

Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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ILN Conference Re-Cap: Social Networking - Why it May Matter to You

I had the good fortune of presenting to our members at the 2010 ILN Regional Meeting of the Americas on Social Networking and why it may matter to our attorneys. I began by taking an informal poll of the room to see how many in the audience were regularly using social networking sites (I clarified that by "regularly," I meant logging in once a week and connecting with someone in their network in some way). It was a fairly small number - about 15-20% of the audience.

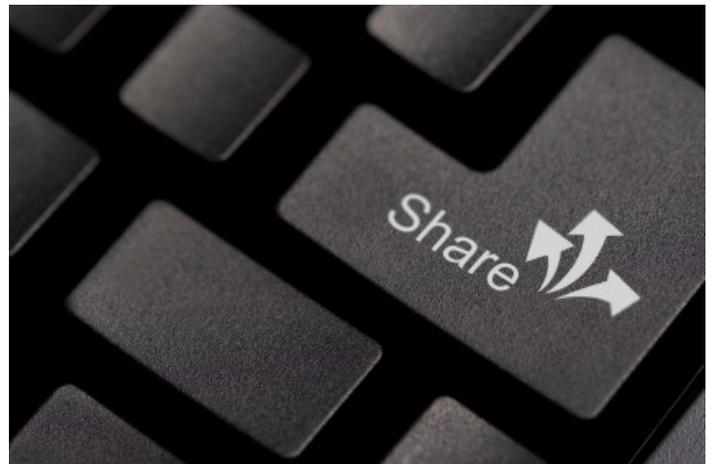
Though social networking is a hot topic, there are still many attorneys who question how it can be useful to them in business development at all, so I gave them a few reasons why, starting with American Lawyer Media, Zeughauser Group & Greentarget's [recent survey](#) of in-house counsel. I mentioned two important points for them that came out of the survey:

- Blogs are an increasingly preferred mechanism for obtaining business and legal related industry information.
- Corporate counsel are getting more of their business and legal related industry information online than from traditional print sources.

I also mentioned that the survey showed that in-house counsel are using blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to get their information and judge law firms.

In house counsel still rely primarily on referrals from trusted sources and credentialing activity to choose their outside counsel - and I venture to say that this will always be the case. But they're increasingly taking blog posts and tweets into consideration.

Since the audience might not have been convinced by a survey among corporate counsel, I thought I'd share with them a success story from [Jayne Navarre's](#) new book, [social.lawyer: Transforming Business Development](#), so that they could see how social networking is working for other business lawyers.



[Glenn Manishin](#), an IP and Technology lawyer for Duane Morris in Washington, DC, is a pioneer in the synthesis of law and technology. He's the only attorney of record for two major antitrust cases, the US v. AT&T and the US v. Microsoft. Glenn told Jayne that through his social networking, blogging, and the use of Twitter, he has landed six clients in the past twelve months directly from his online activity.

In Jayne's book, there are many more success stories just like these, but I cautioned the audience that those of us who have embraced social media don't see it as a silver bullet - just another marketing tool to be considered. I told the audience that those who have found success in social media emphasize that it takes work and requires personality - just like any other business development activity.

And like other business development efforts, social media is about engagement (as Kevin O'Keefe said in [his blog post](#), it's about developing relationships - I fully agree). The point of being involved with these tools is to show people in the industry, from clients and potential clients, as well as journalists who can get media mentions, who attorneys are and why they're good at what they do.

I shared with the audience that the lawyers who have been successful in social media stress that shouting the highlights of resumes, exhaustive lists of services and accolades, or posting press releases to Twitter and Facebook is not the proper approach to online business development.

Instead, they should be figuring out how to add value to communities, start conversations and initiate relationships. I used Kevin O'Keefe's example of sitting next to a general counsel on a plane - you wouldn't just throw your brochures at him or list awards and articles. As an attorney, you would listen to him, try to identify his needs, and talk to him about the ways that you can help. Social networking tools should be used similarly.

I concluded by telling the audience that I understand that there are a lot of tools out there, and a lot of opinions on how to use them, but they shouldn't be overwhelmed. I offered to help them identify which tools might be beneficial to them, or to put them in touch with other social media consultants in the legal industry who could also walk them through the appropriate tools.

There were a couple of questions from the audience, one of which I'll address in a separate post tomorrow. One of the attorneys in the audience asked how many ILN members are on Twitter. I estimated it at about thirty, including individual attorneys and firms - I had mentioned to the audience that I had created [a list of these attorneys and firms](#).

I mentioned to the audience that Twitter, and other social media tools, allow people to see a user's professional and personal side, which makes them more accessible to clients and potential clients.

Peter Altieri added his personal experience with blogging at Epstein Becker & Green. He said that the firm has eight or nine active blogs through LexBlog. Some of the blogs are written by individuals, while others are written by practice group teams.

He co-heads the Non-Compete group, which [has a blog](#) that they publish to once a week. They try to find current cases around the country, and the blog authors are from the firm's offices nationally. He said that he's found that when he goes out to market himself, and people want to know if he's really an expert in that area, the blog is helpful. He said although litigators can do anything and everything, it helps to have a niche area when marketing.

Altieri said that he's had positive experiences through the blog, and talked about a significant financial services company in Iowa that learned about them through their blog. They had invited them to be part of a beauty contest, and although they weren't chosen for that piece of work, the general counsel has continued to call on them on almost a monthly basis for other matters.

He added that another thing that blog authors can do through LexBlog is to see who subscribes to the blog - he said that through LexBlog, they can very inexpensively maintain their blog. LexBlog does all the heavy lifting and provides the authors with reports on how many people have accessed the blog and who subscribes.

Altieri said that keeping track of who is subscribing can help you to see when general counsel are subscribing and reading the posts monthly. He said that this is an opportunity to reach out and make contact. Altieri added that he's finding that he has some general counsel in their thirties, and clearly the next generation is going to be more in tune with getting their information and making and maintaining relationships online. He encouraged all the attorneys to be thinking about this daily.

Alan Griffiths added that Kevin O'Keefe is a wonderful resource, and in addition to providing a great product, would be willing to talk to the attorneys about how to approach social networking, and blogging in particular.

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