

# Think Small (the new BIG thing)

I woke up this morning frustrated. You know that kind of half awake state when something is troubling you? I tossed and turned until finally I decided- time to get up and write. My frustration is that the power of social media is not sinking in for law firms or for lawyers. To intensify this frustration, many of the lawyers that start blogging and even start using social media to build their practice never get much traction. These law firms and lawyers need to realize one thing:

**You can't gain credibility in a community you are not willing to participate in.**

How do politicians gain credibility in offline communities? They knock on doors, speak at the Rotary Club, and join the PTA. How do you gain credibility on the online world?

**Start having conversations.**

This last month in Australia I was able to have a conversation with many of the major firms and over and over I heard the same thing:

“Our firm has a Twitter account.” (as in a single Twitter account for over 1,000 attorneys at one firm I spoke with)

“We are considering starting a blog.”

and then the most frustrating,

“We don't trust our attorneys online.”

Law firms (and many lawyers) are thinking about social media the wrong way. This isn't about “going viral” or being the next big thing. Social media is about grass roots. It is about a hundred different individual conversations. I guarantee your marketing staff doesn't have the time or the resources to be approving each one of those micro-conversations.

**Grass roots efforts can't be micro-managed**

Here are five ways lawyers can think small and enjoy big gains from social media:

## **1. Knock on doors.**

Okay, so you don't *actually* need to knock on doors, but you do need to pick up the phone. Find allies in the online world.

Obama had time to talk to individuals, do you?

Have a phone conversation with the contacts you are making online. Show sincere interest in what they are doing, find out what their goals are, and then briefly share your own. It isn't just about who you touch online, but also about who THEY touch. You will never know this until you talk to them.

## **2. Face-to-face is still best.**

The #1 doubt I hear from lawyers hesitant to use social media is this:

“We prefer to do our business development face-to-face.”

Absolutely right. There is no substitute for getting out there and pressing the flesh. But how do you meet *new* contacts? Who goes to the cocktail parties and conferences in your city? Isn't it a lot of the same people? Aren't you somewhat bound by your limited geography? Social media opens you up to a whole new crowd. Meet them online, then connect face-to-face as soon as possibly.

### **3. Comment on other people's blogs.**

Find the best writers in your area- what are they writing about? Share your perspective. If the readers of your comments like what you are saying- they may come check out your blog. Even if they don't, at least you have shown you aren't only interested in your own content.

### **4. Share other people's quality articles through Twitter, LinkedIN, or even Facebook.**

When you share a fellow blogger's content, you win a new friend. Seems simple enough, right?

Unfortunately, Law Firms are the biggest offenders here- broadcasting self congratulatory information about the firm and their lawyers. If your Twitter account only advertises what your lawyers are doing and writing, this is tantamount to walking into a crowded bar and yelling:

“Look at me, I'm awesome!” and then turning around and walking out of the bar. Please don't be that guy.

To gain credibility online you need to distribute great content- regardless of who the original author is and then stick around to be part of the conversation.

### **5. Stick around.**

It takes time to build relationships. Using social media for business development is much faster than traditional methods but it doesn't happen overnight. Remember, this is a marathon and not a sprint. Set daily, weekly, and monthly goals for your social media use. Then follow up with those contacts you make.

I guarantee that making these simple changes to your social media strategy will make a measurable difference in the results for your firm and your attorneys. If nothing else, it will help me sleep better at night.