

# Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

PUBLISHED BY

Lindsay Griffiths



## Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

Posted at 7:38 AM on April 12, 2011 by Lindsay Griffiths

### Effectively Leveraging Social Media as a Business Development & Marketing Tool - An LMA Recap



You may not be surprised to learn that during the 2011 Legal Marketing Association Annual Conference, I attended the session on Effectively Leveraging Social Media as a Business Development & Marketing Tool. And it was definitely a valuable session.

The panel was moderated by [Josh Fruchter](#), Principal at eLawMarketing, and featured [Melanie Green](#), Director of Business Development & Marketing at Baker Daniels, [Andrea Stimmel](#), Business Development Director, Curtis, Mallet-

Prevost, Colt & Mosle, and [Russell Thomas](#), Director of Media & Public Relations at Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice.

The panel began by asking who in the room worked at a firm that was tweeting, had a Facebook page, a LinkedIn profile, or blogs - the majority of the room was in this category. Law firms lean more towards LinkedIn than Facebook based on the show of hands in the room, though a few of those on Twitter said they felt Facebook had value as well.

The panel had crowdsourced questions from the attendees in advance of the session through the LMA Conference's LinkedIn group, and the panel was built around this.

#### How to Gain Buy-In from Your Attorneys on the Value of Social Media Outlets & Ways in Which They Can Use it for Clients

The first question asked how marketers can gain buy-in from their attorneys on the value of social media outlets, and the ways in which



they can use it for clients. Melanie said that marketers should start by leveraging content, understand the tools first themselves, and then get buy-in. Marketers should show their attorneys how social media intersects with their world by focusing on relevant posts and finding thought leaders - this makes it applicable to the lawyers and their relationships.

Melanie suggested using social media tools for business development research as well - when the tools are worked into your process, it makes them more familiar, and therefore, easier to get buy-in.

Andrea suggested finding someone in the firm to be your champion - this helps to make social media less taboo. Russell said that Womble Carlyle is very aggressive in terms of being sales-oriented, so they are ahead of the curve with social media. They worked to identify targets first, then they take them to market with social media. Their use of social media all flows out of a targeted marketing and sales plan.

Another way to help gain buy-in is to look at the metrics for social media and show them to the attorneys in house. A great example of this is the [Greentarget Corporate Counsel survey](#), which will show the attorneys how in-house counsel are using social media, and why they should be too.

The panel recommended helping the attorneys to understand how social media impacts the practice of law as well, and not just business development. They also emphasized that it's important that the attorneys take ownership of social media - to get them to do this, use an individual approach in your plans. For example, focus on a niche area of the law.



### **Social Media: Is it Being Social or Sharing Content?**

Once you have buy-in, the second stage is getting the attorneys to share content. Marketers should show their attorneys where their clients and target audiences are online - this can be a great example of the value of social media which will encourage them to engage. Russell commented that referrals are where most business comes from, and social media is a referral medium.

Melanie said that her team started small - when you start smaller with an individual approach, you can then share successes to get wider buy-in. Creating a social media policy can also help to ease fears - use this to educate and help your attorneys to become more comfortable with social media. [Jon Holden](#) commented on Twitter that "education has to be a continuous thing," and with social media changing so quickly, I would agree wholeheartedly.

Some of the panelists felt that marketers should be the ones to start with the first stage of social media involvement on behalf of their attorneys - they can upload their contacts and build their

profiles for them. Others feel that the attorneys should be entirely responsible for their social media involvement. Andrea said that she isn't monitoring or maintaining the attorneys' LinkedIn profiles on an ongoing basis.

If attorneys are unsure where to start with social media, Andrea suggested that they share what they know - say good things about clients. Melanie said that not all lawyers should engage in social media - it's not right for everyone. Instead, leverage the attorneys with people skills as you would anything else.

Someone in the audience asked how the panelists would suggest editing those attorneys who are on social media, but not through the firm. Melanie said that the firm needs a communications policy and should monitor them - if they're not being appropriate, have a conversation with them. She reminded everyone that they should be conducting themselves with an awareness of their brand everywhere, even on Facebook.

She said that there is no longer a separation between personal and professional on social media, particularly if you connect to your corporate brand on your social media profiles. So you need to operate accordingly.

### **Step by Step Processes to Take Advantage of Social Media in a Compelling and Meaningful Way**

Lawyers need training just like any other industry with respect to online best practices, and they need to be given the tools/guidance to be successful.

Melanie said that her firm gives attorneys a tip sheet for what to talk about on Twitter. Josh said that it's also important to remind attorneys and employees of the ethics rules that exist.

Attorneys need to keep these rules in mind no matter how they communicate - whether it's talking on elevators, in social media, etc. The panel pointed out that social media relationships are just real relationships - treat the communication as you would in real life.

[Nancy Myrland](#) commented via Twitter that firms shouldn't "assume the youngest staff are the best to champion Social. Are they strategic?" She subsequently said, "Age has nothing to do with strategy...it's the person and their skills, passion, common sense." Firms can hire someone young to handle the tools because they think they are best positioned to understand them, but because social media is just another way to manage and create the relationships you have in business, it is much more important to have someone well versed in the firm's brand and goals to be the one engaging.

The panelists said that in the beginning, it took a lot of time and resources to determine what to do, but over time, it became easier. Andrea said that her firm's blogs are written 100% by the



attorneys, and the marketers only read them at the very end to proofread them. They are also responsible for posting them.

Russell said that Womble Carlyle hired [Adrian Dayton](#) to help them, and the training went over very well with their attorneys. Melanie said that she knew the lawyers wouldn't take the time to learn social media tools, so her team learned them first. She said that when an attorney comes to them with a great blog idea, her first question to them is "how many blogs do you read?" If the answer is none, they won't spend a lot of time working with them. They spend time with the attorneys who are engaged.

Melanie added that social media is just a part of their overall marketing mix - it's not the whole story. Andrea said at her firm, they encourage their attorneys who have ideas for blogs, but require them to present a business plan for them first.

Someone asked what happens if a blog author leaves the firm. Melanie said that they'd gone through that, so now none of their blogs have only one author. If they are firm-branded blogs, the firm owns the blog and the trademark, so it stays with the firm if the attorneys leaves.

Russell said that Womble has 18 blogs, and the authors also have to create an internet business plan. Additionally, they require three other attorneys to work with the lawyer on the blog. Josh commented that successful team-authored blogs treat them as a true publications. The panelists agreed, and recommended creating an editorial calendar for your content distribution in social

media and assigning the topics to different attorneys to support longevity.



### **Examining the Tools Available to Help You Streamline Your Use of Social Media and Disseminate the Same Information to Different Media Outlets**

The panelists then moved on to a discussion about the tools available to streamline your use of social media.

They suggested taking what your attorneys write and repurposing it by

sharing it in other channels. Some of the tools they recommended for this purpose included:

- [TwitterFeed](#): Takes your RSS feed and publishes it automatically to Twitter, Facebook and more.
- [Typepad](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- *Social forwarding icons*: Allow people to post to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. Include these in the body of your emails as well.
- [JDSupra](#): Great tool to distribute thought-leadership

Andrea commented that the "Like" makes it easier for them to share content, though Jon Holden asked via Twitter if it's all about "pumping out content?" He said, "I think we are in a time where authentic, personal communication is key. It's a high tech 1950's." Melanie then agreed from the panel, saying that if you're only using these tools to syndicate content, you're missing a great opportunity.

Russell said that his firm uses private Twitter accounts, using Tweetdeck to share information about what's going on at the firm internally. It's important that the marketers promoting social media within the firm not only know the tools, but are social themselves.

Melanie recommended that when writing a blog post, authors should ask their audience a question at the end, such as "what do you think?" or "what have I missed?" It's a good way to start engaging. She also emphasized that taking relationships offline is essential. From time to time, ask your attorneys how many of the the commentors on their blog they have met face to face.

Melanie said that the marketers should identify where the attorneys are most comfortable, and in what tool - they don't have to be on Facebook. Josh said that attorneys can also participate through the firm's Facebook page instead of having to accept people as friends on their personal account.

### **Tactical Approaches to the Use of Social Media that are Translating into Measurable Lead Generation, New Business, and Increased Brand Awareness**

The panel then moved on to talk about some of the strategies they use to see ROI for their social media efforts. Russell said that Womble uses keywords strategically - they buy these keywords on Google, then watch the results on Google Analytics. Melanie said that they set up their Twitter links by campaign, so if they resyndicate, they add something to the URL that allows them to monitor the traffic. She added that it's important to find the tools that help you measure results so that you have the numbers to leverage them.

The panel emphasized that it takes a couple of months to get results and you need content + social media + search marketing + analytics. It takes strategy to do this right. Melanie said you need to figure out your strategy first internally to figure out how you'll show ROI. It's also essential to manage expectations about what you're going to get from these tools - ask each attorney, what does success look like for them? What expectations do they have for six months from now?

Nancy Myrland commented via Twitter that "If you are going to require ROI for Social Media, you need to do it for all marketing/business development efforts," and others in the Twitter audience agreed.

Josh recommended Google's beginner SEO guide. Other tools include Google Analytics, as mentioned earlier, bit.ly, Feedburner, and LinkedIn.

## **Getting to Grips with the Legal Risks Associated with the Use of Social Media**

The question came up - if someone tries to ask you for legal advice via social media, what do you do? The panelists agreed that the answer is "the same thing you do in real life." Andrea said that at her firm, they do attorney advertising training to help them to understand the ethics rules.

She also has a communications policy to provide guidelines to the users of social media.

Nancy Myrland's takeaway from the session came via Twitter: "Be creative. Be memorable in whatever spaces you publish and interact. Ban the Bland!"

### **Social Media Strategy**

The panelists provided handouts on social media strategy and policies to assist firms in developing these.

For social media strategy:

- The strategy should be a component of the firm's overall marketing strategy. It should be used to distribute content (establishing subject matter expertise), raising visibility, and inviting and creating engagement.
- Social media can be a tool for research.
- It can also be a network-builder: from creation to nurturing.
- Identify incremental steps to building a strategy:
  - Presence: firms, lawyers, practice areas
  - Push content: news, articles, events
  - Engage 1: Start talking, reach out to contacts
  - Engage 2: Attract, advertise, create groups, push select content and targeted communications.
- Then, integrate across all digital media.
- 

### **Social Media Policy**

When developing your firm's social media policy, look at these issues/questions:

- Your firm's external communications policy:
- Should there be a pre-approval process for writing and speaking?
- Does the policy apply when the lawyers/staff members do not identify themselves as working for the firm?
- Is there a style guide?
- Does the firm encourage social media participation?
- Beyond the ethical considerations (confidentiality, client names and matters, legal advice, firm developments), are there parameters? - conversations on sites - with or without disclaimers; business/personal mix; LinkedIn, Martindale, Legal OnRamp, blogs, etc.

- Will there be a monitoring or an honor system?
- Can a firm limit free speech in the age of social media?
- The role of the Marketing Department - are they Digital Police?

At what point in the process are you and your firms at for social media?

Lindsay Griffiths of the International Lawyers Network  
179 Kinderkamack Road  
Westwood, NJ 07675  
Phone: (201) 594-9985  
Fax: (201) 740-9765