

Are Social Media Worth Your Time?

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By Adrian Dayton



In a recent survey of social-media trends by The National Law Journal affiliate ALM Legal Intelligence, 44 percent of the law firms questioned cited “lack of time” as their biggest obstacle to expanding their use of social media.

This leads to two thoughts — that lawyers aren’t spending time on social media because they don’t think it works, or that they simply are not very good managers of their time. The report’s findings suggest ways around these major impediments to broader use of social media within law firms.

The ALM report, *Fans, Followers and Connections: Social Media ROI for Law Firms*, makes the case that social media produce a clear return on investment. Sixty-one percent of the firms surveyed reported that using blogs helped them land speaking engagements, while 58 percent reported an increase in the number of calls from reporters. While their rates of success varied widely, one firm counted 75 telephone calls from reporters as a result of their blogs.

Publicity is nice, but what about new business? Are blogs and social media bringing in new clients?

Apparently. More than half of firms surveyed received leads on new matters and 41 percent reported that social media and blogging brought in between \$5,000 and \$200,000 in new business.

So what was different about the firms that reported success and the ones that did not? Time. The firms that were successful in their use of social media were able to persuade their lawyers to make them a priority.

Blogs require a huge time commitment. Approximately 75 percent of the firms updated their blogs at least weekly; the rest updated far less frequently, posting only once during each month or less. In my experience, blogs that are updated that infrequently are difficult to sustain and are far less likely to produce measurable results. To find success, bloggers need to make time to post on a regular basis. Sixty-six percent of the firms surveyed reported publishing new posts either weekly or twice per week. This frequency of posting requires a substantial amount of time, but has proven successful.

So how do firms convince their lawyers that blogging is worth the time?

It helps to point to the success their competition is having — lawyers are more often persuaded by precedent than by hard data, after all. I've interviewed dozens of bloggers during the past year, and those who update their blogs regularly assure me that, yes, blogging is absolutely worth it. Some land new matters and some only gain greater visibility, but in the vast majority of the cases blogging and social media open the lawyers to new contacts and referral sources, and help them build high-value relationships that would not have been possible but for their use of social media.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings involved a case study at Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice. “A typical attorney in the firm has up to 100 visitors to their firm bio page each month,” said Aden Dauchess, the firm’s director of digital media. “The active bloggers and users of social media have at least 200 visitors each month – and several have 500 or more visitors to their bio page every month.”

In other words, there is a measurable difference in exposure for lawyers who take the time to use social media compared with those who do not.

When I was growing up, whenever I complained that I didn’t have the time to join the football team or practice the piano, my father would reply, “We do the things in life we want to do.” With fresh data making the case for - blogging and social media all the time, it is no longer a question of whether these tools work. The question is whether you will organize your time to make them work for you.

Adrian Dayton is an attorney, social media consultant and co-author with Amy Knapp of [LinkedIn & Blogs for Lawyers: Building High Value Relationships in a Digital Age](#) (West Publishing 2012). Download the first chapter for FREE using the form [here](#).