



AND THE ART OF LEGAL NETWORKING

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INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON
*Relationship Building
within the International
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“Metrics” is Not a Dirty Word

BY LINDSAY GRIFFITHS ON OCTOBER 19, 2017



You’ve probably heard a lot of chatter about “big data,” “data,” “metrics,” and other buzzwords, which can sound like a lot of fancy talk about things you can’t be bothered with (Spoiler alert: in general, it’s not).

While I’m not going to get into a big discussion about data and all the ways you can use it, I AM going to talk about two practical things you can use today in order to support and improve your content marketing efforts. If you’re thinking “hey, ‘content marketing’ sounds like something for other people to do, and not me!” ask

yourself – do you write articles or blog posts? Do you participate in speaking engagements? Do you write memos that you send to your clients and prospects? Do you want more people to know about the kind of law you practice, and how you can help them? If the answer to any of those questions is “yes” then content marketing IS for people like you, too. And for our purposes, when I use the phrase “content marketing” I’m talking about the actions that we undertake to promote the written and oral work you do as a lawyer to a wider audience – it’s likely something you’ve done all your career, but it just may not have been how you referred to it.

Today, I’m referencing a piece by Kristi Hines on [“How to Find the Best Pieces of Content in Your Industry.”](#) I highly recommend that you read this too, but before we look at *other* people’s content, we should start with our own.

Someone mentioned recently that measuring your content and then using what you’ve learned about that content is really “Content Marketing 2.0.” I had thought it was just good common sense, but it made me realize that it’s something we need to be looking at in more depth here at Zen if it really is being considered the next phase in content marketing.

I’ve had the good fortune to speak a couple of times with my friends, Laura Toledo and Adrian Lurssen, who are both content marketing aficionados. We’ve looked into content marketing for a legal marketing audience, and in discussing our presentation, we’ve examined what Adrian and his team at JD Supra call the “Virtuous Circle of Content Marketing” – and a piece of this circle is made up of what they call “support,” and what I like to refer to as the “optimization” piece.

That’s where you take your content, add in your audience, and review your metrics (what you’ve measured) and then see how you’ve been successful or not against your goals, and then further refine what you’re doing for the next piece of content.

That piece right there is almost important enough to be considered a linchpin of content marketing – you’re moving from producing content that you’re essentially throwing up against the wall to see what sticks to setting goals, producing content that supports those goals, for an audience that is defined by those goals, and then measuring the results. You’re then taking those measurements and identifying what works and what doesn’t, and using those metrics to define your next steps – making you ultimately more targeted and more successful.

Can you see how this would set you apart from someone who is just arbitrarily producing content?

Okay, so then let’s look at the two ways you can do this right now.

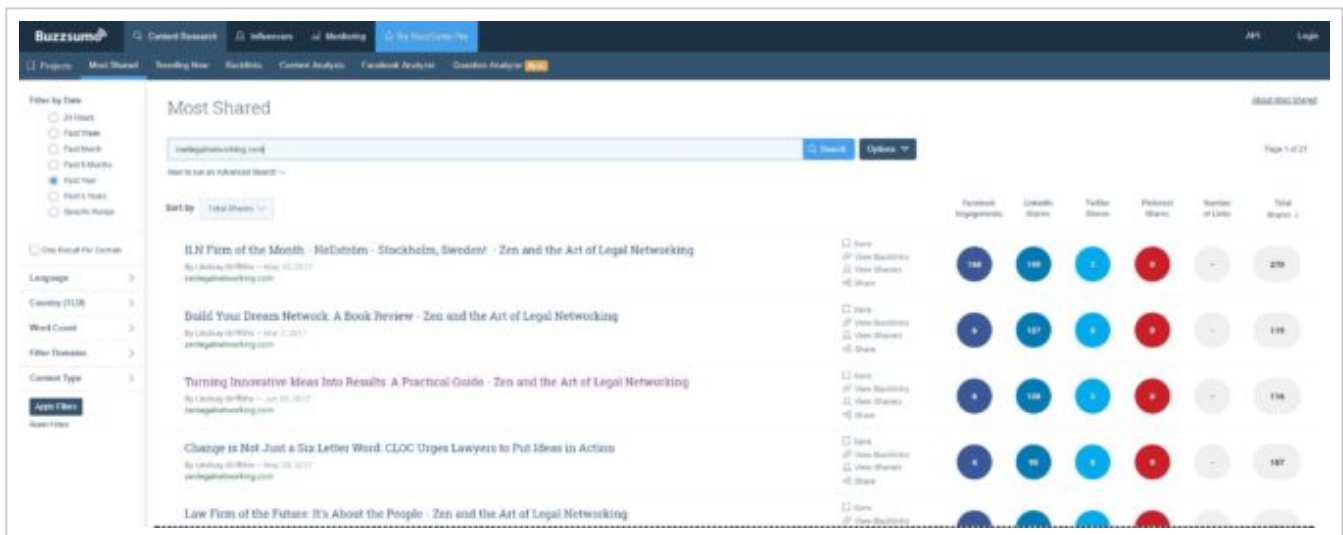
Tip One: Track Your Social Sharing Metrics

Hines provides a word of caution in using social sharing metrics in her article because these can be arbitrarily inflated by people who are buying likes, shares, etc. But since we're talking about your own or your firm's metrics here, and I KNOW you're not doing something like buying social shares, we can assume at the outset that these are reliable metrics.

You may be thinking that the social visibility of a piece of content is not that important to you, but it is – social media is and continues to be an important thing these days, but again, it does come down to what the goals for your content and audience are.

Hines recommends the tool “[BuzzSumo](#),” which will help to provide you with insights into content and which key influencers are sharing it (also important). You can easily see how this would be extrapolated for finding top content in your industry and practice area, but let's start with your individual content for now.

We'll use my blog as an example – since you can search by domain, it's easy for me to enter zenlegalnetworking.com into the search box and see in the last year what my most shared blog post has been (by total shares). I can see which social networks are sharing that content most strongly (which helps me identify where I should be investing my time), and I'm also learning which topics are the most popular among those I'm sharing with.



This is all information I can get with the free product, and there are additional features available with their pro subscription, including further analytics. Pro users can also see what backlinks there are from other blog posts – that means that someone else thought your post was good enough that they referenced it in their post or article, and linked back to yours. That's one of the things you really want, especially if it's a top influencer in your industry!

BuzzSumo isn't the only way you can track your social shares, of course – you can look at the individual analytics you get from your Facebook page, your LinkedIn page, etc., but this is a one-stop shop that gives you a very quick and clear picture of what your top posts have been in terms of what people are sharing, and

where you may want to be focusing your efforts (both in terms of writing and in terms of social networks) in the future.

The downside is that these days, a LOT of people are sharing without reading. That's not necessarily a bad thing, because your content is being promoted widely, but it does mean that just looking at social shares won't give you the full picture of whether a piece of content is valuable to an audience or not. It only tells you if the title is interesting enough that people are willing to share it on social media.

So that brings us to the second piece of the puzzle...

Tip Two: Track Impact Metrics

Hines notes in her piece that this is the more difficult one to really track, but that it goes beyond just social sharing, so it's giving you the fuller picture of whether a piece of content is really successful or not.

Here, she recommends [Impactana](#), which is now in its second iteration. But before you head over there, let's look at what you can learn from your blog or web analytics. There are different "impact" metrics that Hines mentions you can find using this tool, and they're all important ones, which you should also be able to track in other ways:

- **Backlinks:** we mentioned these above, so stick with using BuzzSumo to track these.
- **Views:** these are something you should be able to see from your own site analytics or Google Analytics. Views are important because they're telling you who is actually clicking through and looking AT your content – not who is just reading the headline and sharing it. But I'd go a step further than Hines though – you also need to know how long they're spending on your posts. If they arrive there, and quickly leave, they're not reading your content. Along with this would be search terms – what is bringing people to your content? Look at what they're searching for that is resulting in them landing on that piece of content – is it what you intended? If it is, great, you're doing your job and meeting their needs. But if it's not, there's obviously a need out there for content based around what they're searching for – are you the person to be writing or producing that content too?
- **Comments:** Comments tell you whether people are visiting your content, and what is engaging them enough that they want to add their own thoughts to it. In other industries, there will end up being hundreds of comments, but in the legal industry for the most part, these end up being a much more manageable (and therefore easily trackable) number. So make note of the comments that you're receiving, both through your posts and articles, as well as any social networks – it can be as simple as setting up a spreadsheet and copying and pasting the comment itself, or just noting the person's name and the date of the comment (so that you have a record if any work or further promotion comes of it). As we know, it's not the NUMBER of comments or views that really matter, but the quality of those comments and views, so the more you track this information and further target it at the right people and in the right places, the stronger the response to your content will be.

- **Downloads:** This is one that will depend on the type of content that you're offering. If you have SlideShare presentations or white papers that you're offering, keep track of the downloads of those – the more downloads there are, the more likely it is that there's interest in that type of content. It's difficult to determine, of course, whether someone is following up by reading or using those downloads, but taking the step of downloading the material is a good indicator of interest, moreso than a simple social share would be – it shows a greater deal of investment.

This “metrics” piece of the content marketing puzzle can seem and sound like a lot of extra work – but in the end, it's actually SAVING you a lot of extra work because it's helping you to focus your efforts on producing what is actually going to get you the results that you want based on your goals, instead of just hoping that what you've spent your time on will end up being effective.

What tools have you found work in your tracking of your content marketing efforts? Are you tracking your content? What are some surprises that you've had along the way?