

Are You Beer-Worthy?

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By Adrian Dayton



Let's face it, many lawyers are introverts. They feel more comfortable working at their desks than at a networking reception filled with strangers and awkward moments. Perhaps this is why introverts are drawn to the idea of social networking and business development through LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. They hope they won't have to put themselves out there to build new relationships. Unfortunately, in my experience this is not reality.

When I traveled to Australia and New Zealand in February to speak to a variety of organizations about social media, I often started my speaking engagements with an anecdote involving a can of Coca-Cola. After sharing this story a couple of times, and not getting much of a response, I realized that perhaps Coke wasn't the same icon in Australia that it was in the United States. So I asked a group of lawyers: What is the comparable soft drink in Australia?

"Beer" came the reply from a lawyer who looked nothing like Crocodile Dundee.

It came as no surprise that beer was an important drink culturally for the Australians, but I learned something else that I thought was fascinating. I learned a concept called "beer-worthiness."

We tend to do business with people we know, like and trust — in that order. Beer-worthiness speaks to the question, "Is this someone you would like to have a beer with?" Is this someone you would enjoy talking to, strategizing with and taking a break with when you aren't in the heat of litigation? That's the type of person clients like to hire.

So how do we achieve this status? The logical path to becoming an experienced lawyer is clear: go to a good school, get your degree, join a fine firm. The path to becoming beer-worthy is more art than logic. Clients decide to like someone based on intangibles such as non-verbal cues and the amount of empathy they perceive in us. These intangibles rarely come across in tweets, blog posts or status updates. It usually takes real human interaction to achieve the lofty status of beer-worthiness.

In full disclosure, I'm not a beer drinker, but in training and coaching lawyers all over the country about social media I have come to the conclusion that they can help break the ice, help start a conversation. But it ends there. Unless lawyers are willing to pick up the phone, make an appointment, grab a cup of coffee or hit the bar, they won't find traction in their social networking efforts.

As social networking continues to explode, our interpersonal skills will be essential to business development. I overheard two chief marketing officers from large firms discussing how none of their rainmakers had joined the firm straight out of law school: "They didn't have the pedigrees. They joined later as laterals." The point was that these firms didn't really know how to find aspiring lawyers who could develop business. The people conducting the first-year-associate job interviews were asking the wrong questions. Perhaps one question they should have been asking was, "Are you beer-worthy?"

Adrian Dayton is a speaker, facilitator and author of the book, *Social Media for Lawyers: Twitter Edition*. His latest book, co-authored by Amy Knapp, is *Social Media for Lawyers: LinkedIn & Blog Edition* tentatively scheduled for release in September. To be the first to hear about the official release date, sign up at <http://adriandayton.com>.