

# THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

## Five things lawyers should know about social media

*"[S]ocial media is a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. It's a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologues (one to many) into dialogues (many to many) and is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media has become extremely popular because it allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal, political and business use. Businesses also refer to social media as user-generated content (UGC) or consumer-generated media (CGM)."*

— WIKIPEDIA ENTRY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Online interaction is now commonplace.

Networking sites, including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, are becoming mainstream. Opportunities for attorneys to connect and interact with potential clients are endless.

Before jumping on the "social media" bandwagon, however, there are a few important things about social media that lawyers must comprehend. The failure to do so will result in unsuccessful and disappointing forays into the online marketplace.

### Social media is useless without goals

Come up with a plan, then interact online.

Is your goal to appear higher in search engine results, showcase a particular area of expertise, or interact with other attorneys in the same practice area? Would you like to target local or national clientele?

The answers to those questions necessarily affect your overall social media strategy.

Learn about social media. Figure out how it works and how it can work for you. Then, implement a social media strategy that promotes your goals. Be patient. Results don't occur overnight.

### Different social media sites serve different purposes

An entire firm does not need to actively participate in social media, but a few lawyers should be familiar with emerging Web 2.0 technologies and the ways in which those technologies can help and harm a firm's bottom line.

At the very least, all members of a firm should have online profiles which include their areas of practice posted at LinkedIn, Justia and Avvo. It's free to create profiles at those sites, and doing so allows you to piggyback on the SEO (search

engine optimization) of large, established sites.

Facebook is another site to consider. It allows lawyers to reconnect with people they've lost touch with, opening up an entire network of potential client and referrers.

If a lawyer enjoys writing and is passionate about a particular area of the law, blogging is the perfect way to showcase the lawyer's expertise and writing skills, while simultaneously increasing SEO (due to the unique characteristics of blogs) and humanizing the attorney.

Twitter is ideal for lawyers seeking to expand their national network, increase their exposure and connect with influential people in all major industries.

Lawyers don't have to participate in every form of online interaction, but one way or another, participate and ensure the chosen forums promote the firm's overall goals.

### 'Social media' is a misnomer

Some lawyers discount the potential of "social media" due to the incorrect assumption that it's got nothing to do with business and is all about socializing. This is a serious mistake.

All online interactions, whether they are with other lawyers, old friends, or people you've just met and with whom you share a similar interest have the potential to benefit your career.

Social and professional networking necessarily overlap. A person's interests are not limited to their profession unless, of course, the person is an unbelievably one dimensional and boring human being.

People are more than their careers. Lawyers are more than their law firms. Which brings me to my next point:

### People want to hire other people, not businesses

While it is important to have a static website for your business, it is equally important for lawyers to cultivate a uniquely individual online presence as well.

The best way to do this is to take off your "lawyer hat". Talk to people, not at them. Interact, don't advertise. And, most importantly, share a little bit about yourself and your interests.

It is the overlap between the social and the professional that makes a lawyer more likeable, more approachable and more human.



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People want to pick up the phone and call a specific person — not an intimidating, faceless entity — when they have a problem. Large businesses hire law firms; people hire other people.

### **Lawyers cannot afford to be left out of the loop**

Attorneys who successfully leverage social media tools to communicate, collaborate and network have a distinct advantage over those who don't.

Stand out from the crowd. Use online resources to your advantage. Take advantage of the opportunity to interact with

potential clients and referral sources.

Be patient, persistent and positive. Use social media wisely and narrowly tailor your online activities toward the pursuit of specific goals.

Take my advice and you will see results. I guarantee it.

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