

Protecting Your Legal Marketing Brand From Social Media Bad Buzz

October 29th, 2009 by Kara

User-generated comments and conversation can build or destroy a brand, and legal services are far from immune. Ignoring a conversation in social media and/or not responding effectively could impact your company's bottom line.

Scenario: A disgruntled employee or client starts blogging — all over the place — about something you, your firm, or anything connecting.

Case in point:

At the end of December last year I did an investigation on @hklaw, a Twitterer who had been sending out Twitter Tweets at the rate of approximately 20 per day. The tweets contain links that lead readers back to Investigator — Law Firm, whose profile lists six other sites, each describing it's contents as:



“Information, Articles and Complaints involving Holland & Knight Attorneys.”

[\(See the full article here\)](#)

All of hklaw's connections within social media were connected to their commentary, and for all intensive purposes, will be forever more. The “multiplier effect” has his information spread across the web unedited and/or commented by official representatives of the Holland & Knight law firm. Additionally, these headlines appear on sites such as Digg or Technorati and are all indexed by Google. HKlaw's news is fanned by Twitter and citizen journalists. While the outside party's content has not resulting in a full-blown reputation crisis for Holland & Knight, it is still being generated and Holland & Knight's communication specialists are still competing against it.

Holland & Knight's example is extreme. However, if the cost is simply to monitor the conversation h a few search engines, social networks, forums, blogs and respond to negative buzz when/where appropriate then it just doesn't make sense not to. The benefits of monitoring social media far outweigh the damage to your brand if you choose not to.

Start By Listening To Social Media

You need to track down the entire buzz around your brand within social media to get an idea of what the negativity landscape looks like. Google Alerts are a great way of monitoring the conversation based on brand mentions. So, Google Reader is my RSS tracker of choice and Free and inexpensive tools like TweetDeck and TweetBeep can help you to identify the conversations around your brand on Twitter.

Be the Owner of the Conversation About You

In the event there is negative or factually incorrect talk in cyberspace about you, it is important to interact quickly! Otherwise, the information is sure spread further via blogs or micro-blogging sites such as Twitter.

Simply by responding to the post/comment or contacting the detractor directly shows that your brand is open to dialogue and portrays that your business is listening and values the customer. Do not be defensive as it will encourage further negativity — instead explain your position and invite feedback.

Be Transparent

Social media and public relations is all about being open and honest, more so now than ever before. If something goes wrong with your business, like your website crashing or the development and delivery of a product or service is delayed — then tell your customers. Let your customers know how you are rectifying a situation. Failure to communicate will open your brand up to the mercy of social media.

Social Media Strategy

Your company's blog is the integral element of your company's online presence. It allows you to structure and manage the dominant conversation being generated on the internet about who your organization and it's leaders are. Effective communication is much more than responding on your own platform to negative posts or content. While you do want to do this, it's also important to interact directly with the source, on "his turf", linking back to your blog. Not only will this show naysayers that you know who they are and are paying attention, it adds positive search engine results, pushing down negative posts indexed by search engines. Fun, right?

Make it a habit

Yet a recipient of bad service will tell ten people and many more — maybe even hundreds if they are a blogger or active on social networks. It may not prevent a crisis from occurring, but the earlier you learn of dissatisfaction the faster you can react.

The key to managing and maintaining your reputation within social media is to be part of the conversation and for your brand to have a voice that is respected. This comes only through investing time in engaging with customers through social media, building relationships and in turn developing trust.

If have any news about HK Law that you'd care to share, please do!

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My Morning Routine – Using Social Media Tools For New Business