THE DAILY RECORD

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

Legal LOOP

Tips and tricks to get your legal blog started

Recently, I've had a number of lawyers approach me for career advice and during the course of our conversations, I sometimes suggest that the lawyer consider starting a law blog. Oftentimes I'm met with a somewhat terrified look or am peppered with questions about how to go about doing so. So, I figured it was high time that I wrote an article about the process of creating, and maintaining, a legal blog.

First things first, make sure that you enjoy the writing process and that you can decide on a topic or topics about which you are passionate. This is important because if you don't enjoy writing or the topics about which you write, your blog will fall flat.

The next thing you'll need to do is determine your goals. Why are you writing the blog? To showcase your writing skills and your expertise? To meet and network with other lawyers? To attract media attention? To reach potential clients? To improve search engine optimization for your blog and/or website? To expand your online presence? Or perhaps a combination of some of these goals?

Next, once you've established your goals, you'll need to decide which topic(s) you'd like to write about. Obviously, your chosen topics should further your goals. So, for example, if one of your primary goals is to reach potential clients, then your topics should be of interest to them and written on a level that is understandable to them.

By NICOLE BLACK

Daily Record Columnist

Alternatively, if connecting with other lawyers and showcasing your knowledge are two of your goals, you should focus on topics of interest to lawyers who may ultimately become referral sources.

Once you've settled on a few topics, you'll need to choose a blogging platform. Many people use Wordpress (wordpress.org), a free and easy-to-use blogging platform. My preferred platform is Typepad (typepad.com), which costs just $8.95 per month for a single blog. It's intuitive, is easily customizable, and integrates well with other Web-based tools and platforms.

Next you'll need to create a daily reading list of sites that post about content relevant to your chosen topics. That way you can keep up on the topics you've decided to write about and will thus have fodder for your blog posts. The easiest way to do that is to use an RSS feed reader. RSS feed readers are Web-based appli-

cations through which you can subscribe to the RSS feeds of various websites and blogs. Feed readers are important because they simplify your life and bring information relevant to your interests directly to you, in one place.

Many people use Google Reader (google.com/reader). I prefer Feedly (feedly.com).

Feedly is a browser add on. Once installed, you are able to subscribe to blogs (and/or import your Google Reader subscriptions) and can then organize your subscriptions into different categories. Your chosen content then appears in an easy to read, magazine-like interface.

And, as you open up each item you have the option of sharing it across your various social networks. Also helpful is that Feedly "learns" as you interact with it and serves up the most relevant content based on your usage habits.

Another option is to use a mobile app, such as Zite, which imports your Google Reader subscriptions and then, like Feedly, provides you relevant content in an easy to use magazine-like interface based on your interactions with the app.

The last thing you'll need to simplify your blogging experience is download Zemanta, a blog publishing aid (zemanta.com). Zemanta is a browser add-on that is designed to supplement and assist bloggers.

Once you install the app, it appears as an overlay to your blogging platform and suggests images with understandable license details (obtained from Wikimedia Commons, Flickr and various stock photo providers), links, tags and related articles. The suggestions made are based on based on a contextual analysis of the text of your post.

That's it! Once you've followed these steps, you'll be all set to blog. Best of luck and I'll see you around the blogosphere!

Nicole Black is VP at MyCaseInc.com, a cloud-based law practice management platform. She is also of counsel to Fiandach & Fiandach in Rochester and is a GigaOM Pro analyst. She is the author of the ABA book Cloud Computing for Lawyers, co-authors the ABA book Social Media for Lawyers: the Next Frontier, and co-authors Criminal Law in New York, a West-Thomson treatise. She speaks regularly at conferences regarding the intersection of law and technology. She publishes three legal blogs and can be reached at niki@mycaseinc.com.