

## White Paper 5.0.1

*A Jaffe White Paper*

May, 2009

# TWITTERING FOR LAWYERS

## PART ONE



Jaffe

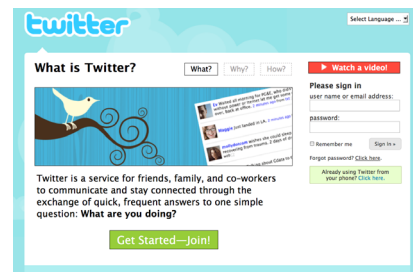
## TWITTERING FOR LAWYERS

You've likely heard the news media all atwitter over Twitter (sorry, we couldn't help ourselves). The power of the Twitterverse has been known to kill advertising campaigns (Motrin moms), wreak havoc with consumer brands (Domino's), and provide up-to-the-second insight into breaking news stories (US Airways plane lands on the Hudson).

Twitter is where it's at online. Everyone is on Twitter, from President Obama to Shaquille O'Neal, from Lance Armstrong, Britney Spears, Barbara Walters, and Oprah Winfrey to the guy who runs your research library. Over 20 million people are now reported to be using Twitter. With the service growing so fast, it might seem as if it's too late to jump in, join the conversation, and start moving the needle for your law firm or your personal practice.

It's not too late, and, from the looks of things, Twitter is just getting started. It is an important conversational tool—whether you're joining the conversation or just listening in.

Here's a primer on what you need to know to get Twittering and some ideas on ways lawyers are using it.



## WHAT EXACTLY IS TWITTER?

Twitter is a free microblogging service that lets you get news and information and have conversations in real time quickly and easily. This information is exchanged in posts of 140 characters or less when users answer the question, "What are you doing?" These posts are called "tweets."

One of the reasons that Twitter is so popular is that it's extremely easy to jump into the Twitter stream. Twitter messages can be sent from just about any computing device—through mobile texting, instant messaging, and the web.

When you join Twitter, you get a personal page and a dedicated Twitter address ([www.twitter.com/yourusername](http://www.twitter.com/yourusername)). Your personal page shows your latest tweets and the tweets of the people you have chosen to follow. You can choose to follow anyone on Twitter, including your friends, business associates, clients, and the aforementioned celebrities. They, in turn, can choose to follow you. Oprah Winfrey joined Twitter and had 100,000 followers in about three hours, for example.

*1 When Motrin launched an ad campaign that implied that moms wore their babies in slings because it was trendy, Mommy bloggers used Twitter to rail against the company and the campaign was pulled instantly.*

*2 Two Domino's employees posted a disgusting video on YouTube showing them preparing food in an unsavory manner in a Domino's store, sparking a stream of negative comments about the brand on Twitter and other social media sites. Domino's joined the Twitter fray and quickly turned the conversation around in its favor.*

Typically, the people who follow you will read your tweets on their home pages or by using special software that sorts tweets. Whether using a Twitter home page or an application designed to help make reading Twitter easier, your followers read updates in a constant stream from you and everyone else they're following. The Twitter Public Timeline is a public version of Twitter where anyone can see all the tweets. It's the public record of Twitter.

## SO WHAT CAN LAWYERS DO ON TWITTER?

Lawyers on Twitter are using the service for networking; information gathering; and sharing, branding, and marketing. A patent lawyer in Cleveland uses the service to tweet about new court cases involving patents and other developments in his specialty; another lawyer monitors conversations about legal issues and his firm's and clients' reputations; a third lawyer, a blogger, says he has replaced his blogging activity with Twittering because that's where the conversation is happening; and a fourth uses it to monitor breaking news that could be relevant to his practice.

Lawyers on Twitter can follow events in the courts too. Legal blogger Bob Ambrogi says that Philadelphia courts are Twittering, and he expects others to follow suit. Another good use of Twitter (and other social media sites) is to research deponents.

## WHY 140 CHARACTERS?

The Twitterverse is all about brevity: think of microblogging as an instant message merged with a blog. One hundred forty characters, including spaces and punctuation, affords enough room for one long or two short sentences, which may include a link to an interesting article or to your own blog post. Abbreviations help, but tweets aren't generally written in the text messaging shorthand that teens adore. Instead, the Twitter universe has generated its own lexicon, which may look loopy to Twitter neophytes but is simple to understand, easy to use, and incredibly useful.

We explain more about the Twitter lexicon later.

Here's an example of a typical post:

**RT @LawyerBob #environlaw Yale law Prof Williams lays out legislative framework to protect environment: <http://tinyurl.com/c9txcb>\***

*\*SAMPLE POST*

## WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD TWEET?

At its most basic, a good tweet is something of interest to your followers. Many people use Twitter to post links to interesting articles they find online. Others publicize and promote their own blog posts on their Twitter streams. Many journalists promote themselves and their work on Twitter. Some use the service to find sources and information by asking questions. Asking questions of any type—for a good restaurant recommendation or a work resource—is a typical Twitter activity.

Because Twitter happens in real time, it is often used to add an extra layer of commentary about and insight into live events. According to the American Bar Association website, last year at the ABA TechShow, “lawyers used Twitter to help conference attendees better communicate and network. Conference attendees were encouraged to Twitter colleagues to let them know when they just heard or saw something really cool, or to let everyone know about a raffle drawing happening in a few minutes, if they were looking for someone interested in a particular subject, or when an important session is about to start.”

Of course, many people on Twitter post navel-gazing tweets but we recommend that you keep these types of tweets to a minimum. The most influential people on Twitter offer their followers information that’s useful.

## ANATOMY OF A TWEET

As mentioned above, Twitter posts seem to have a language of their own. If you look at Twitter streams, you’ll notice that many posts contain a # sign or a @ sign. Still others have URLs that look much shorter than the typical web link. Then there’s RT.

Understanding how to use these symbols is good etiquette on Twitter, but they serve another, more important purpose. They help improve how Twitter works by providing order to the chaos of the service. The symbols enable software to sort tweets so that users can search for topics of interest to them, they let users know when they’re being quoted, and they can help inform analysis of influence on Twitter.

### About the # Sign

Called a hashtag on Twitter, a # sign is used to signify a searchable topic. If “#patentlaw” or “#supremecourt” is in a post, anyone who wants to find the latest information on these topics can find them using the search function on Twitter (<http://search.twitter.com/>).

### About the @ Sign

Many Twitter posts also have an @ sign. The @ sign is used when you want to talk to someone in public on Twitter. In this case you refer to the person as “@username.” The @ symbol helps spread your tweet to his or her feed. By using the @ sign, you enable everyone else who is following you to find the people you are talking to easily by clicking on the @ link on their streams.

### About Tiny URLs

The most useful tweets contain links. Because Twitter allows for only 140 characters, Twitter users automatically shorten URLs using free services such as Tiny URL or bit.ly (<http://tinyurl.com/>) or (<http://bit.ly/>). These services are easy to use—just drag the icons onto the toolbar on your desktop. When you find an article you’d like to share, click on the tiny URL icon, and your shortened URL is automatically generated. Of course the beauty in shortening links is that you have more space to provide commentary about them in your 140-character post.

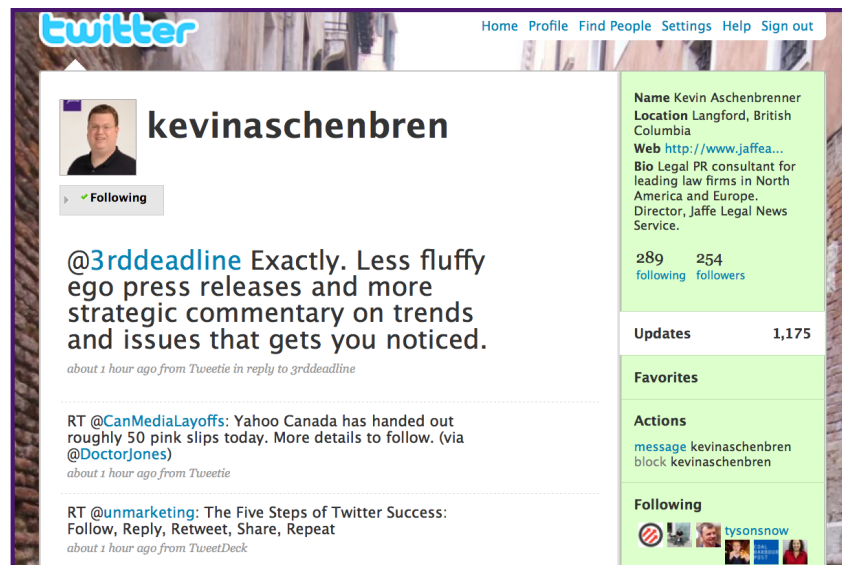
### About RT

RT stands for “retweeting.” On Twitter, it can be likened to forwarding an e-mail. When you RT a post, your

followers can see it too. Twitter etiquette suggests that the original author be given credit for the post, so you retweet by typing “RT @username” and that person’s message. You can add your own comments too.

### About Direct Message (DM)

You can have a private conversation on Twitter with the people who follow you by using the “direct message” button. Direct messages are private conversations, like e-mails, and should be used to respond to someone directly, ask a question about a post, and keep back-and-forth banter off your main Twitter feed and out of public view.



## HOW DO YOU FIND PEOPLE TO FOLLOW AND GET PEOPLE TO FOLLOW YOU?

A presence on Twitter alone won’t help you achieve your goals if no one follows you. People won’t come automatically. You have to find followers and get them to follow you in order to start a conversation.

It all starts with your Twitter ID and biography. Make your user ID simple, sensible, and as short as possible. The practical reason for this is that your ID—and the photo that accompanies it, which is a must on Twitter—is the way you brand yourself. If you keep your user name short and branded, when your posts are retweeted, your name doesn’t eat up too many characters. If you have a very long name, consider using your first initial, last name, or a phrase such as “LawyerBob” or “DivorceLawRobin.”

Your Twitter biography is as important as your ID and the photo you upload on the site to accompany your posts. Only 160 characters, your biography can make the difference between whether someone who doesn’t know you chooses to follow you. Be very specific about who you are and relate it to what you plan to offer on Twitter. Make it easy for the people who find you to “say yes.” If you decide to make changes, don’t worry. It’s simple to update your biography.

Finding followers takes time and diligence. Twitter allows you to upload your web-based address book automatically to identify everyone in your network who is already on Twitter. That's one way to start building your network.

Attracting new people that you think might be interesting can also be done strategically using any number of Twitter directories, including [Twellow](#) (a yellow pages for Twitter), [Twitter Search](#) (think Google search for Twitter), [WeFollow](#) (a directory by topics), and [Mr. Tweet](#) (which recommends followers to you, based on your activity).

When you begin following people, you can look at their pages to see whom they are following. If you're on Facebook or LinkedIn, you already know that exploring your contacts' networks is the best way to find interesting people with whom you want to connect. Twitter works the same way.

Once you join Twitter, remember to add your Twitter ID to all your signatures—on your e-mail, Facebook, LinkedIn, and LegalOnRamp profiles too, to let everyone know you're now Twittering.

## DO YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW EVERYONE WHO FOLLOWS YOU?

Some people follow just a few people on Twitter; others follow thousands of "tweeps" (as people who Twitter are called). You do not have to follow everyone who follows you. You can follow as few—or as many—people as you like. The best thing to do is follow the people who are of interest to you. And if they turn out not to post as advertised, feel free to "unfollow them" (there's a button for this on your profile page). Keep in mind that Twitter can be time-consuming. The more people you follow, the more time you'll spend wading through tweets to find the things that really are of interest to you.

## SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE TWITTERING

Now that you know some of the basics of Twitter, it's time to decide whether it's for you. The most important thing to do before joining Twitter is to determine what you want to get out of the service in the first place.

Twittering can help you brand yourself or your firm. But, according to online branding experts, Twittering is only a part of your marketing strategy; it cannot be your entire marketing strategy. That means that you and your law firm should proceed with great thought. Understand how Twitter integrates with the rest of your marketing communications initiatives. Follow these steps if you decide to venture into Twitter:

**Step 1:** Listen. Don't dive in until you've spent some time listening on Twitter. The Twitter "search" function, described above, allows you to listen to conversations.

- Step 2:** Set goals and determine your communications style. Define your communications objectives and know how you'd like your brand to be perceived online. How would your law firm talk if it were having a conversation with people who have chosen to listen to you? If you blog for your law firm, Twitter can be used to promote some posts—but not all of them. People who use only Twitter to promote their own posts are generally frowned upon because constant self-promotion is considered bad etiquette. Remember that Twitter is a conversation.
- Step 3:** Decide who will Twitter from your firm. Your law firm's social media policy can help set guidelines for Twittering in-house. If you don't have one, check out Jaffe's social media guidelines.
- Step 4:** Practice the parlance before you start posting.

True story: A young lawyer recently tweeted that his mother told him that he should get off Twitter because his Twittering was confusing to his clients. When we peeked at his Twitter stream, we had to say, "Your mother was right." The young lawyer tweeted about his dog, and he posted @ replies that should have been direct messages (private communication on Twitter) to someone we can only assume was his girlfriend; yet his Twitter biography focused on his work as an attorney.

If you are tweeting as a professional, it's okay to occasionally post something whimsical about your dog or your excitement about your favorite baseball team's win. This makes you human, relatable, and interesting. But reserve the personal messages for e-mail or use the direct message function on Twitter for conversations that should not be in the public eye.

- Step 5:** Follow the rules and use the symbols. When you add links, make sure to add some insight into why you've posted the link so your followers can decide whether to click through.
- Step 6:** Be useful. Don't just talk about your offerings at the law firm. Twitter is all about the conversation; it's not a sales call.
- Step 7:** Look for Jaffe Associates' "Guide to Twittering, Part II," coming soon. We explain how to use applications to enhance your Twitter experience, learn about some Twitter rituals such as #FollowFriday, investigate how journalists are using Twitter for their reporting, and hear from Twitter experts in the legal field about how they're using the service.

For further information contact, Jay Jaffe, [jaffej@jaffeassociates.com](mailto:jaffej@jaffeassociates.com), or Liz Lindley, [lindleyl@jaffeassociates.com](mailto:lindleyl@jaffeassociates.com), or visit [jaffeassociates.com](http://jaffeassociates.com) and visit our [P.R. 2.0 Resource Center](#) located under Tools and Information.

[@jaffej](https://twitter.com/jaffej)

[@lizbardlindley](https://twitter.com/lizbardlindley)

[@kevinaschenbren](https://twitter.com/kevinaschenbren)

[@jaffeassociates](https://twitter.com/jaffeassociates)

[@jlms](https://twitter.com/jlms)

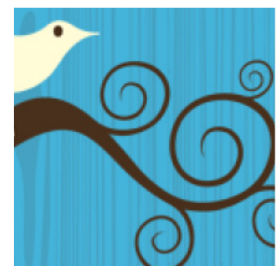
[@joshdkaufman](https://twitter.com/joshdkaufman)

[@tfstanton](https://twitter.com/tfstanton)

[@vivianhood](https://twitter.com/vivianhood)

[@jasonmilch](https://twitter.com/jasonmilch)

[@monicaesmith](https://twitter.com/monicaesmith)



# TWITTERING FOR LAWYERS

## PART 1



Jaffe Associates | Make It Happen

[www.jaffeassociates.com](http://www.jaffeassociates.com)

**Jaffe Associates** ([www.jaffeassociates.com](http://www.jaffeassociates.com)) is the leading public relations firm serving law firms in North America and Europe. Working only in the legal industry, Jaffe offers a broad range of classic PR and PR 2.0 services, crisis communications, strategic marketing consulting, creative support, and web/technology services. Established more than 30 years ago, Jaffe operates as a fully virtual company with a staff of experienced legal publicists and consultants located throughout the US and Canada. Our goal is to 'Make It Happen' for our clients with efficient implementation that goes far beyond goal-setting, strategy and planning.