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## Why Your Firm Needs Social Media Now

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*How much business will your firm lose in 2015 if you do not consistently incorporate blogs and other social media outlets—LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+—into your marketing program? This question was on my mind after several discussions with successful small firms with a business clientele that were considering how to work social media into their business development initiatives, if at all.*

Social media was not going to measurably move the meter for these firms in the coming year in terms of business lost or gained. Still, the same would likely not be true in 2016 or in 2020, which is around the corner. In fact, in only 12 to 18 months, not being involved in social media will make a difference to these firms. More importantly, by standing still and debating the pros and cons, these firms, and possibly yours, are giving the competition the opportunity to far outpace them.

### **Leveraging Your Marketing Efforts**

Social media can do a great deal for your firm, extending and expanding the opportunities you have to engage with your target markets and showcase your expert positioning. They allow you to cast light on and access potential clients who were in the shadows before. Because social media and public relations go hand in hand, social media allows

you to leverage and multiply the force of your PR results. You can let the world know when you are quoted in the media and have articles published. You can promote your upcoming speaking engagements and other events, as well as communicate the content that immediately makes it clear you are the expert in your practice area. You can also distribute social media material that has been created by your PR team.

Some firms are being smart by actively discussing their strategy now and embarking on a program. Making social media work and building a presence take time, not only in terms of hands-on work, but also in terms of growing your audience. If you already have a presence, let's say a LinkedIn profile which you haven't revisited since you put it up a couple of years ago, you can relaunch your digital campaign simply by revisiting your

profile and filling in or updating the details. You want it to tell your complete story in and of itself.

If you believe social media does not apply to your firm or that the type of clients you want will not find you on such sites as LinkedIn, that thinking may be shortsighted. Using social media in a thoughtful, strategic way can indeed enhance your marketing efforts.

### **Keep Clients and Practice Areas in Mind**

As you evaluate social media, you need to consider your firm's time horizon. If you intend to turn out the light in a couple of years, social media may not be a marketing priority. However, if you plan to grow, thrive and attract the kind of clients and talent you want, you need to be embarking on a strategic online engagement program immediately. Additionally, if your firm has or is considering a succession plan with a new generation at the helm, your marketing must support their success; social media must be a key element of that plan.

Firms with business and corporate clients, as opposed to the general consumer, >>



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## How and When to Seek Business From Your Social Circle (continued)

express concern that using social media may cheapen their images. Social media marketing is the same as all professional services marketing. You can do it in an attention-getting, sophisticated manner, or you can do it in an attention-getting and unrefined way. It's not the medium itself that strengthens or cheapens a firm's image. It is the execution that makes the difference.

Your firm's practice areas also strongly influence the urgency of embarking on or enhancing a social media plan. If you are pursuing technology, entertainment, or other clients with a digital orientation, for instance, it is more difficult for you to make a case that you intimately understand their business with an outdated LinkedIn page. You are going up against others who are actively demonstrating their understanding and use of technology through blogs, LinkedIn, Tweets and other social media posts. You may be the more knowledgeable and savvy attorney, but without a social media presence, you may not have a chance to communicate that to the client.

In today's world, no matter your firm's practice areas, the firm needs to demonstrate vitality, energy and an understanding of today's marketplace. Baby Boom generation attorneys want and need to do this to show that, although they may be older than the up-and-coming lawyer generation and most likely older than some of their own clients, they lack nothing in terms of understanding the digital revolution. Your firm needs to do this if it wants to attract young talent. Once in your firm, these young lawyers

will be the ones advocating for a greater online presence.

The growth and impact of social media create a powerful wave that is washing over all professional services marketing. Once considered child's play, social media will only continue to grow, and your firm can only benefit by using social media to its fullest potential. ■

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