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Tricks for efficient interaction

Many lawyers understand the importance of networking, but let's face it — running a law practice takes time and no one ever seems to have enough of it.

In fact, the lack of time is one of the main reasons lawyers offer as an excuse to avoid online networking.

If you use the right timesaving tools, however, you will be able to streamline your online networking experience, so that the time you spend online will be more effective and efficient.

The first thing you need to do is use Firefox as your default Web browser. The tools you can add to the browser bar will make your life online much simpler.

My first add-on recommendation? Ditch Google Reader as the RSS feed reader and switch to Feedly (www.feedly.com). Feedly pulls the feeds you subscribe to using Google Reader and presents them to you in a far more user-friendly interface. Feeds appear in a magazine-like view that is much easier on the eyes and sorting through new items is simple and intuitive.

Feedly doesn't stop there, however. It also allows blogs posts and articles appearing in your feed to be shared quickly and easily. Choose the appropriate button in the tool bar appearing at the top of each item in your feed and, with the click of a button, you can share content on Twitter or Facebook. Feedly automatically creates the body of the post and shortens the link for you. E-mail the content to a client or colleague to whom it might be of interest, add it to your delicious bookmarks or clip it to Evernote.

Feedly also has a new experiment called "Karma," which allows tracking of the links you've shared on Twitter. You can see which links are most popular, how many times people have retweeted your links and how many times people clicked through to the content.

Finally, Feedly allows content to be shared quickly via e-mail or Twitter as pages are viewed on the Web via a mini-tool bar appearing at the very bottom left corner of each Web page.

Another favorite tool is Shareaholic (www.shareaholic.com), also a Firefox browser toolbar add-on. Like Feedly, Shareaholic automatically generates the body of each post and shortens links, allowing you to quickly share content on different Web platforms. One of the benefits of Shareaholic is the breadth of networking sites it supports, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Friendfeed, Digg, Reddit, StumbleUpon, Evernote, delicious, Diigo and Twine.

Should you decide to test the waters and begin interacting on Twitter, a number of platforms and tools are available to make your Twitter experience far more pleasant.

Three very popular desktop Twitter platforms are Tweetdeck (www.tweetdeck.com), Seesmic (www.seesmic.com) and Tweetie (www.atobits.com/tweetie-mac). The platforms offer different features that simplify your Twitter user experience. Tweetree (www.tweetree.com) and Tweetvisor (www.tweetvisor.com) are two online Web interfaces that accomplish the same goal.

Another really useful Firefox add-on is Mr. Tweet (<https://addons.mozilla.org/enUS/firefox/addon/12647>), which once installed automatically provides useful information about your followers on Twitter, in turn allowing you to efficiently sort through and maintain your relationships there.

Microsoft Outlook users should be aware of Twinbox (www.techhit.com/Twinbox/twitter_plugin_outlook.html), an add-in that seamlessly integrates Twitter and Outlook, making it easy for you to manage a Twitter account directly from Outlook.

Twitter applications can be used on your smart phone to keep up with the conversation stream. Popular iPhone Twitter applications include Tweetie (www.tweetie.com), Tweetdeck (www.tweetdeck.com) and Twitterific (www.twitterific.com).

Arguably, the most popular BlackBerry application is Twitterberry (www.twitterberry.com). Other Black-Berry applications to consider are Twibble (www.twibble.com) and Tiny Tweeter (www.tinytweeter.com). If the Palm Pre is your smart phone of choice, Tweed (<http://tweed.pivotallabs.com/>) is a good Twitter application to consider.

Finally, Social Mention (www.socialmention.com) is a great, free resource that allows real-time searches of online social networking sites for mentions of you, your business, your competitors, key words relevant to an area of practice or other topics. Search results can be filtered to locate mentions from certain types of sites, such as Twitter, blogs, or video sites such as YouTube. Search results also provide interesting data about the results, including whether the sentiment expressed is positive or negative.

Online networking does not need to be an overwhelming experience. With the proper tools, online interactions can be made more efficient, and more streamlined than you ever dreamed possible. Put these tools to use and make online networking work for your law practice.

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