

As anyone paying attention to social media knows, there is a whirling vortex of on-going debate on the usefulness/uselessness of Twitter. I'm not real clear why the conversations can be so polarizing, but they are. There is a wonderful 2-month-old debate among a few high-profile social media lawyers where comments range from: "I love Twitter for the amazing information that gets passed around. There are so many thought leaders linked in to Twitter, that it really is the best place to aggregate that information" by [Adrian Dayton](#), to "[Twitter is] worse than a toy -- it's a waste of time" by [Larry Bodine](#). (If you're a member of Martindale Connect, the conversation is located on the forum tab of the Social Media for Lawyers group, entitled "Online Lawyer Networks".)

The debate centers around the concept that each of the social media/networking sites needs to provide "measurable" marketing results to be useful, otherwise it wastes your time. My belief is that the argument makes two incorrect assumptions: first, that you can apply old marketing principals to new techniques; and second, that unless you're selling what you already have, you're wasting your time. As an avid Twitter participant and advocate, I've been asked how the use of Twitter has added to the "bottom line" of my practice. My standard answer is: "Without Twitter, I wouldn't even have a practice."

Why? Because when I started using Twitter, I was totally bored with law, but didn't know what else to do. Twitter is where I found the people, the resources, and the concepts to formulate ideas of new opportunities and directions I could take my practice. And Twitter is where I go to continue to grow and expand my thinking, leading me to even more creative and exciting opportunities for the future. We're talking about value far beyond anyone's bottom line. (For the record, I do get work referrals from people I've met on Twitter.)

In [Twitter Doesn't Create Influence, it Reveals It](#), Tac Anderson observes that:

Some may ask how Twitter made so many people influential. It didn't. I'd agree that it has made some people \*more\* influential if only because it gave people greater reach, but they had to possess some level of influence potential. (hmm, Influence Potential, a new buzz phrase?)

Twitter didn't make anyone influential. Twitter only exposes and amplifies influence.

So if these kinds of interaction and opportunities sound exciting to you, but you don't know where to begin, here are my recommendations:

1. [Target Your Goals](#). In Twitter, you "follow" people. Before you decide who to follow, you need to decide what you want to accomplish. Remember that simply creating a presence on Twitter is a marketing function, so let's put that aside. Who do you want to connect with? Your potential client base? Other lawyers in your practice areas, or areas you might be interested in pursuing? How to manage your law office?
2. [Find People to Follow](#). If there is someone you know or have heard of that you would like to follow, simply type his/her name in the Twitter search box. When their profile

comes up, just click the follow button. If not, there are several 3rd-party applications that enable you to find people to follow: [Twellow](#) and [WeFollow](#) are among the most popular. Now, Twitter has introduced "lists". Go to <http://listorious.com> and do a category search. Once you have found a few people you enjoy following, check out who they follow. Those are usually good leads to follow as well. By the way, this list does not have to be long. Follow 10 people at first. Take it slow. Your list will grow soon enough.

3. Listen. Watch and listen for a while. See what people are talking about. Many of the tweets will have hyperlinks to information. Read it. Does this information have value for you? Are you moving in the direction you wanted to go? You will also see that people "retweet" others' tweets, because not everybody follows the same people, and nobody is on Twitter 24/7. Check out the people they are retweeting. Are these potential new people to follow? As you add more people to your stream, you will begin to pick up on conversation threads. Follow them.

4. Follow-backs. Everyone has a different follow-back policy. Some of the people you follow may follow you back automatically. Some may wait until you start tweeting. Some may never follow you back. It doesn't matter. Just keep reading and growing your list. And by the way, don't be intimidated by the number of followers others may have. Do what works for you.

5. Jump into the conversation. When you feel comfortable, say hello. You can comment on something you read that was tweeted. You can retweet someone else's tweet if you think it has value. Or you can contribute to the conversation with your own information. At some point, you need to start connecting to the people you have been listening to. You have to "get" known to "be" known. That's where the real fun begins. Because the people you meet here are open and responsive, and the interaction occurs on many levels. It goes beyond an exchange of information to social/professional connections that can grow and embellish your life.

6. Take the conversation offline. Once you have established online connections with people, don't be afraid to pick up the phone to discuss things you have in common. You'll be amazed what can come from it!