

Law Firm Social Media Strategy

By Samantha Collier

www.socialmediaforlawfirms.com

Social media is one of the newest business development tools available to lawyers and law firms. It appeals to most on some level due to its perceived low cost, huge reach and dominance in the news. Social media is not the end all to legal marketing. It should compliment offline business development activities. Firms should also carefully consider if their target audience engages via social media. Afterwards, the single most important thing firms should do prior to opening up their first account is create a strategy.

Strategies are not hard to come up with. These are just some of the questions to ask yourself when creating your strategy:

Who is my target audience?

Be specific. What types of clients are you looking for? Think about your top ten client wish list and figure out what about them appeals to you. Don't forget about your current clients and referral sources, you might want to consider engaging with them via social media as well.

How will I find them?

Now that you've narrowed down your target audience, how are you going to find these people and engage with them? Depending on where you're at in the social media sphere there are a number of options available. I won't explain them all in detail here as I could go on and on. How you find your target audience will depend on which networks you choose to frequent and what type of practice you're in. I work in an Intellectual Property firm and we deal with direct clients, foreign associates as well as multi-national corporations in varied industries.

Note: if you are already using LinkedIn you can see which connections use twitter or have a blog (if they choose to publish that information), etc.

Where do they reside in the social media world?

Which platforms will you use? I suggest using LinkedIn, JD Supra, Twitter and yes, Facebook. Google Updates is also a great way to figure out where to spend your time.

How will I engage?

Whatever you do please don't spam. I trust you wouldn't as we are all professionals and know better but I just have to make sure. Engaging with your desired clients must be authentic. How you do it largely depends on you and your personality. You might try:

- Answering and asking questions on LinkedIn.
- Joining relevant LinkedIn groups.
- Creating a Facebook Page.
- Creating a Twitter Account Start a Blog. It's not as hard as you think. Create an RSS Feed for inspiration. If you don't know what an RSS Feed is Google it now and get one, you'll thank me later!

How will I follow up with those who engage with me?

The above question should also include the question "how do I define engagement?". If you have a Facebook page, will you engage with those who like your page? Same goes for Twitter and retweets, new connections on LinkedIn, comments on your blog, etc. Will you follow up on each and if so, how? My personal opinion is have patience and don't jump to engage with everyone right away. Get a sense of how people network online.

How often will I post/write?

This is one of the biggest factors that comes into play when "selling" social media to professionals. Using social media takes a large amount of time to learn in the beginning stages. I often liken it to attending large conferences. We spend hours preparing, travelling, networking, attending dinners and receptions, following up afterwards, etc. If done correctly, using social media can be like attending a targeted offline event with only relevant people attending. You'll also need to consider what type of administrative support is available to you and your efforts. Will anyone be available to monitor your RSS feeds for interesting topics? I think it's best to set a schedule at first and stick to it, no matter what. Set aside thirty minutes and don't go over it. You have lots of time and it's better to do it right.

How will I create content?

This is a very important factor to consider. What are you going to share online? You must have a content strategy. I think lawyers are naturals at creating content due to the nature of the job. Some of your content could relate to practice changes, rule changes, events and

news relevant to your industry, how you solved a client's problem, etc. Google Reader is my best friend when it comes to inspiration.