

Your law firm's blog can make new business easier, not harder, and will help you to better understand how digital and social media marketing works.

You hear everyone talking about blogging and social media, but you don't understand the relevance for your law firm. *As important as a website was for your law firm a blog is now as equally important if not more so.* It should become a gateway to your firm.

A personal blog will provide you with a direction, focus and professional enrichment unlike anything you have ever experienced before. Your personal network skyrockets giving you the opportunity to generate the right kinds of new business leads that are a better match for your firm. Plus, you won't have to be constantly chasing after new business; your new business pipeline will always remain full.

So with those things being said, here are 10 tips to get your attorneys' blog started and to start turning those blog readers into clients:

1. Before you start to write learn to listen.

Identify and read other online resources that would be important to your target audience. Read blogs of other firms. Subscribe to blog RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds through Google Reader or the feed reader of your choice. Using a feed reader will greatly help you to strategize and organize your online reading. Get a feel for how blogs are written.

Writing a blog post is much different from writing for print. People tend to scan for information online rather than reading word-for-word. You'll gain lots of ideas for your own posts from your online reading.

2. Do not incorporate your blog into your firm's website.

You will need to allow your firm's blog room to breathe and evolve apart from your current branding. As you interact with your target audience, they will become the decision makers as to what information resonates, what messages are appealing, what their legal challenges and obstacles really are.

You may think you know what your readers want, but you will continually be surprised as you receive their input, reflect upon your blog's analytics. What you gain from this experience will help you discover an "appealing" position and proper branding for your firm from your prospective clients perspective.

3. Blog posts should be written by the firm's principals or key attorneys.

Social media is personal and you are the face of your firm. We are in a relationship-oriented business and clients want to work with someone who they know, like and trust. Therefore your firm's principals should lead the way.

Another reason I advocate that the blog post be written by the firm's principals is that they are the least likely to leave the firm. Therefore, equity isn't lost if an associate chooses to leave for another firm.

4. Keep the design simple.

Limit your creative and interactive staff's involvement in the design process unless you want to greatly slow the process down. The design of your blog should be nice and clean. Here content is king.

I personally recommend using either WordPress.org or WordPress.com as your blog platform. These are simple blog platforms that are relatively easy to use and provide just the right bells and whistles.

5. Own your domain name.

I have seen a number of blogs with a wordpress.com or blogspot.com in their URL (web address). Be sure to own your domain name. That way, if you ever change blog platforms, you won't lose traffic to your site.

6. Create a simple written plan for your blog.

From my perspective, the objective for your blog is to generate leads and new business for your firm. To reach this objective you will need to identify your target audience, who you are writing to. What are their legal challenges? In what ways can you become an invaluable resource and help?

You'll need a name for the blog. An appropriate tag line that states what this site is about. Identify the categories that you will be writing to. I would suggest limiting the categories to 10 or less.

As you begin your blog remember, you cannot be everything to everybody and the more general your blog is the less traffic you can expect.

7. Keep a list of blog post ideas.

I'm often asked "don't you run out of ideas when you are primarily writing only to a law firm's marketing needs and social media tactics?" The answer is no. Every morning I start the day by opening my Google Reader.

I have RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds from about 16 of my favorite blogs and publications. I scan quickly through the list of post titles or headlines, when one catches my attention I open it up and read it. It often sparks ideas for my own posts or is information that I can cite and link for my readers.

I use a browser bar tool called “Press This” that allows me to post a draft of that article in my blog. I also keep a list of post ideas on my DeskTop. I never find myself lacking for something to write about that won’t be of some help to my audience.

8. Set a goal for the number of posts to write per week.

I have a goal of posting 5 blog posts per week-it is very ambitious to think an attorney will have this many posts, but remember, consistency is key. I want to be constantly posting so that I don’t lose any readers. The feedback that I gain is what motivates and excites me. My readers are very loyal and I don’t want to disappoint them by not having fresh content.

9. Repurpose your blog content.

I have lots of material to utilize through other new media tools. Your blog posts can actually be turned into a book. You can also create your own white papers, e-newsletters, and informational press releases from your content.

I use a tool called Tweetlater, to automate postings on Twitter. You will find all the effort you’ve put forth in your writing for your blog can be repurposed in lots of different ways through a number of different online channels and will have a long, long shelf life.

10. Learn how to generate blog traffic.

The current communication revolution makes it critical that you know this stuff so that can provide better direction for your firm and for your clients. Learning how to generate traffic to your blog is an eye-opening experience. You will better understand SEO (search engine optimization), web analytics (such as, Google Analytics), RSS feeds (reader subscriptions), email campaigns, HTML, etc.

Plus you will know the importance of and learn how to use social media tools like FaceBook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Delicious, Technorati, Digg and StumbleUpon just to name a few.

Understanding social media is not for just one practice area within the firm. Every staff member needs to understand it. What better way to learn than to use these tools than to generate new business for your firm through social media.

Social media is permanently revolutionizing communication. It isn’t an option to not participate. **If your firm is to survive you’ve got to “get it.”** Only as a participant will you genuinely come to understand what a valuable tool it is for your firm.