



AND THE ART OF LEGAL NETWORKING

BY: LINDSAY GRIFFITHS OF THE ILN

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON
*Relationship Building
within the International
Lawyers Network*

POSTED IN [LEGAL MARKETING](#), [TWO FOR TUESDAYS](#)

Two Content Marketing Resolutions for 2016

BY LINDSAY GRIFFITHS ON JANUARY 19, 2016



Although we're well into 2016 now, it's not too late to make some resolutions for your content marketing. I came across this Forbes article from the end of last year with [6 Content Marketing New Year's Resolutions to Make This Year](#), and there is some great food for thought in there that I'd like us to consider. As it's a Two for Tuesdays day, we'll focus on two of them to start with.

Why content marketing resolutions at all?

It's easy to get too into the weeds with content marketing, and be so focused on the process of producing and distributing content that we forget to take that step back once in a while to make sure that we're sticking to our strategy, working with a strategy that makes sense for us, our practices, and our firms, and continuing to produce and distribute content that meets with what our audiences really want to consume.

Resolutions can act as a bit of a refresh (as does the entire planning process at the end/beginning of a new year). We're identifying ways to breathe new life into our content and ensure that we're still as committed to our content marketing as we ever were.

Resolution One: I Won't Wait Until the Last Minute to Come Up With Blog Post Ideas

This is a wee bit of a pet peeve of mine – and even sometimes for my own content (though my editorial calendar prevents me from having NO direction, and I'll get to that in a moment).

Forbes says:

“

Although some last-minute content ideas can be brilliant, this often isn't the case. If you come up with something on the fly and write it in a hurry, chances are good that it won't be as well thought out or as engaging. Since blogs are a balance of quality and quantity, you can't slack on the quality of your writing. Try keeping a running list of potential blog post ideas at all times so that you'll have a good pool to draw from, or come up with a content creation calendar so that you'll know well in advance what you'll be writing about.”

As busy lawyers and marketers, this can seem like both a daunting and annoying task. Bad enough you're expected to produce content, but now you also have to make sure that in the midst of all that regular (often/usually billable) work you're doing, you also have to come up with content ideas in advance.

But I promise, it's actually not that painful.

Here's a couple of easy ways to manage it:

- **Go [Ever]green:** Evergreen content is an excellent way to source ideas that will remain of interest for a long time, and are easily written about, because they're the subjects and topics that you deal with on a regular basis. As my friend, Adrian Lurssen, of JD Supra likes to say, there will

be three to five subjects that come to mind when you give yourself the prompt, “I’m often asked...” Write those subjects down somewhere, and when you’re searching for a topic to write about, choose one from that list.

- **Head to Social Media:** You may think of social media as just a time suck (and I’d be happy to argue against that another day), but it’s also a great research tool. Why drive yourself crazy looking for source inspiration for content when you can head over to Twitter, where you’ve set up columns of keywords and phrases that deliver the relevant trends right to your desktop? Or head to LinkedIn where you can jump into one of the subject matter groups that you’re a member in and quickly identify what people are talking about most often. It takes no more than five minutes to review the top headlines or trends in your area of expertise, and come up with your own take on the subject that you can translate into a blog post, video clip, infographic, etc.
- **Check out the News:** “News jacking” is “the art and science of injecting your ideas into a breaking news story so you and your ideas get noticed.” Every day, there are major news stories that people are talking about and sharing, and more often than not, they will have a legal angle that you could weigh in on, if it matches with your area of expertise. Take advantage of those stories that make sense for you to inject your opinion on, and ride the wave of news jacking.

As you’re developing these content ideas, you may put them in a list that you keep for when you need inspiration. But it would be even more productive to have an editorial calendar that you’re using instead. This isn’t just lip service – creating an editorial calendar was one of the most useful things I’ve ever done for my own content marketing strategy.

I based my template on [HubSpot’s editorial calendar](#), and review and update it quarterly. There are certain regular features that I do, such as Two for Tuesdays, our roundups, and Firm of the Month, and those I’ll put in automatically. Then I add in some other broad topic areas based on what I know has done well in the past with my audience (because I track metrics) – it may be something like networking or social media or business development best practices. That leaves me the ability to be more specific once I’m actually ready to write, but leaves me broad enough guidelines that I have the latitude to jump into the latest trends and still stay on topic while retaining the accountability that I need.

And accountability is what’s key here for me – when I didn’t have an editorial calendar, it was too easy to put off writing because I was busy. Something will always come up that will take precedence over content creation if you don’t prioritize it. So I calendar my posts, and on Fridays, review the following week’s broad topics and which days I have identified for writing. As ideas come up, I can either input them into my calendar, or I will keep them in a running list in a draft post I keep on the back end of the blog. Either way is helpful for keeping my content fresh and regular.

Resolution Two: I’ll Try to Make New Friends

I’m not trying to be all happy and cheery here – this is about business development. Forbes suggests:

“

Contrary to what some people seem to believe, guest blogging is not dead, even after Google's most recent algorithm changes. Posting guest blogs haphazardly on any website isn't a good strategy for your search engine optimization, but posting guest blogs on industry websites and relevant blogs can be a good thing. Along with helping with search engine optimization, it can also help with establishing a good name and bringing in natural traffic from a well-targeted audience.

Plus, if you return the favor and let other people post guest blogs on your blog, you can take some time off from posting every now and then and can bring some refreshing content onto your site, which is always a good thing. This is also a great incentive for some of your partners or companies you'd like to be associated with. Try reaching out to them and offering them the chance to have their content published on your blog.”

Forbes talks a lot about SEO, but let's just focus on the human side here and what it means for your content and business development – there are two ways that content marketing can really help you with direct business development.

Guest Posts

The first is guest blogging (or invitations to do other types of content), as Forbes suggests. You have a blog or other type of content that you distribute, there is someone that you either want to meet or want to further your relationship with, such as a client or potential client or media connection, so you invite them to share their own knowledge in a guest piece. It doesn't have to be a straight guest piece either – you could collaborate, adding more opportunity for interaction, or make it an interview.

The idea is that you're not trying to connect with someone with an overt business development request. You're appealing to their ego by saying that you respect their opinion enough to feature their commentary on your own blog or site, and you're opening up a dialogue between you. Even if they say no, you've opened the door, and it's likely that they will at least check out your own work in considering whether to participate.

Source Engagement

The other way is through what we'll call source engagement, and it's something that we talked about in [last week's post](#). When you're sourcing your blog posts or other content, it's rare that any of us come up with

unique ideas – and actually, it's better if we don't. You create credibility when you're not the only voice on the subject – when you take something smart that someone else has written, link to it and quote from it, and then add your own opinion and perspective on it.

Why not be strategic about who you're quoting from and linking to? Are there clients or potential clients or media sources that you'd like to get to know, who are also writing in your area of expertise? Stay on top of their commentary, and when they write something that you can add to, do so. Then send them an email or LinkedIn request with a link to your content, and let them know that you thought so highly of their work that you wanted to add to the conversation and further share their thoughts.

It opens the door on the relationship, and may create opportunities for you to then take it offline when you offer to buy them a cup of coffee when you're visiting their city, ostensibly so that you can talk more about the same subject that you both discussed in your content. This will likely happen much more with media sources than with clients and potential clients, who don't author content as frequently, but it's an excellent way to create relationships with influencers in your field of practice who can spread your name even further than your own content already manages to do.

What are your content marketing resolutions for 2016?