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Are blogs vital to an online presence?

One of the most effective ways to establish an online presence and showcase your legal knowledge is to start a blog.

Many who advise lawyers about creating an effective Web presence consider blogs to be the cornerstone of a law firm's successful online presence.

Blogs are an unparalleled tool for educating clients, indulging in intellectual discourse with colleagues, or staying on top of information.

In my opinion, if the very idea of maintaining a legal blog makes you groan, then it's entirely possible that blogging is not compatible with your interests or your personality. That's perfectly fine — there are, then, other forms of social networking that may be a better fit for you and your law practice.

In the past, when I've expressed such an opinion during online discussions, I've been met with vehement disagreement. Many assert that a law blog is a law firm's "home base" and that an online presence is wholly ineffective without it.

I disagree for two reasons. First, there is a glut of law blogs in the online marketplace now that lawyers are finally, and quite belatedly, realizing the potential marketing value of a "successful" blog. The sheer number of new law blogs flooding the Web is overwhelming, and, as Scott Greenfield aptly explains at his very popular law blog, Simple Justice (<http://blog.simplejustice.us>), only the best and most interesting will endure:

Only the fittest will survive, not because the others are awful necessarily, but because we would be deluged with far more than we could absorb if every blawg that came down the pike was a winner. There still would be a natural vetting process, and people would still read only the few that capture their interest best... There is a saturation point. There are diminishing returns. There is survival of the fittest.

In other words, there's simply too much competition. New bloggers face an uphill battle for readers, and only those with a

true passion for their subject matter will be able to maintain long-term interest in their blog.

Second, the importance of blogs as a firm's online presence has decreased quite a bit due to the recent explosion of social media and the vast increase in the number of platforms from which attorneys can participate and share their legal work product. The online landscape is changing rapidly, and while blogs are still an important tool, there are others that are just as effective.

Lawyers can connect with other attorneys and potential clients on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other law-specific platforms such as Martindale-Hubbell Connected. Similarly, lawyers now have available many other means through which they can disseminate and share content via social media. Articles, pleadings and newsletters can be uploaded to JDSupra, Avvo or docstoc — all of which are well-traveled platforms that weren't in existence just a few short years ago. That same content then can be showcased and connected to social media profiles on LinkedIn and Facebook, as

discussed more fully in my soon-to-be-released "Social Media for Lawyers: the Next Frontier," set to be published by the American Bar Association this spring.

The bottom line is this: An online presence is vital to success in the 21st century; however, there is no right way to create an effective online presence for a law firm. Instead, determine your goals for online interactions, then determine which platforms best forward those goals, and best fit your personality. You may find that blogging is the ideal platform for your firm. If not, don't despair. You can create an effective online presence nonetheless.

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