

In-House Counsel Are Reading Your Blog

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By Adrian Dayton



The public relations firm Greentarget LLC released a survey in 2010 regarding the use of social media by in-house counsel that has shaped strategy of law firms across the United States. This morning, the firm released its [New Media Engagement Survey](#) findings for 2011. The results were somewhat surprising.

The survey, conducted with the Zeughauser Group and Inside Counsel, found that, across all age groups, more than 50 percent of in-house counsel reported using LinkedIn during the past week — and many within the past 24 hours. Only one group showed a decline — lawyers aged 30 to 39. In 2010, 84 percent of lawyers in that age group reported using LinkedIn during the past week; in 2011, their use declined to 65%.

“The days of the younger ‘power users’ is quickly fading as older counsel are using social media tools with greater fervor and frequency than they were just 18 months ago,” said John Corey, Greentarget’s founding partner.

Law firm blogging has also seen huge gains in terms of credibility and its ability to persuade legal departments, the survey found. Fifty-five percent of the general counsel surveyed said blogs influenced their hiring decisions, and 76 percent attributed importance to a lawyer’s blogs when hiring outside counsel.

So how should law firms respond to these findings? First, by recognizing that blogs and social media are here to stay.

“Lawyers need to learn social media. It isn’t the future. It is here now,” Janine Dascenzo, associate general counsel for General Electric Co., said during the recent Hildebrandt Marketing Partner Forum. Her fellow in-house counsel agreed unanimously during a panel discussion that general practice e-mails were out and Twitter and blogs were in. “We are inundated with so much e-mail, it makes our lives so much easier if we can view the information through blogs and Twitter,” she said.

According to the survey, if in-house counsel don’t comment or start conversation with regards to your content, that doesn’t mean they aren’t reading. Most in-house lawyers are reading but choose not to interact; while 86 percent of in-house counsel use social media, 68 are lurkers.

William Sailer, a senior vice president and legal counsel at Qualcomm Inc., echoed this sentiment during the panel discussion. He uses blogs and social media to educate himself, not to start conversations, he said.



That should be encouraging for bloggers — the fact that nobody comments on your blog doesn’t mean your efforts are being ignored.

My recommendation to firms has always been to go where the clients are. If clients and potential clients are reading blogs, start writing. Firms that create high-quality blog content on a regular basis will find success with in-house counsel. The same goes for Twitter — especially among high-adopter clients in the technology, media and green industries.

A marketing director of a white-shoe firm asked me, “Do you know of any situations where a client left a firm that didn’t have a blog for a firm that did?” Although I didn’t know of a specific example, these survey results suggest that the time is coming. Writers of high-quality blogs are impressing their in-house counsel readers, and it is only a matter of time



until your clients approach them with work. You may be tired of hearing about social media, but these tools aren't going anywhere. It's time to start using them.

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](#).