

### **Social Media for Lawyers: It's What You Make of It**

The past few days have seen a flurry of discussion about the type of conduct appropriate for lawyers and firms participating in social networks.

Trying to make sense of it all, law firms and legal marketers too often analogize social platforms to familiar, off-line venues (e.g. MySpace is a bar, Twitter a cocktail party, Facebook a barbeque, and LinkedIn an office meeting). Or they make generalizations like: Facebook is for social networking; LinkedIn is for professional networking.

At the end of the day, though, these semantic constructs are simply that – constructs. They do little to help lawyers successfully network online. Worse yet, these constructs are based on the false premise that the participants are one-dimensional demographics.

If they are to be analogized to anything offline, social networks are simply virtual buildings – with rooms and accoutrements by which people can share information and connect.

And the participants? They are people – and people are not one thing in one place and another somewhere else – solely interested in one thing when they are here and in another when they are there. They are like you and me.

Whether I'm scanning my home page on Facebook, reading my Twitter stream, or checking out the latest discussion on LinkedIn, I'm a CEO who hires lawyers for corporate matters; a mother who needs a Trust lawyer; and I could have a car accident tomorrow for which I'll need a personal injury lawyer. I also love good mystery movies, The Daily Show, and witty jokes. I was a business litigator, but have a passion for constitutional law. And all of that is true whatever website I happen to have up on my monitor at the moment.

No matter which URL is at the top of my screen, if something of interest to me shows up there, I'll follow the path – which inevitably leads to the person who shared it.

There are CEOs on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. And they sometimes get pulled over for drunk driving – and their parents die – and they get into disputes with their employers – and...

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Use any of these platforms to share information about your favorite music and sports teams – seek out people with similar interests - and it's a cocktail party. Use them to distribute your legal articles – seek out people interested in the subject on which you are writing - and, voila, it's a channel for distributing your legal content.

It is whatever you make of it.

Successful online engagement is simple: properly set, and then meet (or better yet exceed), the expectations of the community you build – wherever and around whatever you choose to build it.

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