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LegalCURRENTS

Google Plus 101 for lawyers, part 2

Last week I explained why I believe that Google Plus is an important addition to the social media landscape.

Because Google Plus is the newest social network and already has a robust user base — having gained over 50 million users in just three and a half months — it's a good place to start for those lawyers considering their first foray into social media or for those interested in expanding their social media presence. Unlike the other networks, lawyers are sparse on Google Plus, so it's easier to establish a strong presence and stand out from the crowd.

Ok, I'm convinced. How do I get started?

It's simple. Sign up at <https://plus.google.com>. Once you have done so, create a robust profile that includes a decent photo of you and clearly describes your location, areas of practice and interests. Make sure to fill out the field directly below your name using a few concise words to describe you, since that's the only description that people see when they hover their cursor over your avatar when making a snap judgment as to whether to include you in their circles.

Next, locate people you know or whom you'd like to know. Google Plus has built in suggestions based on their own algorithms and information that you provide. Set up a few basic circles and then decide whom you'd like to include in your circles using Google's suggestions.

Then, consider following the lawyers included on this list of lawyers and legal professionals on Twitter that was curated by Adrian Lurssen of JDSupra: <http://tinyurl.com/gpluslawyers>.

Next, check out the people followed by some of the more interesting lawyers that you've discovered. In many cases, you'll locate additional legal professionals to follow.

Another way to locate people is to use the built-in search function at the top of the Google Plus home page. You can search for a particular person or enter search terms such as "lawyers," "litigators," "Realtors," or any other classification that interests you.

How and what do I share?

Google Plus is particularly conducive to interactive, threaded discussions. It's easy to share a link or start a discussion by inputting information into the "Share what's new" field at the top of your Google Plus home page. You can then choose which circles to share the post with.

You can even direct the post to specific users by including their username preceded by a "+" (+username). You also follow that very same process — i.e. "+username+" — when mentioning other users in comments to a post. Including their name in a post or comment ensures that they will be notified of the discussion and then have a chance to offer their two cents.

As for what you should share — consider sharing links to articles or blog posts that interest you or that you think would be of interest to a particular subset of people whom you follow. Insert the URL of the article or blog post into the "Share what's new" field and Google Plus will automatically create a title and insert an image and link from the post. Before you post the link, note in the comment field why you think it's interesting or ask your followers for their opinion on an issue raised in the article or blog post.

Next, you can also simply input text into the "Share what's new" field, whether it's an update about your practice or a question about a specific issue addressed to your followers.

When interacting on Google Plus, follow my social media interaction formula:

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- 50 percent of posts should provide links, articles, other blog content, and re-sharing interesting posts from other users.
- 30 percent should consist of replies to other users (interaction).
- 10 percent of posts should be self-promotion, including firm accomplishments, and links to your blog.
- 10 percent should relate to your personal interests (although I would be selective with that on this particular platform, since I

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believe Google Plus will ultimately be more business-oriented than, for example, Facebook).

Is Google Plus the solution to all my problems?

Unfortunately, no it's not. It's just a social media platform. Participating on Google Plus may benefit your practice — and it may not. Whether your practice stands to benefit from your interaction on any social media platform, including Google Plus, depends on a number of factors, including your goals, how long you've been in practice, whether you already have a steady stream of business, how strong your professional network is, your geographic region, your areas of practice and your comfort level

with online technologies.

That being said, if, after carefully researching your options, you decide using social media would be a good investment for your law firm, Google Plus is a good place to start.

*Nicole Black is of counsel to Fiandach & Fiandach in Rochester. She co-authors the ABA book *Social Media for Lawyers: the Next Frontier*, co-authors *Criminal Law in New York*, a West-Thomson treatise, and is currently writing a book about cloud computing for lawyers that will be published by the ABA. She is the founder of *lawtechTalk.com* and speaks regularly at conferences regarding the intersection of law and technology. She publishes four legal blogs and can be reached at nblack@nicoleblackesq.com.*