



## Blogging and Social Media for the Legal Profession: Advice on What Works and Why

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At the recent [American Society of Trial Consultants](#) convention in New Orleans, I was part of a wide-ranging panel discussion on social media and marketing that considered the benefits and effects of blogging and other social media. Since I've been developing this blog and using social media for professional networking to grow my startup firm, this topic genuinely interests me. I started blogging and became active on Twitter and LinkedIn

in early 2011 with little to no training, figuring it out as I went along, and I'm always eager to learn from others and share what I know. With that in mind, here are some of the key points made at the presentation that may be useful to attorneys, trial consultants and legal marketers.

I sat on the panel with litigation consultant Ken Broda-Bahm of [Persuasion Strategies](#) (for those of you who do not know Ken's blog [Persuasive Litigator](#), I recommend you check it out), and Andy Kutcher of [FSC Interactive](#), an expert in social media and SEO. The panel was moderated by [Brad Bradshaw](#), who wrote *The Science of Persuasion: A Litigator's Guide to Juror Decision Making*.

Here are some of the questions posed and the panel's answers:

### What are the pros and cons of blogging?

This topic looked at why anyone in the legal and business communities would blog. Andy pointed out that blogging has tremendous potential value from name recognition to Search Engine Optimization. The fresh content that comes from blogging is something that all the major search engines look for to bring up your site in search results. The interactive nature of blogging and commenting on blogs also helps greatly with search visibility because the more you blog, the more people will comment and link to your site, which increases your presence in search engines. Ken also added that his favorite thing about blogging is that he simply loves to write, and blogging gives him the forum to do what he loves.

I didn't speak to this question on the panel, but I can add here that I see many positives and very little negatives to blogging. This blog prompts me to keep up with trends in my field of legal graphics, case presentation and litigation strategy; it adds my voice to issues of concern



or interest to the legal community; and it connects me to others in the field and to potential clients. For example, I was asked to be on the ASTC panel (and other panels earlier in the year) through connections made through blogging and Twitter, and just last weekend I got a call from a potential new client after we connected online.

While I'm not terribly prolific, I've found I actually like to write—something I didn't really feel confident about earlier, but the process of regularly writing has helped me clarify my ideas and enhance my knowledge in the field. The only "con" is the time commitment and the self-imposed pressure to write something useful and original. (For more, please see my earlier post, "[Some Pitfalls of Legal Blogging.](#)")

## **What is the time commitment of blogging?**

On this topic I told the audience that I make a goal of writing once a week and really try to meet that goal. I added that it helps to have someone assist you with editing, proofreading, and uploading the text and graphics into a new post. All of that is time consuming, and having some help with that function can really help. Blogs need to be nurtured with good writing and promotion. If you don't think you will be able to find the time and inspiration to write quality new posts consistently, then perhaps you shouldn't blog. Having an old blog that needs updating on your website can be worse than not having one at all.

The time commitment shouldn't stop with writing and publishing your own post, however. Taking time—even if it's just 20 minutes, once or twice a week—to read others' blogs is worthwhile to stay informed and make connections. Try to think of blogging and social media as two-way communication, which means it's up to you to do some reading and listening, not just writing and talking.

## **Does blogging generate business directly?**

This was a question the audience cared a lot about, and the panelists shared a similar view: that blogging generates business indirectly. The more that people subscribe and come to your blog, the more name recognition you have and the more likely they may be use your services in the future. Also, the more often you write thoughtful, relevant or at least entertaining posts, the more you enhance your reputation as an expert in your specialty, which can help if you want to get articles published in law-related publications or speak at events.

We all agreed it's personally very satisfying to receive comments from people who say they read and liked a blog post, even if their positive feedback doesn't translate into business. We all also had examples of when people really did come to us primarily because they discovered us from blogging. I have a number of clients who came to Cogent Legal because they stumbled upon the blog or saw one of my status updates on social media that mentioned my new blog post.



I also told the audience that my blog posts sometimes serve as invaluable marketing tools for potential new clients. When we discuss their case and how I might provide strategic help and develop graphics for it, I often send them a blog post on a similar type of case we have worked on that describes what we do. This can be extremely helpful in convincing the client to hire my firm, and valuable to the client as well.

## **Are there any topics to avoid in blogging or social media?**

I cautioned the audience about being overly political, because if you take a strong stand on politics, you will likely piss off half your audience. I also mentioned that since I do a balance of plaintiff and defendant cases, I want to be careful not to take sides on the legal issues that come up in these cases.

Ken mentioned that he is a bit of a political junky, so he uses the political campaigns as a backdrop for lessons about persuasion. He made a very good point that politics used in this manner can help explain issues that attorneys face with juries every day in regard to persuasion.

## **Why do some firms have a problem with blogging?**

There is a tension between blogging and larger organizations since an organization wants to have a single marketing-oriented voice, but blogging really demands authenticity and a personal voice. Large firms generally have a problem with their individual partners blogging since it is an unpredictable, interactive format.

If you are going to blog and want your blog to succeed, your writing needs to come from an honest place and not purely a marketing motivation. There is nothing more boring than reading blogs that are poorly disguised press releases on recent accomplishments of the firm. If you are going to blog, put the marketing issues aside and use your own voice, and comment and link to blogs when you like them even if they are a "competitors." Enjoy and cultivate the exchange of ideas even when people disagree with you.

*Morgan Smith is the owner of **Cogent Legal**, a litigation graphics and trial strategy firm based in the San Francisco Bay Area that develops clear and compelling visual presentations for attorneys to use in mediation or trial. Services include animations, 2D and 3D graphics, medical illustrations, PowerPoint or Keynote presentations, interactive timelines, videos, strategic consulting and trial support. Cogent Legal integrates the legal expertise of a successful trial attorney with the creative and technical talent of a design firm.*