

[Chris Brogan on Legal Marketing: An Interview With Karasma Media](#)

April 6th, 2010 by Kara

[Trust Agents: Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation, and Earn Trust](#) by Chris Brogan and Julien Smith is an incredibly straight forward guide for anyone communicating regularly with a large group of people on the internet who give what we say enough credence to follow, friend or quote what we have to say with some regularity.

The book is chock full of useful information and mirrored so many of the experiences I had been going through as a public relations legal marketer over the last two years, that I ended up taking some very copious notes as I read. By the time I finished, my copy was surrounded by a rainbow of sticky notes, and I was compelled to send my top ten questions to Chris.

Chris was gracious enough to respond.

1. You reference [Douglas Rushkoff's](#) idea that kids have 3 methods they use when they relate to games: playing, chating and programming. In the spirit of [Arianna Hufifngton](#), can you provide a scenario of this ideology that directly relates to attorneys, and other legal marketing professionals?

C: Attorneys learn how they get new business. They play within these confines (maybe this is paper ads, etc). Then, they realize that if they do X to the ads, they get more response. They're still in system, but they are doing something to get better response. Finally, they realize that they can use completely unique channels to reach people (like a blog, for instance) and switch the funnel from outbound push marketing to inbound marketing. That's one way.

2. Hacking isn't cheating. It is changing the rules of how the game is played, using a system in a different way than it was designed. Can you elaborate on what that scenario might look like for on the legal marketing playing field?

C: It might mean that instead of using typical legal marketing channels, like ads in local papers or radio spots, that legal marketers use ads to drive attention to a special "advice planner" application, or to a series of blog posts on what the potential client might need. It might be as simple as using Twitter to search for people expressing legal concerns that you could solve and then offering them a consultation.

3. You mentioned that as trust agents become more well-known, those around them become more protective, and it becomes extremely difficult to reach the best people. You also cautioned that as someone becomes this person, they should make sure to find ways to facilitate important meetings with new unknowns and maintain the development of new contacts. Can you lend some advice to legal marketers in this regard?

C: It's important to grow your network. Having only one trust agent at an organization opens you up to the risk that the one person with access to your prospects and clients in the social web might just up and leave. Deepen the bench.

4. What are some of the things you've put into place to manage the multiple demands for your time, and keep your etiquette standards in place?

C: I've done my best to manage my contacts with help from my assistants. I limit my synchronous time (things like phone calls) because I can do more at odd hours than I can trying to line up my time to others. I sometimes falter at this, but for the most part, I try to stay responsive. It's required a lot of effort, the priority management part of things.

5. You stressed the importance of blog comments and how invaluable they are for two-way participation. Lawyers are extremely cautious about putting too much personal information out into the web world, as well as the danger of providing legal advice publicly. With this in mind, do you have some guidelines to provide for them?

C: I think you can always offer the common sense parts of advice, and that you can properly disclose the "this isn't meant to be construed as legal advice, nor do any interactions between us in this format count as lawyer-client privilege," etc. There are many legal blogs out there already who make for an easy template for managing disclosure. Beyond that, comments mean someone's taken the first step in your prospecting funnel. It becomes up to you to qualify and/or determine how you want to answer next.



Chris Brogan

6. One way to build up a reputation that you can leverage is by being one of the boldest or best in what you, ie: Gary Vaynerchuk's [Crush It!: Why NOW Is the Time to Cash In on Your Passion](#) Yet, there's a danger painting yourself as a self-proclaimed "specialist". Can you make some suggestions of how a legal marketer might build a niche that leverages Internet power?

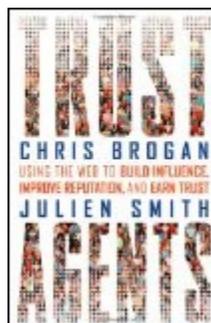
C: Legal marketers maybe don't have to bang their chests and declare themselves specialists. Instead, you can outshine the competition simply by being the most responsive, the most helpful, the gentlest hand at converting a contact into a client. Being yourself helps. There are many parts of marketing that are about revealing the humanity of the organization.

7. Since "human is the new black in social media". In the wake of negative comments and/or naysayers, did you ever feel uncomfortable revealing yourself on the web? And, if so — what did you do to keep being self-expressed?

C: There are days when people really take swings at me. Oddly, whenever I mention business, that's when the Kumbaya crowd gets a bit fussy. Some days, it's personal, but then, that kind of criticism often discloses more about the writer than it does about me. I've learned to accept that if I'm going to feast on my praise, I have to suffer through my critics. The trick, if you read what successful people do, is to take both lightly instead. I'm learning to do that.

8. Can you make some key suggestions of how legal marketers to feel more comfortable expressing themselves on the Web?

C: Legal marketers can feel more comfortable when they strive to connect with others. If I disclose a detail about my life, it's so that I can connect with others and find a benefit to our sharing that news. For instance, I wrote in my newsletter that I never really fit in while at school, and not so much professionally, either. From that, I went into talking about what I learned and what others could do with that kind of situation. I think that's the benefit. Don't just share who you are: share who you are to connect.



9. Making online experiences more effective: Listen, Ask, Reciprocate, Comment and Comment Back — After that comes "contributing": In that attorneys need to be careful not to provide legal advice, how do you suggest they interact with their audience?

C: I think that contributing might be as simple as pointing out information that doesn't count as legal advice. It might even be pointing out information that's related to but not directly connected to one's legal specialty. For instance, if you're working with immigration cases, you might be able to point out the other things immigrants might benefit from knowing (the best books for learning English as a Second Language), etc. Make sense?

10. Potential clients often call me saying that they want to be on national television, “garnering media attention” Can you elaborate a bit on making the shift from webstream to mainstream and the role you expect traditional PR to play in 2010.

C: National television isn't what it used to be. I was on Dr. Phil a few months back, and I've gotta say, it was wonderful meeting him, but even with my book rotating around on screen in front of millions of viewers, we had no significant uptick in sales. When someone blogs about my book, I get obvious and fast sales. The web is faster, more direct, more nuanced, and more personable. Especially in the legal profession, unless you're trying to bag Fortune 100s, the web will work better for you in the long run.

Most of my clients for my marketing business are Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies. They all found me via my blog or via Twitter. No TV required.

Many thanks to Chris for taking time out to practice what you preach!!

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[The Space Between Center Rejuvenates the Creative Spirit of Legal Marketers](#)

[10 Essential Rules for Legal Marketing Brands in Social Media to Follow](#)

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Kara works with legal marketers to create a more clearly defined focus and distinctive business strategy that will provide them with a competitive advantage for new business, higher reputation recognition, and enhance their ability to attract, win, and retain the clients they really want.

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