

Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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Highlights of the ILN's Social Media Member Survey



With social media gaining in popularity and importance, the ILN felt that investigating the usage and interest in social media among its mid-sized member firms would be a useful exercise.

In October through December 2010, the ILN distributed the Mid-Sized Firm Social Media Survey via email to member firm attorney around the world. Respondents included managing partners, equity partners, shareholders, associates, and marketing professionals.

Overall, the research revealed that while some firms have jumped on the social media bandwagon, others are still questioning its usefulness as a professional tool for business development.

Notably, the majority of firms were not using social media, and use of social media tools for professional reasons and as a source of news and information was fairly

limited.

The results of this survey are particularly interesting when viewed in light of [Greentarget](#), [ALM](#) and [Zeughauser Group](#)'s survey of corporate counsel in the [Corporate Counsel New Media Engagement Survey](#).

This survey revealed that corporate counsel are increasingly using blogs, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. According to the survey results:

Almost half of the survey's respondents use LinkedIn and 68 percent use Facebook, although, for the time-being, the latter primarily for personal instead of professional reasons. Blogs are an increasingly preferred mechanism for obtaining business and legal industry information, and among the most surprising findings of the research: corporate counsel are now getting more of their business- and legal-industry-related information online than from traditional print sources."

This suggests that if clients are flocking to social media tools to get information and engage with professionals, outside counsel should be similarly looking to these tools to connect with their clients and potential clients. There is a significant opportunity out there, particularly for smaller firms who are looking to level the playing field. Notably, the smaller firms in our survey were more likely to think that social media was less important.

Additionally, firms are missing the opportunity to measure their results, track leads and define goals by not having a social media plan in place. Goals identified in a social media plan, followed with training, can assist with a firm's concerns over the message being communicated, the amount of time employees spend on social networking while in the office, and how to handle any miscommunication put out through social media tools.

Although our survey was only answered by 90 respondents, their answers can provide value and insight into the mid-sized firms' thoughts on social media.

Highlights of the Mid-Sized Firm Social Media Survey

Social Media Importance and Use by Individual Attorneys

- 69 percent of respondents see social media as "very" or "somewhat important."
- When broken down by firm size, smaller firms are less likely to consider social media to be of importance to law firms (56%). For firms with more than 50 attorneys, the numbers are fairly similar for perceived importance of social media.
- Respondents considered LinkedIn to be the most important site for law firms (57%), while they thought Twitter was the least valuable (42%).
- Respondents ranked legal industry websites (68%), general business media (54%), and legal industry trades (50%) as their top three most frequently used news and information sources.
- The social networking tools that respondents most frequently used for professional reasons are LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter (despite Twitter being identified as the "least valuable" tool for law firms).
- The social networking tools that respondents most frequently use for personal reasons are Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

- Despite blogs gaining "broader acceptance as credible sources of information," a "theme that...resurface[s] throughout [Greentarget's] analysis," [Greentarget Corporate Counsel New Media Engagement Survey] they were visited by the attorneys in our survey for professional reasons far less frequently than Facebook.
- Not surprisingly, those under 30 have the highest use of social media for professional reasons in the last 24 hours and we see notable spikes in Facebook usage for professional reasons among 30-39 and 50-59 (25% and 22% respectively). Additionally, usage of LinkedIn for professional reasons spikes dramatically among those in the 60+ age group.
- 72 percent of respondents use social media tools for attorney networking and 52 percent use these tools to engage with clients.

Firm Use of Social Media

- Firms with 151 attorneys or more are focusing more on raising the firm's brand/visibility through social media than smaller firms. Among the smaller firms, greater emphasis was placed on raising personal brand/visibility.
- Smaller firms are also using social media to test new marketing initiatives, whereas firms larger than 100 attorneys are not doing so at all. Similar results are seen for recruitment.
- 51 percent of respondents said that their firm does not have a presence in online social networks.
- However, 77 percent said their firms maintain an online presence on LinkedIn, 46 percent of respondents' firms maintain an online presence on Martindale-Hubbell Connected and 31 percent on Twitter.
- Only a small percentage of firms have a social media policy (23%), but as firm size increases, so does the likelihood of a firm having a social media policy.
- 17 percent of firms are tracking social networking leads and 66 percent of the attorneys surveyed belong to firms that are not measuring the return on investment from social networking.

For the full report and results, please click [here](#).

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