



How to Find Time for Social Media Engagement and Be a Lawyer, Too (Pt. 2)

Written on March 24, 2010 by [Donna Seyle](#)

Before we talk about time, let's talk about what it means to engage in social media. Because the amount of time you spend will depend on what it means to you. In [Part 1 of "How to Find Time for Social Media"](#) I talked about the blogging process, and mentioned that I wanted to look at social media participation "...to understand the value, both personally and professionally, of this new level of engagement that creates promotion for you and your firm." Here's an example: On Twitter, people will follow me, and I check them out before I follow in return. Every now and then, I click on their name when they tweet, to remind me who they are and what they're doing. The other day, I did this with someone I did not know, and discovered that he was using a Twitter app to send out tweets on his behalf. He used an automated system so he would show up in the stream and get his stats. I unfollowed him immediately. Why? Because to him, social media was a system, not an opportunity for engagement. So when someone asks me how much time each day it takes to create an effective social media presence, my question to them is: what does that mean to you? Because if it means simply creating exposure without participating in networks and communities, you might as well find a social media marketer who will put the systems in place for you, write your blogs and tweets and blog comments, and give you numbers. But that's not what social media is really about. In ["10 Steps to Becoming a Social Media Rainmaker"](#), Adrian Dayton's Step 2 is : "Join the Party." And there he states:

"A very prominent TV lawyer in town called me after I spoke at the local bar association and asked, "Can you do this social media stuff for us? Can we just pay you a retainer?" I told him I would gladly take his money, but it wouldn't work unless he and his firm were engaged.

It is an incredibly competitive legal world out there, and people simply don't want to hire a lawyer. Clients want to hire someone they trust and respect as their counsel and someone whom they trust and like as a person. By maintaining an active presence in the social media world, people get to know who you are, which leads to personal relationships with clients. That is such a powerful thing."

And it's not just the relationships you can create with your clients, it's also the relationships you create with your colleagues: the exchange of ideas from around the world, the friendships, the potential for collaboration — it's all there. But if you don't participate, you miss it. This social media stuff? It goes far beyond marketing.

In a recent blog bemoaning the existence of “ghostblogging”, Kevin O’Keefe passionately states:

“But the very essence of social media precludes ghostwriting. Social media is not about producing content. Social media is about engaging others so as to build and nurture meaningful relationships. Engagement that requires listening to your audience and offering value to the conversation.

Sure, it’s going to take a little time and practice for you as a lawyer to learn the art of social media. That’s okay. You’ve taken the time to learn the skills critical to your success before. Do it again here. It’s required.”

So if you’re in it for the real deal, here’s what I recommend about time:

1. When you are just beginning to join and participate in social media networks and communities, (and here I would include Twitter, LinkedIn, Martindale-Hubbell Connected & Avvo. You will find more as you explore) expect to spend a few Saturdays learning your way around, creating profiles, joining groups, finding the right people to follow or connect with. This is time well invested.
2. If you want to include a Facebook fan page, unless you’re a techie, I suggest hiring someone to set it all up for you, then you can take control. Be sure to spend an hour with your Facebook pro to gain an understanding of how to use their apps, manage the site, etc. Remember: Facebook is a moving target and requires continuous management to be effective.
3. Once you’re up and running, you need to touch as many of those sites as possible every day. Plan on finding at least two hours a day to do this. It doesn’t need to be all at once. Preferably, it’s at different times during the day as information changes.
4. Create a schedule that works for you. Think about all those time gaps in your day you fill with nonsense, and start putting them to use. Hop onto twitter during breakfast. Get the right apps on your phone and check your LinkedIn groups emails while you’re headed to the coffee room or wasting time in a doctor’s office. Spend an extra 1/2 hour at your desk at the end of the day interacting with your new contacts. How about the time you waste zoning out in front of the TV?
5. As you become more involved, you won’t notice how much time you’re spending, because you’re engaged. You’ll want to see what’s new, find out what’s going on, responding, initiating.
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Then you will be able to answer the question: how do I find the time?