

# Tweet Surrender

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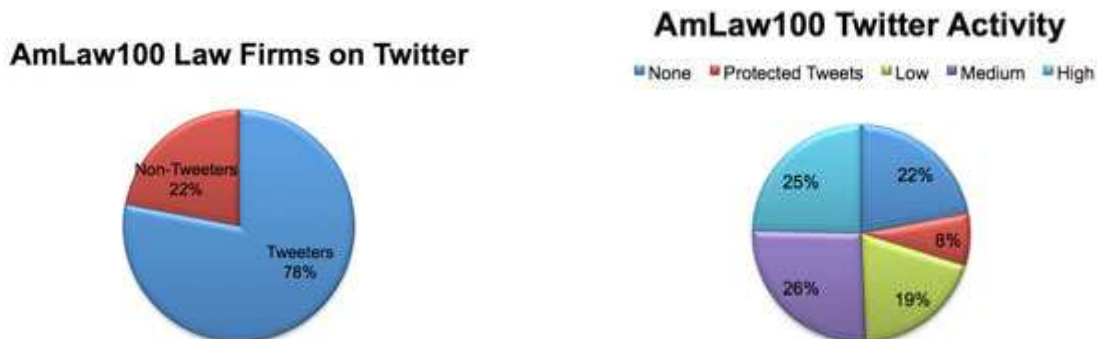
There was a time when big, respectable law firms would never use silly words like Tweet, Twitter and Twitterverse, but that seems to be changing, at least for some firms.

In January, Brian Inkster noted on his The Time Blawg blog that many of the largest firms in the United Kingdom had never sent a single tweet. We noted a similar trend in the United States in December.

Let's look at which American firms are actively tweeting and how they are making Twitter part of their marketing strategy.

Most of the firms on the AmLaw 100 have Twitter accounts — 78% have at least one firm account. But what do they do with it? Most do almost no tweeting at all, while 19 firms had a relatively high level of activity on Twitter. (Defined as having shared more than 500 total tweets. Medium was 100 to 500 tweets. Low was fewer than 100 tweets.)

Eight firms took the approach of “protecting” their tweets, which means that they can be seen only by Twitter accounts the firm individually approves of and that the firm's updates on Twitter don't show up in general searches. Protected tweets make sense for in individual who doesn't want his boss to see his tweets, but almost no sense for any firm in the AmLaw 100.



So what about the other end of the spectrum? Does a high level of activity by the firm Twitter accounts lead to greater success? Let me put it this way: It is a good first step.

## FIRMS WITH A HIGH TWITTER ACTIVITY LEVEL

Rank	Firm	Twitter Name
3	DLA Piper	DLA_Piper_News
10	Greenberg Traurig	GT_Law
11	Weil Gotshal	WeilGotshall
12	Mayer Brown	Mayer_Brown
19	Reed Smith	reedsmithllp
28	McDermott Will	McDermottLaw
32	Akin Gump	akin_gump
33	King & Spalding	kslaw
35	Goodwin Procter	goodwinprocter
40	Fulbright & Jaworski	Fulbright
54	McGuire Woods	McGuireWoodsLLP
56	Squire Sanders	Squire_Sanders
62	Seyfarth Shaw	seyfarthshawLLP
64	Nixon Peabody	NixonPeabodyLLP
67	Duane Morris	DuaneMorrisLLP
76	Troutman Sanders	Tstweets
77	Steptoe & Johnson	Steptoe_Johnson
78	Patton Boggs	pattonboggs
81	Crowell Moring	Crowell_Moring

My question about law firm Twitter accounts has always been, “Who is your intended audience?” Corporate counsel? C-suite executives? Companies in urgent need of specialized complex litigation help? If the answer is all three, then most of your tweets will be irrelevant to a large part of your audience. People don’t want to have to sift through irrelevant information. By tweeting all of the firm’s content from a single account, you are forcing followers to do a fair amount of sifting.

In interviews with larger firms I ask, “Who is following your firm on Twitter?” They sometimes reply, “A few journalists and a couple of clients of ours.” Is reaching such a small audience really worth the time and attention it takes to have a member of your team send out daily tweets?

The firms often respond that they lack the time to implement a more robust strategy. They are stuck at Level 1.

### **Level 1: The firm Twitter account**

“Our firm has a Twitter account! Follow us to learn all of the great things our firm is doing.”

If your Twitter account is self-congratulatory, it will be of little use to anyone. If it equally covers all of the firm’s practice areas, you will have a similar problem. Opening a single Twitter account for your firm is taking step into the world of social media, but it is a tiny step with little chance of bringing positive or negative exposure. It is, however, a completely safe play, and represents progress of a sort. (Click [here](#) for the complete list of AmLaw 100 Firm Twitter accounts.) If we missed your Twitter account, please send it to [tinfo@adriandayton.com](mailto:tinfo@adriandayton.com).

### **Level 2: Practice area (or industry group) Twitter accounts**

“Our firm now has separate Twitter accounts to discuss our immigration practice, M&A, environmental and e-discovery practices. Follow these account for specific articles and information relevant to your industry.”

Level 2 represents a definite improvement over Level 1. You have created a valuable source of information for others in the industry. You also begin to brand your firm as having expertise in those areas — if, of course, the information you share is timely, relevant and insightful. This helps to build the big firm brand as well, because it shows the firm has multiple areas of excellence.

The downside here is two-fold. First, who wants to talk to a practice group Twitter feed? A key element to social media — as the very phrase implies — is engagement. It is unlikely that anybody will strike up a conversation with an industry-specific Twitter account. Second, who will do the updating? Is this the job of the marketing or knowledge management departments? Do they know the industry well enough to be collecting and sharing the best articles? Wouldn’t it be better to have the information updated by the experts within the firm?

### **Level 3: Attorney Twitter accounts**

“You can observe the depth and breadth of knowledge within our law firm by observing the articles and blogs posts shared on the Twitter accounts of our lawyers.”

It often is said that social media shouldn’t be 100% of one person’s job, but rather should be 1% of 100 people’s job. This takes coordination and it takes training, but it has the potential to be the most effective use of Twitter by law firms. As lawyers tweet out news and links to articles, they are personally engaging with

their audience. This opens opportunities for the individual attorneys to speak at events, write articles and provide comments for major publications. Most importantly, this helps the lawyer build new relationships that she may not have encountered any other way.

The downside is that it requires a high level of trust by the law firm in its lawyers. Some firms allow only partner-level attorneys or those with approval to tweet. My advice to firms is to properly train lawyers to engage appropriately online and then trust them. You trust them to attend cocktail parties without inadvertently revealing client confidences; start trusting them to tweet.

Twitter is only one of many tools available to law firms online. It may not make sense for firms to use it for every practice area, but for certain areas of law it can be a great fit. Areas in which I have seen great results include IP law, e-discovery, venture capital, private equity, start-up and business formation, entertainment law and employment law.

- When deciding if a Twitter account makes sense for you, ask these questions:
- Are there influential people in my industry using Twitter?

What about reporters who cover my industry? Reporters from every major publication are using Twitter to find sources for their stories. If your lawyers are already blogging and writing, I highly recommend that they create Twitter accounts to share this material. Twitter presents one more platform to build your reputation.

**Adrian Dayton** is an attorney, speaker and author who helps law firms make the leap into Level 3. Email [info@adriandayton.com](mailto:info@adriandayton.com) for more details, or sign up for his monthly alert at <http://adriandayton.com>. Special thanks to **Samantha Collier** for her help with the research for this article.