

## Law Students: Get Blogging

*[As originally published in the National Law Journal on March 1, 2012](#)*

By Adrian Dayton



There has been a rising controversy about the utility of a traditional law school education. Lawyers finish school prepared to think like lawyers, but are they prepared to develop business and survive in a competitive economy?

Well, no, not usually. To remedy this situation, Fordham University School of Law brought in Silvia Hodges, who earned the first doctorate degree on record in legal services marketing. Last spring, she launched a course on the topic. While a far cry from the usual torts or constitutional law curricula, her class is essential. It aids law students in developing their personal brands.

It is never too early to start developing your personal brand, according to Hodges. “Why wait?” she said. “Take courses in the area you want to focus on, join associations and interest groups, etc. — and blog about it. All this will help build your own brand and distinguish you from the many other young lawyers out there. This will put you in front of firms and potential clients.”

This message has resonated with Hodges’ students. “I’ll be working at a Manhattan law firm this summer and hope to begin my career there, and

want to give myself as many tools as possible to improve my value to that firm,” 2L Andrew Fleischman said.

Building your brand is all about improving your value. “Blogging is a great tool to help law students accomplish this,” Hodges said. “Great posts show that you are familiar with the topic. You become part of the discussion, become known among those interested in the topic. Having valuable contacts online is part of becoming a thought leader. You get your name out, it gives you visibility and helps you with search engine optimization. Your name and content will pop up when people look for your topic. Hopefully, this will help you get hired.”

Launching a blog can be intimidating, but free platforms like WordPress and Blogger make it easy. Hodges recommended that aspiring lawyers begin by “focusing on a niche you are really interested in. Do research and understand which platform works best for your viewpoint. Learn as much as you can about this topic and write brief, intriguing, easy-to-read blog posts on a regular basis.”

You can see some of the work of Silvia’s students at [www.legalblogger.com](http://www.legalblogger.com). While none of her students has landed a job yet from blogging, their blog posts have elicited comments, dialogues and retweets — even a mention on Twitter by Roseanne Barr, who linked to a student’s post.

“This is the social media age,” said 3L Ellie Mochkin, student of Hodges’. “I do not want to be the lawyer who is lagging behind the fast pace of growth and improvement in marketing, business and advertising.”

Hodges wants to create lawyers who are great in two ways.

“We want them to be strong lawyers from a technical as well as a business point of view,” she said. “I want them to get the big picture of what life as a lawyer is all about. It is important that they find their niche and play to their strengths. There are too many lawyers out there who are supposedly unhappy in their jobs, and I think it is partially because they fall into positions instead of figuring out what their strength are and what the real opportunities are in the market.”

To help them get there, Hodges starts with a basic SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity and threats) analysis. Later, they write marketing plans and in the end they get experience blogging and writing about topics they find particularly engaging. She forces aspiring IP lawyers to ask, “What is going on in my industry? How can I relate to this?”

This may sound far more like business school than law school, but it just makes sense. With a growing number of students leaving law school for the unemployment queues, saddled with huge debts, it is about time that law schools start preparing students for the business of law.

***Adrian Dayton is an attorney, social media consultant and co-author with Amy Knapp of [LinkedIn & Blogs for Lawyers: Building High Value Relationships in a Digital Age](#) (West Publishing 2012). Download the first chapter for FREE using the form [here](#).***