

Bureaucracy destroys initiative. There is little that bureaucrats hate more than innovation, especially innovation that produces better results than the old routines. Improvements always make those at the top of the heap look inept. Who enjoys appearing inept?

– Frank Herbert, [Dune](#)

“Don’t turn the TV off!”

My Dad insisted he was recording the football game.

“Well, can I at least change the channel?”

“No.”

What my father didn’t understand is that the VCR could record his game, even if the TV was displaying a different show. For those who don’t remember the old invention called the VCR, it could record one show while you watched another on the TV. It could even record the show while the TV was not on. That completely blew my father’s mind, so just to “be safe” he left the TV on and kept it on the channel he was recording.

Technology and social media can be scary to the ruling class, and we even see that among the legal blogosphere. Take one of my favorite law bloggers, [Scott Greenfield](#)....

In a recent post, Greenfield applauded a young lawyer for [dismissing social media as an effective marketing tool for young lawyers](#):

Matt’s experience mirrors my own, with the worst words to open a phone call being “I found you on the internet.” These words almost invariably mean that the person calling has neither a case of interest nor a desire to retain counsel. As for twitter, the best that can be said is that it’s a place to

grab a few laughs.

Greenfield makes two clear points here. First, he doesn't want people to find him through the internet — because in his experience, people that use the internet to find lawyers don't have interesting cases or can't afford to pay lawyers. Second, he believes Twitter is only good for telling jokes. At least he is finding some use for it. In this and over a dozen other posts, Greenfield has drawn a line in the sand like many other lawyers and clearly expressed his opinion that social media does not bring in business. End of discussion. Sounds a little bit like U.S. Commissioner of Patents Charles H. Duell, who proclaimed in 1899 that “Everything that can be invented has been invented.”

It isn't technology that Greenfield hates, though; he just dislikes marketing that isn't effective. So why does he have to be dismissive of the entire technology?

I'm not sure why social media has gotten such a bad rap. One of the problems is that the same lawyers who don't like networking or going to lunch or making those vital business development phone calls are hoping they can simply switch on an RSS feed and an automated Twitter account and start bringing in business. It doesn't work that way. Some of the biggest lawyer success stories online come from lawyers who have been blogging for over three years. That takes commitment and dedication.

The biggest misconception about social media is that it is an easy way to bring in more business. That couldn't be further from the truth.

Law firms today are dealing with a principle that Clayton Christensen called “the innovator's dilemma” (in [his book](#) by the same name). Just like the companies in Christensen's book that failed to look ahead, firms today have built their empire without social media, so they think: do we really need it? Is it really necessary? The only lawyerly answer is a resounding “maybe.” As Adrian Lurssen from [JD Supra](#) says, “Technology is benign; it's only as good or bad as the person using it.” Social media can be a powerfully effective tool for professionals when used

correctly. It needs to be used in a very targeted way, though. “You must use it to make more of the RIGHT people find you,” Lurssen explains.

The remaining question is: can it be good? Can social media really help lawyers bring in more business? It all depends on how you use it.

Matt Bartus, a partner at Dorsey & Whitney and author of the Silicon Valley start-up blog **A View From the Valley**, saw results fairly quickly by using Twitter in conjunction with his blog. **Bob White** — a shareholder at the **Gunster firm** in Florida, who simply used Twitter to share articles with tech companies — has also **landed some major clients** via Twitter. Dan Harris has cracked into the mega-market of China law with his **China Law Blog**. All of these lawyers used the right tools for the right markets. Law firms need to stop debating the good or bad of social media and start using it in a strategic way in the appropriate industries.

On a final note, my father finally took the plunge and upgraded from the old VCR to the Digital Video Recorder (“DVR”) to record his football games. I believe law firms are due for an upgrade as well.