

Let's Be Social - A Look at the 2012 In-House Counsel New Media Engagement Survey

February 9, 2012 by [Lindsay Griffiths](#)



There are still people out there who think social media is not for professionals.

C'mon, admit it.

All right, so the likelihood is that those people aren't reading this blog, because, after all, it's part of that "social media stuff." But how many of you who have dipped your toe in the water (i.e. joined Facebook, staked your claim on your Twitter

name, filled out your LinkedIn profile) are *using* social media? And how many of you are blogging...regularly?

I'm sure more than one of you mentally raised your hand as you read that.

And I'm sure some of you who did are still wondering why the heck you would want to use social media anyway. So let's talk about that for a little while.

First off, there are many out there who think that social media is a new fad, that's either useless, or just fun, or might fade away. But here's the thing - social media *isn't really a newfangled anything*. It's simply the use of some new technology to do what you've always done - build relationships.

Really, it's that simple.

It's about connecting to people, and learning the technology is the easy part. You already know how to connect to people, so it makes sense to get out there and do that via social media because the main investment is time (which regular relationship-building takes anyway), and it opens you up to finding the people you want to connect with worldwide.

Now THAT'S a valuable cocktail party. Minus the cocktails, of course.

Here's another reason why you should be there - last week, [Greentarget](#), [Inside Counsel](#) and [Zeughauser](#) released their [updated In-House Counsel New Media Engagement survey for 2012](#), and it shows that the adoption of social media by in-house counsel is GROWING.

That's right, growing.

That means, your clients are there. And you should be too.

Let's look at some of the important points that came out of the report:

Blogs, Executed Well, Influence Hiring of Outside Counsel: *Seventy-six percent of respondents say they attribute some level of importance to a lawyer's blog when deciding which firms to retain. Additionally, the percentage of respondents who say a law firm's blog can influence hiring decisions went up slightly, from 50 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2012.*

These numbers are significant. More than three-quarters of respondents are looking at a lawyer's blog when deciding whether to hire that person? That's incredible. Your blog is an excellent place to showcase the expertise you have in the area that you practice - it gives in-house counsel a reason to hire you.

Will they hire you *just* because of your blog? No, but they will include it along with everything else they learn about you. And if you're *not* blogging about the changes in the law, commenting on recent cases, etc. they may wonder whether you're really the right expert for them.

LinkedIn: The 'Serious' Social Network for Lawyers: *LinkedIn leads all other social networks in professional usage and perceived credibility (88%) but, as of now, domestic law firms aren't taking full advantage of its technological capabilities. In addition, significantly more in-house counsel are using LinkedIn for personal reasons than were doing so in 2010.*

This should come as no surprise - LinkedIn is leading all other social networks in professional usage. I've been saying this for the past five years, and will continue to emphasize it. LinkedIn is growing rapidly, and if you don't have a *complete* profile, and make the effort to connect and interact with people there periodically, you are very much missing out. (Not sure where to start? I did a whole series, which you can find by individual posts [here on the blog](#), or via [e-book on Amazon](#)).

Not only that, but law firms can also do much more now with their firm profile pages on LinkedIn - so marketers, make sure that your pages are up-to-date and active.

New Media Usage (Steadily) Going Mainstream: *The generational divide that fueled the 2010 findings is leveling off. This effect is driven by older counsel consuming more content rather than a significant drop in consumption among younger counsel. While the 2010 survey revealed that blogs were read more consistently across age groups than the "big three" social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter), the 2011 research shows a continuation of this trend plus older counsel reading blogs with even greater frequency.*

Here's another significant finding - the generational divide of social media is levelling off, because older counsel are consuming MORE content. So if you were thinking that social media is just for the younger generation, think again, because the likelihood is that your clients are using it, or will be using it. Note that in particular, they're saying that older counsel are reading blogs with greater frequency - as a blogger and frequent blog reader myself, I can say that there is some EXCELLENT content out there, and I often enjoy the accessibility of the author, unlike when you're reading a news article.

That's not to say that journalists are going anywhere. My sister is a journalist and editor for a newspaper, through her, I've gotten a greater understanding that journalists have a different set of guidelines and norms than bloggers do - but bloggers aren't going away either, and you can find people talking about virtually anything you might have half an interest in. So it makes absolute sense that people of all generations are reading blogs with greater frequency.

In-House Counsel Largely 'Invisible Users' of Social Media: *This audience rarely contributes content on social channels, preferring instead to listen and consume. This approach makes their true level of engagement difficult to measure.*

This finding doesn't surprise me, but it does make me sit up and take notice. It means that your clients might be following what you're doing on social media without you knowing it. Now, when you use LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc., it's clear who is following you or connecting to you, so you will often know whether a client has connected. But if you're a regular blogger on topics of interest in the legal community, your clients (and potential clients) may be avid readers of your blog, without you ever knowing it.

Don't assume that because you have few or no commenters on your blog that no one is listening - they are.

Firm-to-Client Communications Going Social: *Whether initiated by inside counsel or by firms themselves, the legal industry is warming up to social media as a client services mechanism at an eight percent year-over-year increase.*

Social media has already started to change the way that we do business, and now, even more so. I've seen it even with my own clients - I've connected to a few of them via Twitter, and they'll use that platform to have quick conversations with me; a number of them use LinkedIn to shoot me an email rather than Outlook; some of them have even connected with me on Facebook, and will email me there or leave a note on my wall.

It's easy to use, it's something that you are probably using already, and there's an immediacy expected that clients like.

Still not sold on the idea? Just think...there was a point in time where no one thought that confidential client communications would ever take place via email - it was just to "un-secure," right? But today, it's one of our primary means of communicating with our

clients, if not THE primary means. So who's to say that social media won't replace some or all of this?

The main takeaway from this report? Clients are using social media in growing numbers - to consume news, to figure out who the qualified attorneys are in the areas they need assistance in, and to communicate with their lawyers.

If your clients are there, shouldn't you be?