All participants agreed each platform has unique benefits, depending on a user's goal — obtain a job, promote a business or network with other professionals.

The legal profession slowly, but surely, is beginning to realize the importance of an effective online presence. When I began my first legal blog, "Sui Generis," in 2005, only one other Rochester-based law blog existed. Since that time, a number of Rochester lawyers now blog. Two local law firms entered the blogging scene within the last year. Attorney Alexander Korotkin publishes the "Rochester



Family Lawyer" (rochesterfamilylawyer.korotkin-law.com/), which discusses recent state family law decisions and provides practical advice for clients and lawyers alike.

The newly established law firm Easton, Thompson Kasperek LLC recently joined the blogosphere as well. Its "New York Criminal Defense" blog (newyorkcriminaldefense.blogspot.com/) provides insightful commentary and analysis regarding New York appellate criminal law decisions from some of the most experienced criminal defense attorneys in Rochester.

Another lawyer, Elizabeth Randisi, who is associated with the Rochester law firm WeinsteinMurphy, posts regularly at "Sui Generis" (nylawblog.typepad.com) regarding trusts and estates and elder law issues.

Local lawyer Gregory Bell, an editor at Thomson Reuters, blogs about law and technology at "Practicing Law in the 21st Century" (21stcenturylaw.wordpress.com/) and also about blogs and another passion of his, the local Rochester jazz scene, at "Jazz@Rochester" (www.jazzrochester.com).

Blogs are not the only way to create an online presence, but maintaining an online identity, in one form or another, should be the crux of any law practice's marketing plan. People no longer reach for the Yellow Pages when they need an attorney. Instead, they ask friends for advice and seek information on the Internet. If your firm does not have an online presence that is easily located, without a doubt you are losing potential clients left and right.

Promoting a law practice online is a no-brainer. It's easy to create and manage an online presence using any one of the many free or low cost online platforms I've discussed. I assure you, the minimal monetary and time investment will be well worth the effort in the end.

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