



Legal Blogging in the 21st Century One Practitioner's Perspective

by Jessica S. Grigsby on 03/04/11

My idea for blogging sprung from a personal injury attorney television commercial I had seen as a child – a very lawyerly looking man in an expensive suit explaining how insurance companies had lawyers working hard on their side, and so should accident victim. I was struck by how unlike that guy I was...and still am. First off, I'm a female personal injury attorney. Secondly, I haven't been fighting insurance companies for the entirety of my adult life. And finally and perhaps most importantly, the conception of the personal injury attorney on T.V. seemed so stilted to me. That man in the commercial was to be the accident victim's voice, but he resembled a sort of attorney-robot without a voice of his own. That man wasn't going to listen to a client's injuries and personal woes, kindly explain the litigation process and what happens at a deposition, or frame interrogatories 150-307 in plain and understandable English. I secretly believed that man on T.V. had a button on his back that made his arms move when he spoke. And so it is with so many lawyer websites; they are flush with statistics of their results and impressive qualifications, but not once do they ever enlighten the client/consumer as to what it is they actually do!

My blog started as just that: a telling of what I do throughout my day with a mix of information on personal injury topics that are commonly asked or misunderstood. Blogging is not eloquent or over-edited. Blogging is free-flowing, creative and often messy – going deep into those places we lawyers fear to tread. As a logical, rule-based and organized bunch, it can be hard for us to appear...well, human. Those framed diplomas on our walls have become our safety-blanket, acting to insulate us from the world of non-lawyers around us. This is both a blessing and curse. I noticed through my blogging that clients have reached out to me more, and eye me less suspiciously with the advice I provide.

Soon after I began blogging I discovered another of its unexpected benefits. Not only was I reaching my client community, but I was also communicating with other lawyers. In a profession where contention and litigation are goals, not behavior modifying obstacles, lawyering can be a lonely enterprise. Through my blog I found others who had similar experiences, failures and triumphs. Blogging is networking in a way that provides valuable and “real” information. For example, I can hand someone my card and tell them to call me if they ever need a personal injury attorney. But what does that card tell them? Nothing more than I work for a firm that has a nice sense of style and color palate. However, they can read my blog and in a few minutes have a true sense of who I am and the services I provide. The referential impact of blogging is limitless. I frequently read legal blogs of all different practice backgrounds and I learn about trends in the practice area, but also about the lawyer’s actual experiences – something, we all know was never taught in law school.

In a profession with an astounding 18% instance of drug and alcohol abuse, blogging can also be a cathartic and stress relieving venture. Although every week or so I wander around the office grumbling about having to set aside the time to blog when I have pressing (if not looming) litigation deadlines, I find once I commit to the writing, I achieve personal satisfaction unparalleled in my day-to-day practice. Being able to blog about that petty, underhanded motion to compel opposing counsel just served on me allows me to blow off some steam and refocus my energies on other more important things. Invariably I receive an email or call from someone who has had an identical experience – sometimes with the same opposing counsel.

The simple truth is, that undertaking the task of finding something to blog about forces me to focus my energies upon that particular subject. The chaos of the day is distilled down into a one-page entry, and I have to make myself a specialist on that particular topic. The real work and the healing property of blogging lies not in what is actually written, but in the thought and care it takes to decide what it is that is worth writing about. So, although I began my blog to provide information to clients regarding what it is I do for them, along the way I discovered that my blog reminds me that there is meaning behind what I do in the day-to-day grind.

