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## **Growing Your Law Practice Productively: A Twelve Step Program for Curing Social Media Addiction**

**Jerome Kowalski  
Kowalski & Associates  
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**C**onfession: I am a [fan](#) and a [believer](#) of the commercial vitality of social media. But then again, I suppose I also enjoy a fine wine from time, an occasional trip to a gambling casino, a social liaison and an occasional cigar. But the vice is that any of these pastimes can easily turn into addictions. I say this bearing in mind part of the American Psychiatric Association's definition (DSM- IV) of addiction: "Repeated use resulting in failure to fulfill

obligations at work, school, or home." The trick of course is that all of life's pleasures are enjoyed best when used in moderation.

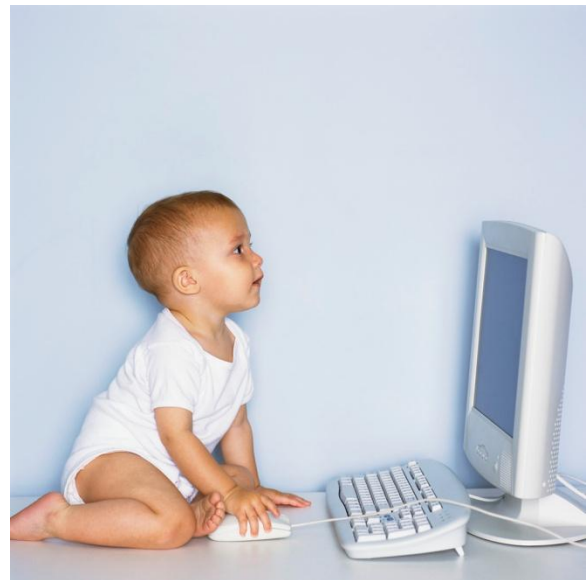
The issue came up a month or so ago when I was visiting with a client's executive committee which was taking its first cut at budgeting and calculating partner compensation for the coming year. As we went through the partnership rolls, we came to a mid-level partner, whom I shall, for

purposes of this piece call Bob, because that's his name. Ken, the firm's managing partner, quietly rolled his chair back from the conference table and said simply "Bob is a real problem." "How so?" I asked. "Well," Ken said, Bob is a fine lawyer who came up through the ranks. He is talented, smart, a team player and is a tireless worker. He is an important service partner in our banking group. But in the last couple of years, his billable hours have gone way down and the department head tells me that he has plenty of work for Bob to do that he just doesn't get to. But, by the same token, Bob is starting to bring in some revenues. He's brought in almost \$750,000 in quality work from some fine clients, which is nice, given the fact that two years ago, he brought in zero. But that year, he billed close to 2,000 hours and this past year he billed less than 800 hours. Yet, he is always in the office and seems to be constantly busy. But he also billed 1,500 hours to 'client development.' He's also managed to get his name in the papers commenting as an expert on recent developments in banking law and he's been having greater success in getting his name out there than the head of the department and we have a paid PR flack whose mission is to get the chairman's name out there. While I've complimented him on his growing business and fame, he just doesn't want to listen when I tell him that client development is critical, but he is losing sight of the fact that the actual legal work needs to be done." I suggested that I spend a little time with Bob and see of I could get a handle on what his game plan is.



So I moseyed down the hall later that day and popped in on Bob. A handsome straight laced 38 year old Ivy League law school graduate, Bob was

pecking anxiously away at his keyboard, using two computer screens, staring intensely at both. He took no notice of my arrival. I finally harrumphed and said "Bob! I was in the neighborhood and thought I would stop by." No response, as Bob continued to feverishly peck away. I repeated myself a bit louder and got the same reaction. I then came around his desk, tugged at his elbow and again repeated myself.



Bob greeted me pleasantly, but surely very distracted. He then said:

"What a day! I got to work at the crack of dawn. I checked my [Twitter](#) feed and then re-tweeted a bunch of stuff. I checked [LinkedIn](#) for updates and then for discussions in which I am participating. I responded to some comments in discussions in which I am participating and some new discussions. I checked all of the on line trade and business papers for items of interest and Tweeted those. I checked my RSS feed and then my [Google Reader](#). I Tweeted items of interest. I checked my [Facebook](#) pages – personal and business and responded where appropriate. I then checked [Google+](#) and commented where appropriate. I then

checked [Quora](#), [Reddit](#) and [StumbledUpon](#). I again commented and Tweeted where appropriate. I wrote a great blog post about the [Volker Rule](#). I published the blog post to various LinkedIn groups, I Tweeted the post, uploaded it to [JD Supra](#), posted it to Google+, Reddit, [Digg](#) and Stumbledupon. I responded to various new comments in LinkedIn as they appeared during the course of the day. I published my post to [Lexology](#). I then logged on to [Legalonramp](#) and posted there. I checked Facebook and Google+ again. I responded to comments posted on my blog. I have three calls that I need to return from *The Wall Street Journal*, Reuters and Bloomberg. And, as you can see, it's now 5:00 PM and time to start doing some work. But I'm too tired. On the plus side, I have 2,615 followers on Twitter, 457 connections on LinkedIn, I belong to 30 LinkedIn groups, I have 650 friends on Facebook, 350 people in my Google+ circles, and when I add all of these up, together with the aggregators I posted to, I have gotten my name in front of well over 10,000,000 professionals and business people around the world. And I think I did a pretty good job at my blog post so there are 10,000,000 or so people who I would hope that I have some demonstrated expertise in this growing field of law."



I quickly did the math and concluded that Bob was probably right on the mark in terms of the number of people whom he was exposed to that day. I asked him what the results have been in terms of his own professional advancement. He said, "well two years ago, I was just a service partner, which was nice, but really didn't give me a lot of job security. Last year, I brought in about three quarters of a million of new

quality work, all of which I can trace to my social media activities. Based on the stuff I have in the pipeline, I expect to double that next year. That is my job security."

Bob was of course right. But, I pulled out my trusty DSM-IV manual and quickly diagnosed Bob as a social media addict. The more social media in which he partook, the he needed to produce his required level of [dopamines](#).



Clearly, Bob needed a Twelve Step program. And so, this is what I recommended to Bob and Ken:

1. Bob had to admit that he was powerless over social media. His life had become unmanageable.
2. Bob also needed to admit that only a power greater than him (I suggested Ken) could restore him to sanity.
3. Bob also had to make a decision to turn the management of his professional life over to the management of his department head, and his firm' marketing department who would give him needed control over his addiction and his practice.
4. He also needed to make a

searching inventory of the various social media he was using and eliminate those that yielded poor or no results. Did he really get some business from Facebook or Google+? Was his Twitter account bringing traffic to his blog?

5. Admitting to himself and others where he had just gone too far in his social media addiction.

6. He had to be ready to remove all of his shortcomings. Among other things, Ken was right, somebody had to actually do the legal work and Bob's talents in this area were not being put to their highest and best use.

7. Bob also had to ask Ken, his department head, his marketing director and his partners help him rid himself of his shortcomings.

8. Make a list of all of those who had to pick up the work that Bob should have been handling.

9. Make amends to all of those who had to pick up Bob's slack, by not only pitching in more but in continuing to grow a quality practice for the

benefit of the ultimate higher authority: The Law Firm.

10. Continue to take a personal inventory of the most effective social media outlets that served Bob, his practice and the firm best.

11. Through careful thoughtfulness improve his conscious and productive contact with his colleagues.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening through these steps, it was Bob's mission to carry this message to other social media addicts and to practice these principles in all of his affairs.

Bob really did have an awakening. He continued to build his practice. His social media activities are still a part of his life, but don't control his life. And his practice continues to grow productively. And, I expect he will be treated well by his firm's compensation committee.

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**Jerry Kowalski, who provides consulting services to law firms, is also a dynamic (and often humorous) speaker on topics of interest to the profession and can be reached at [jkowalski@kowalskiassociates.com](mailto:jkowalski@kowalskiassociates.com).**