

Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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Beyond Blogging: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn - A Re-Cap of LexBlog's Webinar



This afternoon, I had the good fortune to sit in on [Kevin O'Keefe's](#) webinar on "Beyond Blogging: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn." I'm already sold on the benefits of all three for law firms, but I love hearing Kevin's stories which I can relate to our attorneys to win them over. The five most important things I heard Kevin say in his webinar were:

1. Starting to use these tools isn't a strategy - it's a tactic. Saying that the strategy is to get on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook is like saying you're going to have the lawyers drive red cars. It doesn't make sense. Use them as relationship-building tools and tools that frame your identity.
2. Because media is more social, and a shared experience, you need to be doing those things that will cause your information to be shared by others who have people trusting them.
3. Just because another law firm is doing something doesn't mean you have to do it.
4. It doesn't matter if your clients or perspective clients ever see your information being shared or if they read your blog - influencers and amplifiers are seeing it and connecting you to the right people.
5. Empower the lawyers at your firm to use social media to build relationships.

Media is a Shared Experience

Kevin began by emphasizing the idea that media is a shared experience - where people used to get their information from a newspaper they had delivered to their house, they're now getting it from those they trust.

Because of this, you want to be doing those things that cause your information to be shared by others who have people trusting them. Kevin challenged us to think about the information that we blog and share, and whether or not it's picked up and passed on to others - he cautioned that this didn't mean autofeeds.

Along these lines, Kevin said that the goal is to get your information out there, but without forcing it on people. People don't join social networks just to have a law firm's information pushed on them - this would be like going to a cocktail party and shoving articles at people. It's not polite. He added that just because another firm may be doing this, it doesn't make it right.

Then Kevin said something which might seem earthshattering (but I whole-heartedly agree and almost wrote a separate post just on this subject last week) - ***It doesn't matter if any of your clients or prospective clients ever see your information getting shared in this type of way. It doesn't matter if they come to your blog.***

To answer the question of "why not?" Kevin offered an example. He recently spoke in a room of 200 lawyers and towards the end of his comments, he asked if anyone knew he had a blog. No hands were raised. He asked if there was anyone who would want to read his blog after hearing him speak. Only about five hands raised. He asked if there were people who wanted to speak with him afterwards, want to know more about what his company does and maybe work with them and all hands were raised. They didn't need to know that he has a blog or uses Twitter, but they would consider hiring him.

Two weeks later, he has a client as a result and two requests to meet. This all came about because he built a relationship online with someone in Denver, Colorado. This person had a business relationship with a highly connected guy, who asked Kevin to speak at a keynote in Florida. Someone from Washington was in the audience and called him a month later to speak to two of the largest groups to gather there. During the presentation he first mentioned, a guy from PLI was in the audience and subsequently asked him to chair a conferences. None of them had read his blog - but because he is using these tools to develop relationships with influencers and amplifiers, he is connected to the right people.

Helen Pitlick broke in with an audience question - someone wanted to know why firms shouldn't use autofeed for feeding posts to LinkedIn, for example. Kevin asked how often users go to LinkedIn profiles and read their blogs - very rarely. He's not sure it amounts to much, but there are ways to use LinkedIn more strategically.

LinkedIn is a powerful networking tool. For example, as a LinkedIn user, you can join groups, and you might attach a link to a blog post in a group. Rather than just using the title of the post

as the comment, he'd edit this and say that it's interesting, and ask people what they think. It gives them the opportunity to engage.

Kevin emphasized that this is what the internet is for - engaging and building relationships, which is why Facebook is so successful. These tools shouldn't be looked at as ways to drive traffic, but as tools to build relationships.

Professional Development - It's Online

Kevin's next point was that everyone talks about business development and marketing, and to become a better lawyer, you need to be involved in professional associations. Social media is all about that. He said that when he was a young lawyer, he realized that he couldn't just sit in his office and wonder if this was as good as it would get.

He had to join an association, network with its members, become a board member. Then he was networking with the who's who, and could ask them questions. He got active in other associations and learned to be a better lawyer, and got better work.

Social media tools can help you to be a better at your job - he used the example of being in New York City in a coffee shop fifteen minutes before a meeting, when he received an email from the company he was meeting with asking him to bring sample social media policies with him. He went to Twitter because he has a substantial network there, and asked them for their help. Immediately he got links to policies both for law firms and business, which allowed him to do a better job.

Another audience member said that it seems that less than 10% of firms are using Facebook. Kevin said that he didn't agree with this statistic - 100% of the 200 largest law firms in the country are using Facebook because it's personal.

Facebook connects you with friends, relatives, close business associates, parents, etc. Maybe the parents of a friend of your child work at a bank or are in-house counsel. Lawyers tend to make more money and live in affluent neighborhoods, where their clients would also live. So the chances are good that connecting with the parents of your friends' children could give you a relationship with someone you want to know. Facebook is a reality today.

Kevin noted that firms using Facebook versus attorneys using Facebook are different things, so he talked a little bit about what a firm could use their page for. He suggested that firms don't put up information about awards and firm news, but instead think of Facebook as a way to engage people. Share articles that you've read that are of interest, put up things about the firm's people or recognize a client who's won an award. Make the firm real.

Firm Websites - Advertising. Social Media - Building Trust

According to Kevin's statistics, only 14% of people trust advertising, and essentially that's what a law firm website is. In order to drive traffic there then, you need to get out in social media to establish trust. Kevin calls this "building social media equity" - when people like what you're

sharing, you're building equity. He recommended going to Twitter and sharing other people's content - this gives you the reputation for sharing other people's content instead of being pushy with your own.

LinkedIn

Kevin said that LinkedIn is your professional profile of record, and in his opinion, there's no more important profile. People (like reporters and bloggers) will Google your name and your LinkedIn profile will come up. What are you saying to them if you have three connections and your name is all in lower case? You're saying that you don't network, you don't stay up to speed, you're not innovative and worse.

LinkedIn is a networking hub - if you cite someone in your blog, drop them a note with the information. When they send a thank you, offer to connect with them on LinkedIn. Kevin said (and I agree) that you should customize any invitation, and shouldn't use the standard text.

Some stats on LinkedIn:

- 100 million+ professionals around the world as of March 2011
- A new member joins every second
- As of January, LinkedIn has profiles for executives from all 2010 Fortune 500 companies

Kevin offered yet another way to use LinkedIn, saying that when he's heading to Portland, he can go to the advanced search section and look for people with a certain job title in a certain industry working for companies of more than 11 people within a 50 mile radius. He can then see who he's already connected to and who else he can connect to, and can drop them a note, connect, or send a message, with the knowledge that people are three times more likely to respond to a LinkedIn message than an email.

Twitter

The CEO of Twitter said that it instantly connects people with relevant information and people. Kevin showed us his Tweetdeck and said that he doesn't read the tweets of everyone he follows - instead, he organizes people in columns based on what he's interested in and search terms. He suggested setting up columns for your firm, your name, the name of your blog, your clients' name, etc.

Kevin suggested that a lawyer who's working in a town can create a private list of the influencers in that area in that town, so that he can keep up with what they're doing. Twitter is mobile, so you can also instantly connect to people while you're on the go.

An audience member wanted to know how a lawyer can effectively manage their limited amount of time. Kevin agreed that he's also very busy, but said he has an insatiable desire to stay up to speed. He said that lawyers can share what they've seen if they don't have the time to produce original content. Instead, they can curate, edit and maybe provide quick insight into what they're sharing.

Kevin said that Cordell Parvin used to spend 4-5 hours a week as a lawyer on business development. This shocked people, but he said that people will get hungry when they have a client base they haven't developed over time. Kevin said that lawyers need to do these things or get ready to be fired by their firm. You'll be the person who is getting handed the work instead of bringing it in, which is a dangerous place to be.

Some stats on Twitter:

- 200 million users
- 190 million tweets a day
- 1.6 billion search queries a day.

Kevin showed the group [LexTweet](#), which brings together the tweets from those in the legal profession. He showed that it's happening in real time, and isn't some abstract thing. For those who are worried that their clients and prospective clients aren't using Twitter, he said it doesn't matter because *influencers and amplifiers do*. He challenged the audience to build a relationship with them.

Kevin shared a few successes that resulted from his sharing information with people and building relationships on Twitter. He emphasized that these things need to come naturally, and it has to genuinely be about building relationships, not just looking for business.

Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg called Facebook a tool to enhance your relationships with people you know in the flesh - your real world friends, acquaintances, classmates or coworkers. Kevin said it's in our DNA to be sociable and getting to know someone's kids through Facebook is more enjoyable than having them tell you what they do for a living. He said that clients don't want to talk about the law when they get together - they talk about family, baseball, whatever. That's what life is made of.

Some stats on Facebook:

- As of March 2011, 35% of users were between 35-64
- 17.4 million were between 45-54, surpassing the 13-17 age group
- 58.9% growth in users from 55+ from the last year

Mobile Networking

Kevin suggested that any of the lawyers on the call without an iPad should get one - there are so many apps that let you receive and share information, that in 5 years, we'll be laughing that we ever got our information by computer. According to Mobile Marketing Association, mobile social networking is the fastest growing mobile content category.

Takeaways

- This was a high-level look at social networks, and Kevin will be covering Twitter in more depth on July 28th.
- If you're not using a Google reader, you're missing out on the world. It's better than Google alerts and can get the best information to you.
- Get a Twitter account - you don't need to tweet, you can just listen. Don't set it as private, and used your name, and not your blog name or otherwise, for your Twitter name.

Questions

There were two final questions that Kevin took:

- What advice would you give for someone nearing the end of their legal career? Kevin said two important things - 1) Think about the legacy you're leaving. Even if you don't need to create more relationships, you can get involved in social media to ensure the continuation of the firm's legacy. Empower people to do things at the very least. 2) Why not use social media? Connect with family you haven't seen in years, see pictures of your grandchildren, use the reader to stay up to speed.
- Do you want to comment on the rules about social media put forth by the Florida bar? Kevin said that Florida will always be the state to set the ethics rules, and you have to comply with Florida if you're in Florida. He said the focus should be on better social media policies - are we doing enough to attract the right people to work here?

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