

## **Ghost Blogging: It's Here to Stay**

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From HBC's Sound Bites Blog ([www.hellermanbaretz.com/soundbites](http://www.hellermanbaretz.com/soundbites))

We were a little surprised when Kevin O'Keefe, founder of the legal blogging platform LexBlog, recently wrote critically in his own blog about the practice of "ghost blogging." For the uninitiated, ghost blogging refers to the practice of using a third party -- whether that be an associate at a law firm or writers at a communications agency such as ours -- to draft blog posts that go out under an attorney's name on that attorney's blog.

Kevin criticizes lawyers and law firms that engage in the practice, and even goes so far as to say that ghost blogging will be the "death of social media in the law." (Yikes!) Without putting words in his mouth -- you can check out the post [here](#) -- Kevin seems disturbed by any lack of complete transparency when engaging in "social media" activities.

We felt the need to reply. Here's the comment John Hellerman posted:

Maybe it's just the apocalyptic headline but in light of our previous conversations Kevin, I was surprised by your take yesterday on the topic of ghost-blogging.

I think everyone would agree that merely purchasing a stream of content on an issue and passing it off as your own work crosses an ethical line. However, hiring a professional communicator to provide help and support so you can articulate your ideas clearly and with value to your intended audience is not only ethical but smart and efficient too.

Let's face it, most attorneys simply don't have the time to conceptualize, research, and craft interesting and worthwhile blog posts from scratch the once or twice a week necessary to keep a blog lively -- let alone daily. So, having writing and research support from firms like mine is a virtual necessity these days for busy lawyers that want to have compelling, successful blogs.

As far as transparency goes, I don't agree at all that blog posts should be placed in a different category, requiring greater transparency, than professional writings such as journal articles and even summary judgment briefs. The issue is not transparency or even whether a post originates in-house versus externally; the issue is whether the content is an authentic representation of the blogger's voice and experience. If it is and that voice is compelling, it will work, and if it isn't or that voice is not compelling, it won't -- no matter who created the first draft.

If you expect blogs to continue to be authoritative sources of information and new ideas in the legal community, and if you want more high-profile, forward-thinking attorneys to join the blogging ranks

(which I was under the impression you did), then get comfortable with ghost-written blogs: you're going to see more of them.