

Lawyer Gets New Business Using Twitter for Law Firm Marketing

By Larry Bodine, a business development advisor with Apollo Business Development. He has helped law firms nationwide attract new clients and generate new business by using strategy, business development training and individual attorney coaching. See www.ApolloBusinessDevelopment.com. He can be reached at 630.942.0977 and Lbodine [at] LawMarketing [dot] com.



Larry Bodine

When Twitter became a sensation in January 2009, the data had shown that Twitter was not effective as a business development tool. I said if the facts changed, I would change my mind and it's happened: lawyers *are* getting business via the popular micro-messaging platform. You can indeed get new clients by using Twitter.

For months there have been occasional reports that a lawyer connected with a potential client with a Tweet. But it took blogger and online social networking expert [Adrian Dayton](#) to find Fort Lauderdale, FL, lawyer [Robert C. White](#) who methodically works Twitter. White tweeted about an article on mobile advertising and got calls from two different mobile companies as a result.



Robert White

You can listen to the 30-minute podcast conference call between the two at "[Think Twitter's for Kids? Think Again](#)"

"I'm taken it upon myself to be the social media guy within the firm," said White, aka @soflatechlawyer on Twitter. "I spoke at a recent meeting of our lawyers on social media. I try to be a leader by example and it doesn't take a lot of time." White is a shareholder at Gunster, Yoakley & Stewart, P.A., where he practices business, corporate and technology law. Gunster is the oldest commercial law firm in Palm Beach County, with 140 attorneys and 200 staff in eight Florida locations.

"Everyone needs to determine who their clients and referral sources are. I'm a technology and entrepreneurial attorney, so my clients use Twitter. For other areas of law, Twitter might not be as efficient. Very few of my clients are active Twitter users, but from a branding standpoint Twitter can be useful for referral sources. The key is to touch people so they can touch other people with you and mind," he said.

"I just hung in there and kept at it until I started to see results. You have to adopt long-term thinking with social media. It will be a long-haul thing. Twitter is not a magic bullet -- you can't stop doing everything else you do. You still need to take people to lunch, dinner, fishing, and write papers. Twitter isn't something you can use exclusively for marketing and branding. It helps you build and amplify the other things you're doing."

Dayton said, "There is a common misconception that Twitter and social media are for the younger generation. It just isn't true. The teenagers may know how to upload pictures to Facebook -- but they have no clue how to identify, qualify, and engage new clients online. These "soft skills" for lack of a better term, are much more unusual. The ability to turn a contact into a client -- that takes talent. I have always said that partners that already know how to network, and aren't afraid to pick up the phone, have much more potential for success online than young associates."



Adrian Dayton

Blocking followers

White is very selective about who gets to follow him. "I've added several hundred good high value contacts I wouldn't have gotten otherwise. I turn away a lot of followers because I want to be very selective in who follows me," he said. If you are not the kind of person he wants to reach, White will block you from following him. "I get tons of requests for people who want to be followers. Some of them on their face are people I want to deal with. But even some of the business people don't seem valuable. I try to make it a high value situation for myself. I've been turning away people on all social platforms."

Dayton takes a less severe approach, saying he doesn't block followers, but is selective about whom he follows back.

White added, "I tried a shotgun approach to marketing -- being a nice guy and getting myself out there, and it kind of halfway worked. I have a very narrow vertical in the law -- it's a technology practice and a short list of things I do. It wasn't until after 23 years of practice that I found social media was really helpful to me in defining my branding message. It is so much better when you can focus on who you want to be."

"There's a lot of upfront time when you get into this, it becomes a labor of love. Once I learned it, it's very efficient. If I spend no time on social media some days, other days I spend a few minutes. Sometimes it's an hour a day," White said.

White uses Google Reader to scan the financial press and look for interesting articles to tweet about. He uses Hootsuite to send updates to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, and schedule when his updates appear. "The younger generation is moving up the ladder, and social media is a way of life for them. It's going to be a huge part of communication between clients and lawyers. It's always going to be a huge marketing tool," White said.

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