



The Legal Connection

where legal technology & people connect

Summer 2012

One Word : Relaxing

It's the end of the summer 2012.

It has, without a doubt, been the most relaxing and stress free summer I have ever enjoyed.

Even when I was a kid summers were full of stress – being a child of divorced parents with domiciles in two countries – it was my fate to ride the Amtrak between NY and Burlington, Ontario several times per year.

I'd spend my full summers up north – away from friends and everything I knew – except my Dad. Don't get me wrong, I loved seeing and being with him – I missed him horribly throughout my life; but as a teenager – it was hard to be happy about uprooting my life every summer. Hence the stress.

By contrast, this year I travelled to and from Pennsylvania as I wished; working from both LI and PA at will.

Thanks to Tracy, LegalTypist's Operations Manager, I also got to take two full weeks of vacation where I did not have to scan my phone, email or social media accounts -- I simply got to be with my family and friends; doing the types of things one cannot enjoy when the kids are in school and days are more structured.

So in a word, my Summer 2012 was relaxing.

How was yours?

I'm betting not as relaxing. Most of the people that I know are so busy all the time, I think they have forgotten how to relax (or if they remember, they probably feel guilty whenever they do.)

Now that I think about it, almost every person I greet and ask how they are doing responds with "Busy".

That is sad.

The old stand-by response to "How are you doing" used to be "Good. And you?" I liked that better.

Don't get me wrong – I have my share of stress!

There's deadlines that need to be met; client needs to be taken care of; bills to be paid; strategic planning ... all of the trappings of being the CEO of a growing business.

I just learned a long time ago, that I could be working for a lunatic – putting in 24 hour days, 6 or 7 days a week – or I could build my business to give me the freedom I wished. The choice was mine.

I think I made the right one. I hope you do to – and that you start putting in place the people, tech and processes you need so next summer your word can be "relaxing" too.

til next month...

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the letter 'A' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.



Andrea's Website Creation Checklist

- **Find and buy your own domain name***
Make it a .com address. Use your name plus "PC" or "law," combine last names or use the firm specialty for a suitable domain name (e.g., workerscomplawyer.com). Location is another great way to get a domain that stands out. If you're going with a location-based domain, be as local as your target audience. Try not to use initials, hyphens or unintelligible spellings. Print out any contender and look for inappropriate words—they can and do sneak in.
- **Choose your tools.** If you plan to do it yourself, there are options ... your hosting company may have all the modules or widgets and mechanisms for you to manipulate your site's content and offerings (called a Content Management System, or CMS), or you can learn to use a desktop software program such as Dreamweaver or a web-based application such as WordPress.
- **Be a good host.** From the moment visitors land on your site, they should be easily led through its pages to the intended conclusion ... whether that's signing up for your newsletter, making a call or setting up an appointment. So, when you are creating pages and adding links, put yourself in the minds of your visitors. Tell them how you can help and then tell them how to contact you for that help.
- **Content will always be king.** Sprinkle words in your web copy that those who are trying to find you will put into Google or other search engines. (For a simple example, you may practice "trusts and estates" but potential clients are likely searching for "wills"). Write about how you help your clients, not about the tools or processes you use to do it.
- **Be perfectly clear.** Use language that speaks to your audience, have clear and easy-to-follow navigation, include professional head shots of firm personnel and prominently post the firm's location.
- **Get an editor.** You will need professionally edited text that has been proofread by someone other than you. Make sure that all links and pages are tested from an "outside" computer, making any errors apparent. By this I mean a computer that was not involved with drafting or loading the content, so nothing is stored in the cache memory.
- **Trash the Flash.** Steer clear of Flash intros, large picture or audio files or anything that slows load time. If you have to put a "Skip This" somewhere on the page, just skip it altogether. Flash intros not only cause lengthy load times, they can disrupt search engines from properly spidering your website. You have less than seven seconds to capture a site visitor's interest so don't waste it on anything unnecessary.
- **Be easy to reach.** For SEO purposes it doesn't hurt to publish a Google Map on your contact page. Statistically speaking, you will get more contacts if you also list an e-mail address on your landing pages and home page. However, to avoid spam, use a generic address, such as "contact" or "info" @yourdomain.com.
- **Refresh regularly.** You want to make sure that you add fresh content to your website on a regular basis—two to three times per seven- to ten-day period. Some painless content can be found by listing partner speaking engagements, publishing articles written by associates or including the latest issue of the firm's newsletter.

*Be certain to put an active email address, owned and reviewed by you, as domain administration contact. Many times web designers and companies will offer to buy the domain for you. DO NOT let them! A simple process and about \$10 is all you need to make sure YOU own the domain and not the company or person registering it.



Andrea Cannavina helps lawyers and other professionals select, configure and use web based technology. To learn more, or to schedule an appointment with Andrea: <http://www.andreacannavina.com>

Vacation Time!



It's summer and I'm heading out of the office for two weeks. We're joining family at a lake in Washington State. The accommodations are advertised to have "internet access." Mobility, ain't it grand? Cell phones, internet, cloud applications, all sorts of technology that allows me to work from wherever I am, at any time.

Thank goodness I am the boss of me! I do NOT want to work a lot on vacation! I need a break, ask anyone. I've been doing a lot of heads-down concentrated work and I can't wait to lift my head and enjoy truly guilt-free free time.

If you drew a circle, and you wrote all the things I could attend to related to work in it- that circle would be large. If you created another circle, of all the work things I enjoy, that's a subset of the big circle- and then, if you add a verrrry small circle in the middle- you can see how much work I'm planning on doing on vacation. Basically, I have a couple of client calls, that's the work I will do.

Vacation/Work Target



The ability to work isn't the same as the need to work. The impulse to check email, voicemail, social sites, isn't the same as the need to do so. It is fantastic to be able to take vacation, knowing that if necessary, you have the capability of attending to work. It's dreadful if you allow that to interfere with your vacation, your ability to refresh and refuel, your relationships, your "balance".

Our technological powers increase, but the side effects and potential hazards also escalate. Alvin Toffler

There are some great resources about preparing for vacation- how to notify clients, delegate, set up backup and emergency systems, and so on. What I'd like to add to that conversation is that you should be very planned and intentional. Know before you go what work you will do, and plan and schedule it so that it disrupts your vacation adventures as little as possible.

Enjoy the summer! Take breaks! Use "off" buttons, sliders and toggles. As always, the rocket science is in the doing!

Editor's Note: Keep an eye out for late August "Practice Target" seminars. Dates to be announced on the blog: <http://www.successfullysolo.com/blog>. Barbara's been working on some ideas to help you have your best year ever, and she can't wait to share them- **after** her vacation!



Barbara Nelson helps lawyers and other professionals learn the simplicity of action. She's grateful for the opportunity to show up here and share her unique perspective. Barbara is a huge fan of writing to improve productivity. To learn more, visit Barbara's blog: <http://www.successfullysolo.com/blog>



3 Reasons Publishing Your Mobile Number Is a Bad Call

When you're starting a solo practice or small law firm, it seems like a no-brainer to leverage the phone you already have: "I'll just add more minutes to my plan, and my clients can reach me 24/7!"

Then again, your clients will be able to reach you 24/7!!

Being responsive is important, especially for attorneys (one of the top bar complaints is not returning client communication), but you don't need to sacrifice your privacy to achieve it.

Besides your own sanity, here are three reasons publishing your cell phone number could be a mistake:

1. "What did you say? I can't hear you over that dog barking!" Missed calls are missed opportunities to engage potential clients and keep current clients happy, but a lot of background noise isn't going to impress anyone. Even if you could answer your cell on that bustling, loud New York City street corner, should you?

2. When you're not available, callers reach voicemail. Whether you're in court or a client meeting, there will still be times when you can't answer your phone, even if it is handy. In that case, callers will likely reach voicemail, and there's no promise that they'll leave a message or wait for your return call.

3. What happens if your firm grows? Even if you're a solo, you may end up hiring a paralegal or clerk to help you with your mounting coursework. Will you be pulling double duty as attorney and receptionist by taking messages for your new employees? Changing your number in the future can be a hassle (though not impossible), and there's no guarantee your current clients will embrace it. Your phone number is, to some extent, synonymous with your firm; prospective clients can hang onto your business card or direct mailing pieces for years to come.

Now for the good news! If you're just starting out, there are lots of economical alternatives to publishing your cell phone number, including remote call forwarding lines (numbers that "live" at the phone company) and VoIP systems can forward your calls to your cell phone without having to give out your personal number. However, you may still end up missing calls with these services when you're unavailable.

Another option is to try a live virtual receptionist service. A friendly receptionist will answer your calls promptly and professionally, and make a great impression for your budding firm. Whatever telephone system you choose, you'll be set up for success!



Katie Wilson is a Sales and Marketing Associate at Ruby Receptionists. Harkening back to an era when every call to an office was answered by a friendly receptionist, Ruby Receptionists provides personalized live, virtual receptionist service to small businesses and professionals throughout North America. Visit: <http://www.callruby.com> to learn more.

**THE 21st CENTURY
RETAINER AGREEMENT**

The Art, Science & Ethics of the 21st Century Retainer Agreement Webinar

Date: September 6, 2012

Time: 12:30 – 2:00 pm ET

Cost: \$49.95*

Presenter: **Carolyn Elephant, Esq.** (MyShingle.com)

Sign up: <http://ow.ly/cTRrl>

*Includes recording, PPT, transcript and a copy of **The Art, Science & Ethics of the 21st Century Retainer Agreement** ebook, with index of forms, checklists and links to ethics rulings.



The Rural Lawyer – It's Hot

My apologies to Mr. Loesser, *but baby its hot outside.*

To whoever is in charge of the global thermostat, I'd like to register a few words of dissatisfaction. While I fully understand that it is not uncommon for the air of a midwestern July to be humid enough to cut and for the temperature to provide a gentle counterpoint to January's chill, but your latest variations on the hot/humid theme are perhaps a bit too avant-garde for us conservative Minnesotans. For future reference, it is generally accepted that it is time to turn the heat down once one observes that the hound-dogs quietly lurking on front porches have transformed into oddly shaped throw rugs and that the dairy cows are producing cafe-au-lait rather than their more plebeian fair.

But all is not gloom and doom here in the little law office on the prairie, after all it is time to put the second crop of hay into the barn and were it not for your endeavors, I would have to head into the gym for my afternoon sauna. I must also admit that the tenor warble of an air conditioner's compressor heard from afar brings a tear of joy to my eye as I know that my silicon darlings are running cool and dry. I am sure that next month's electric bill will make my heart skip a beat from sheer exhilaration.

Speaking of hot technology, the stuff that's getting this rural lawyer all het-up is most likely old-hat for those of you living where the calendars read 2012 rather than 1952, but it's a simple mind-mapping app that's turning out to be the summer's hottest hit.

As a mediator and Collaborative lawyer, a large part of my interactions with clients center around the development of goals, issues, and options; all of which are tracked on bits of highly processed tree (flip-charts, legal pads, etc) - much to the chagrin of my "less paper" approach to office management. Ah, but now the days of lugging easels and flip-charts are over, replaced by a compact projector, lightweight screen, and a mind mapping iPad (weight-wise, I'm not sure I'm ahead of the game). Now, I can list goals, outline issues, and diagram options in a free-hand and free-form way as conversations develop; saving it all at the end of the session as a PDF. There is less worry that the ordering of items may imply some type of priority or lack of neutrality and the electronic documents are far easier to distribute to the parties.



Bruce M. Cameron Having decided that going to law school and opening a solo law practice would be a sufficient response to the male midlife crisis, Bruce now practices Collaborative Family Law and Estate Planning in rural Minnesota. When not in the law office, he can be found on his small farm where he and his wife are at the beck and call of a herd of horses, a couple of cats, a few dogs and one extremely spoiled parrot. <http://www.rurallawyer.com>



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LUNCH & LEARN WEBINARS

WEDNESDAYS - 12:30 - 2:00 PM ET

Wed Sep 5	12:30pm – 2:00pm	⊕ TLCxn Lunch & Learn ~ Web Presence 101 - websites & blogs - http://ow.ly/cuSAv
Wed Sep 19	12:30pm – 2:00pm	⊕ TLCxn Lunch & Learn ~ Web Presence 201 - LinkedIn, FB, Twitter + - http://ow.ly/cH2NP
Wed Sep 26	12:30pm – 2:00pm	⊕ TLCxn Lunch & Learn: Office 365 101 - http://ow.ly/cLVOD
Wed Oct 10	12:30pm – 2:00pm	⊕ TLCxn Lunch & Learn ~ SEO - It's NOT Rocket Science - http://ow.ly/cH2NP
Wed Nov 7	12:30pm – 2:00pm	⊕ TLCxn Lunch & Learn ~ eDiscovery 101 - http://ow.ly/cH47P
Wed Nov 14	12:30pm – 2:00pm	⊕ TLCxn Lunch & Learn ~ SEO Best Practices
Wed Dec 12	12:30pm – 2:00pm	⊕ TLCxn Lunch & Learn ~ PDFing: Tech+Techniques

<http://tlcxnwebinars.eventbrite.com>

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