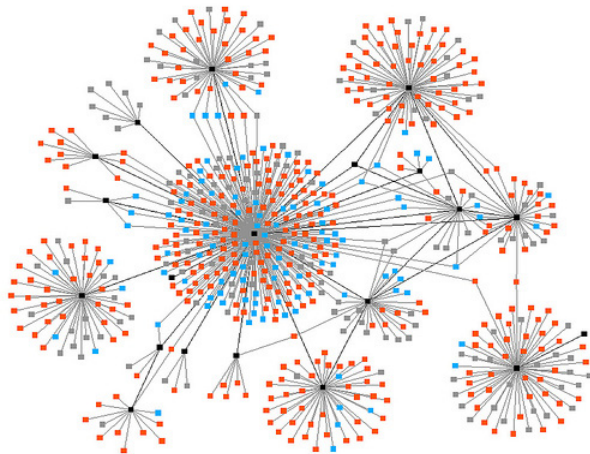


*A Winthrop & Weinstine blog dedicated to bridging the gap between legal & marketing types.*

## It's a Small World: Using Your (Social) Networks to Grow Relationships That May Lead to Business

August 18, 2011 by [Laura Gutierrez](#)



Awareness isn't just about making a name for yourself. It's about utilizing your network and being aware of others' strengths in a way that mutually benefits both parties.

As humans, we can't know everything. (That may be shocking!) That's why we have friends—referrals—to ask for real-world advice.

With a straight face, I can tell you that networking and meeting new people has the potential for new business. I know, because it's worked for me (note: I don't sell anything, but it's great for my reputation and development). In my line of work—[legal marketing](#)—we often hear lamentations about how business

development *doesn't* work. Where is the new business? Why isn't the potential client calling me? We always want to ask—have you called them for advice in their niche area? Are they top of mind when you think of their industry? Like in all relationships, there needs to be mutual trust. Why would someone trust you if you never go to them? Relationships, as I've mentioned several times, are a two-way conversation. For example, if all your "best friend" ever did was talk about herself and never asked about you, do you think you'd share your most personal information?

I can't tell you how helpful it is to be able to pick up the phone and call one of my many sources—many of whom have become great friends after "meeting" via social networks—and ask for advice (and by "advice" I mean similar experiences, a "sounding board," as my dear friend [Lindsay Griffiths said](#)). I can do this because we've established trust. They know the reason I'm calling isn't for the sole purpose of getting what I want for nothing in exchange. They know they can call me if there was ever a need, and I'd be more than happy to share my knowledge on whatever subject it may be.



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## Solid Advice

In addition to the [advice I gave on not burning bridges](#), you must keep in contact! Here's where the social networking comes in. It provides the perfect opportunity, in that you can update a wide audience on what's going on without having to inform each individual. Those peers are interested on you and your life, and are more apt to keep in contact if they feel like they know you.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. [LexBlog's Kevin O'Keefe wrote a wonderful post](#) in response to HubSpot's Dan Zarella, who said that *engaging in social media doesn't extend your reach*. Kevin said:

Lawyers get their best work by virtue of relationships and their word of mouth reputation. The Internet didn't change that. The Internet accelerates relationships and reputation.

Please remember that using social networks in and of itself does not get you business. There is so much more that goes on—*relationships*. If you can't hold a relationship, don't think you'll get a lot of business out of it. But, if you're consistent and continue to keep in contact, there's no reason those relationships won't produce some kind of "fruit."

The [Director of Marketing](#) at [Winthrop & Weinstine](#) (my lovely boss, Deb Cochran) thinks of social networking as a memoir—updating your profile(s) with short tidbits on your life. It doesn't have to be very personal, but something that might connect you to others. Maybe it's checking in at the Uptown Art Fair, or letting your audience know you're participating in the Warrior Dash, or even that you're engaged. Your network *will* notice by giving you a "like" on Facebook or asking about it the next time you meet in person. It has nothing to do with business, but consumers do business with people and companies they **know and trust**.

Here are some examples of using your network:

- Relationship advice: My good friend (whom I "met" via Twitter and then in person) sent her network of close friends a message about finding a partner in life. This person knows and trusts us, and therefore thought we were good enough referral sources for that purpose. We may not find her "soul-mate," but I was happy because she trusted me enough to ask.
- Best practices: I received an email from a friend and colleague in California asking what our advice is on sports tickets. She'll use it in her blog post, with credit of course, but a great way to exchange best practices. We're not "giving away the farm," here. Many times we can build on what others are doing. Adapt and grow!
- Career advice: My boss is an amazing source (solid career advice, stories of what it was like being a woman in the workforce to make me feel like I don't have it so bad). In addition to her, I've got a really great resource in a colleague who's been through it all. If I have a bad day, this person is great to turn to. We keep in contact regularly, and I know that if I ever needed the services his company provides, they'd be top of mind.



You can apply this to all sorts of relationships and industries. But make sure you're giving, too. There's a thin line between a discussion to motivate and getting the work done for you. But it never hurts to ask. People are typically happy you asked them as an "expert" on the subject.

Here are all those clichés: Give to get. Karma. You get what you deserve.

Go, and do good things. ;)

*[photo courtesy of [AJC1's flickr](#)]*

