Social Media for Lawyers: Twitter Edition

ADRIAN DAYTON

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Executive summary

TWITTER HAS exploded onto the social networking scene and experienced enormous growth since its modest beginnings in 2006. Initially dismissed by many as a pointless fad, there are now a growing number of tales of individuals and companies who have had great success from using Twitter to promote themselves or their services.

However, whilst there is now more interest in Twitter as a viable tool for business growth, many people still have reservations about taking the plunge. Lawyers, in particular, may doubt whether using this new-fangled social media tool is appropriate to their status as trusted advisers.

Social Media for Lawyers: Twitter Edition explains why Twitter is an opportunity that cannot be missed. General counsel from major corporations and high-profile experts in the legal world are already using Twitter – shouldn't you be, too? This new guide introduces lawyers and other professionals working in law firms to the concept, benefits and challenges of Twitter and outlines some essential tricks to enable them to make the most of Twitter.

Chapter 1 puts forward five key reasons why people refuse to use Twitter – and goes on to outline why these arguments are flawed. There's nobody I do business with on Twitter: what about CEOs and general counsel of Fortune 500 companies? It's a waste of time: on the contrary, it's similar to highly-targeted networking at a high-powered cocktail party. Buying decisions aren't made online: simply not true! I don't understand the terminology: easily solved. It's too complex: messages are only 140 characters long – how complex can it be?

Chapter 2 explains how to build a profile that attracts people's attention – for the right reasons. Choosing the right profile picture, adding a link and crafting an interesting yet concise biography are all essential ways to encourage people to connect with you. This chapter teaches you how.

Chapter 3 exposes the six personality-types found on Twitter to help you decide which you want to be: the used-car salesman, the drag queen/king, Aunt Bessie, the celebrity, the Twitter pro or the true friend.

The following six chapters explain the main characteristics and functions of Twitter, to help you maximise its use.

In Chapter 4, practical advice is given on how to find and start following relevant and interesting people on Twitter, whether they are people you know or people you would like to know. This chapter will also get you started on building a following of your own.

Chapter 5 explains the etiquette for starting discussions on Twitter. In particular you will learn the function of the @reply and how to use it correctly. Tips are given on advanced usage and how to use the @reply for group discussions.

'Retweets', the Twitter equivalent of e-mail forwards, are covered in Chapter 6. The author explains the value of retweets, how they work, and how you can pique people's interest and encourage them to retweet your posts.

Chapter 7 explains how to ensure your conversations are found, by using the hash tag (#). This simple character ensures that a) you can easily spot conversations that interest you, and b) that others can search and find posts by you that are relevant to them. This chapter also gives the inside scoop on some commonly-used hash tags that may otherwise baffle the novice user.

Chapter 8 provides some tips on 'tweet-ups' – when the online world meets the offline world. The chapter outlines the importance of focus (think about what you want to accomplish, and ensure the participants have a common interest), how to find relevant people or another tweet-up arranged by someone else, and the best thing about a tweet-up: it's free!

Chapter 9 introduces the TweetDeck, a downloadable application which can help you organise messages and ensure you don't miss valuable information. The most useful features are explained, such as how to shorten URLs to save valuable characters, how to create groups (and why) and how to save searches. Twitter Grader, a handy statistics tool, is also introduced.

The following chapters get to the heart of the matter: how to integrate Twitter with the rest of your marketing and networking tools to ensure you are maximising the rainmaking possibilities.

Chapter 10 outlines how to create a Twitter-friendly website and use Twitter as a customer services tool. Chapter 11 goes on to explain how Twitter can be integrated with your website to enhance lead generation. Once your followers or other interested parties have found your website, there needs to be content that will convert their passing interest to a lead – or ideally new legal business. This chapter dispels three myths about websites and offers three tips for building a fit-for-purpose website. It further demonstrates how the traffic driven from Twitter can be converted into paying clients. Included is a detailed explanation of the close ratios and data needed to show the real return on investment of your Twitter activities.

Twitter is all about providing good, helpful content to your followers, and Chapter 12 goes into more detail regarding how to continue that trend of 'giving' on your website to capture leads, and to convince individuals to part with their e-mail addresses.

Chapter 13 explains the ways to identify, qualify and engage prospective clients using Twitter. Every relationship on Twitter is potentially valuable; this chapter gives you the keys to turning conversations into offline clients.

Chapter 14 addresses the concerns that many law firms express about allowing or encouraging their lawyers to use Twitter. Once written, comments cannot be taken back and, as in offline life, the maxim 'Don't say stupid things' applies. However, whilst Twitter can magnify bad deeds, it also magnifies what is best about your firm and puts it in front of a wider audience. Do you really want to miss out on this amazing opportunity?

Is Twitter working for lawyers? You bet. Chapter 15 shares dozens of success stories from lawyers specialising in different areas. Other lawyers are bringing in great clients through social media. Are you?

Social media and Twitter are here to stay. Chapter 16 provides mind-blowing statistics that demonstrate social media is not a fad, but a fundamental shift in the way we communicate.

Chapter 1: Five reasons people refuse to use Twitter

1. Nobody I do business with is on Twitter

The world has changed. Perhaps the question you should be asking is, are there people on Twitter with whom I want to do business? How about CEOs of Fortune 500 companies? General counsel at major companies? Such people on Twitter have near celebrity status. Let's look at some simple demographics. Who uses social media like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn? The easiest answer to that is: everybody, or at least most people. Social media is no longer a techno-fad used by video gamers, computer hackers and architects. Social media has increasingly become an extension of our lives.

What is the largest demographic on Twitter? Adult males aged 35-44.[1] That is an extremely attractive demographic to almost any business. The amazing thing is that among older generations, say 50+, there is an explosion in growth on Twitter. Why? Because this technology is so easy to use. Back in the 70s Bill Gates had to use punch cards to program computers. It was so tedious and complicated that only a handful of people managed to learn how to program. That's not the world we live in anymore.
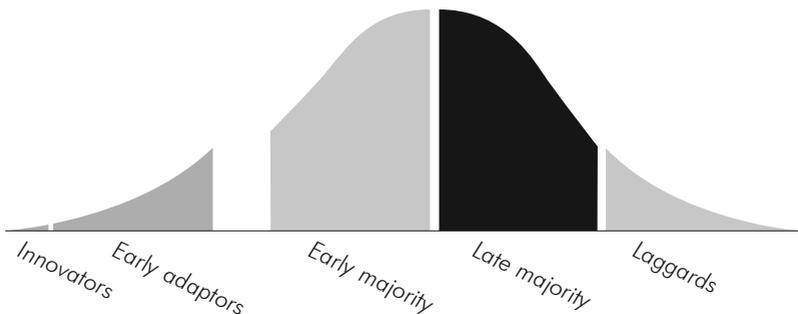

Figure 1: The revised technology adoption lifecycle[2]

According to a recent article, there is a Twitter user who is 104 years old.[3] This sweet old lady, who reminds me of my own 99-year-old grandma, logs on and in an instant is engaging people all over the world. If she can do it, well, you know the rest.

We are all familiar with the technology adoption lifecycle, as shown in Figure 1. So where is the US population along this curve when it comes to social media like Twitter? We are miles past the innovator stage. My parents and my grandparents are using Facebook. That puts us soundly in the early majority. What does that mean? It means the boat is about to set sail. Great opportunity exists for those forward-thinking partners and business managers who execute immediately. Most managers and heads of companies still don't understand the power of social media tools, but you can. My friend Julio Varela told me how, back in 1990, he was graduating from Harvard and all of his friends were moving to Silicon Valley to work with computers. "They are crazy!" he thought. Boy was he wrong. In a recent conversation, he told me he had missed out on the boom last time. He wasn't going to let it happen again. Don't let it miss you either.

2. Don't waste my time

The instinctive reaction after any demonstration of Twitter is, "Won't this be a huge waste of time?" or "I am busy as it is, how will I make time for another task?" These are all valid concerns. I know – my generation practically invented wasting time online. We are really good at it. What we aren't good at, generally speaking, is turning mindless surfing of the internet into clients, building our brand and real business. This brings us to the most common disconnect when it comes to social media: how to wrap your head around the fact that social media is fun and engaging while at the same time potentially highly profitable. Twitter stands out as a great tool because it connects strangers through sharing ideas. The most interesting ideas generally attract the most attention, and the buzz they create makes Twitter more dynamic than other applications like LinkedIn.

There is one problem with LinkedIn. It's the same problem that cocktail receptions suffer from – they are boring. It is not that they are filled with boring people (although that sometimes may be the case) but the real problem is that

they are not set up to be as engaging as possible. There may be a fascinating discussion going on somewhere in the room, but how are you going to know about it? How are you going to be introduced to the most interesting person in the room? Maybe you are bold and can jump in to the conversation and start shaking hands, but most people aren't comfortable with that. What if there were a way to identify the exact right person to talk to and the precise discussion you wanted to be a part of at the reception? That is what Twitter allows through its search function.

The beauty of Twitter is how searchable it is. You can search LinkedIn as well, but only for names and groups names; Twitter allows you to pinpoint precise terms being used. If there is a discussion regarding eminent domain in complex litigation going on somewhere in the world, you can find it. Think of Twitter as a giant cocktail party spreading all across the world. At this party there are rock stars, Nobel Prize-winning scientists, doctors, lawyers and stay-at-home mums. What are they talking about? Everything. What do you want to talk about? Name your topic – self-help, breakfast cereal, 'Lost', complex real-estate litigation. Somewhere in the room, somebody is talking about what you do, and you should be part of the conversation. At the end of this book you will not only know how to find the people talking about what you do, but you will know how to engage them and how to lead them.

3. Buying decisions aren't made online

This is the most hilarious myth of all. People make buying decisions online every second of every day. This is no secret. In 'Marketing 101' we are taught the hierarchy of why people decide to buy from a certain individual. It's very simple:

- People buy from you because they like you.
- People buy from you because they trust you.
- People buy from you because they think you know a lot.

Purchasing decisions are made in that order of importance. I meet people I like on Twitter almost every day. If some of them like me back, I have a decent chance of bringing in a client.

Take a look at this a different way though. Say somebody likes you, but they aren't quite sure they can trust you. How easy is it for them to handle their due diligence? First they can check out your website, then they can ask your followers on Twitter what your reputation is. After that, if they still aren't convinced, they can check out your LinkedIn profile or contact your past employers. All the information is out there already. What does it say about you? In Chapter 3 we are going to talk about how crucial it is to create a strong profile online using Twitter. Most individuals don't think about biographies when putting them together. Some individuals simply throw together a bio and slap a picture up. It is more important now than ever to create online bios strategically, and you're going to learn some of most effective tactics here.

4. I don't understand the terminology

"I will never use Twitter, because of the stupid name." *Grumpy old man*

Here is an explanation of a few of the key terms used on Twitter and throughout this book:

- A message you post to Twitter is called a 'tweet'.
- People who use Twitter and are part of the community are referred to as 'tweeple'.
- A gathering inspired by Twitter where people who have met online meet somewhere offline is called a 'tweet-up'. We will go into more detail about that in Chapter 8.
- If you love somebody else's tweet, or want to share it because some of your followers might like it, then you can repeat it to your followers, but you must give attribution. The way that is done on Twitter is by writing the characters 'RT', which stand for 'retweet'. This is very important, and in Chapter 6 we will explore not only why the retweet is the secret sauce that drives Twitter, but how you can take advantage of it to spread messages like wildfire.

There are about a dozen other unique terms and phrases that you may see throughout the book, but we will define those as we come to them.

5. It's too complex

Another common reaction from individuals who see Twitter for the first time is, "All those Twitter messages look like a whole lot of noise, I don't want more noise in my life." Twitter is an immensely complex system. As it grows, the complexity also grows exponentially, but the beauty of Twitter is not in its complexity but in its simplicity. Each message is only 140 characters long, meaning it can be read in 2.4 seconds. By the end of this book you will learn how to find only the information you want and filter the junk.

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