



The Legal Connection

where legal technology & people connect

2012-10

October Theme = Tech+Scary

As I sit here waiting for Hurricane Sandy to wreak havoc on the area, I am reminded of just how scary it is not to have full back up process in place.

However, you can't just back up and not make sure that back is working.

TLCxn contributor Ben Schorr wrote a blog post about Back Ups wherein he recommends placing a dummy file in with regular files for back up.

Let the normal process back up the dummy file. Then go in and delete the dummy file from your system and try to recover it from the back up.

If you can't locate or recover the test file for any reason, then you know you have an issue with your back up process which needs attention.

Here's a link to Ben's entire page/post on Back Ups:

<http://www.officeforlawyers.com/lawtech/backups.html>

If you don't have a process in place, or you haven't tested it in a while, let this be your reminder to do so asap!

My contribution this month is about speaking in public (what could be scarier ... right?!?)

Barbara Nelson shares with us 3 of the things that she thinks is really scary that some lawyers *might* be doing in their practices.

Allison Shields is back this month with her wonderful contribution about SEO practices and how they can be very scary if not done correctly. Allison also shares with us six SEO strategies you can put to work for you and your website right now.

Contributor Katie Wilson shares with us three ways being a solo doesn't have to be scary which includes a H/T to virtual assistants; and The Rural Lawyer, Bruce M. Cameron, shares with us his story of digital ghosts.

Don't forget to check out the last page and TLCxn Calendar for the upcoming webinars on pdfs and e-discovery (including the promo code that subscribers can use to get in for free); and to check out our recommended conference for those who are (or who are considering) Macs for their law practice coming up in Florida in November.

fil next month...

Speaking in Public *Scares* Us All

People who know me generally end up hearing the story where I almost passed out because of a physical reaction I had to public speaking (gave a reading at a family wedding blah blah blah long story, couldn't breathe; lots of sweat ... almost passed out); and my journey through ToastMasters to help me get over it - (the logical part of me knows I can speak to people one at a time or in groups <-which is more ... well, efficient, among other things).

Recently, an attorney I have met many times through the LI Solosez lunches (Fern Summer – who practices compliance work here on Long Island) asked if I would consider speaking to anyone other than a group of attorneys. She is a member of the JCC in Roslyn which has a Connect to Care program of invited speakers and she wanted to submit my name.

I have always limited my time and focus to legal and attorneys, but I said sure because my ToastMasters training taught me to NEVER turn down an invitation to speak; plus I ♥ Fern and would do anything she asked ... and I thought, maybe I should expand my horizons and stop beating my head against a wall trying to convince a demographic such as attorneys to give up cassette tapes ...

<thump thump thump> ...

Anyway ...

The presentation was today. The title: Twitter 101.

I was nervous. I'll admit it. While I know that I know twitter inside and out, I really didn't know how I was going to talk about it for TWO hours ... even with 57 slides of screenshots!

Turns out, as usual, I worried for no reason. I could do a separate 2 hour class just on hashtags!!! #whoknew lol

So I just had to share - not only did I fill in the 2 hours, but I got some very enthusiastic praise, I ran out of business cards (oops!) and even got a HUG!!! <-Just what could be better than a hug from a Jewish grandma hrmmmm ?????? That's right! TWO <-when I told her I was a hugger "hugs over handshakes" and all that - she came back and hugged me again!

I think the real kicker though was that another Sezzer I had lunch with earlier this week decided to tell his Mom about the presentation and she showed up. It is amazing what small circles we all travel in and how many nice people you get to meet because of a connection you have "on line".

Now, I'm writing this article, not to toot my own horn (ok maybe a little!) but mostly to update you all that the physical reaction I've endured my entire adult life to public speaking is

poof

Gone.

Not one drop of sweat (and I don't recall even one uhm (or eh) through the entire 2 hours! <-times you wish a ToastMaster was in the room!!! ;)



Andrea Cannavina is the CEO of LegalTypist, Inc.. Editor of The Legal Connection ezine and consults business owners on how best to use web based technology:

<http://www.andreacannavina.com/>

3 THINGS YOU MIGHT BE DOING THAT I FIND SERIOUSLY *scary!*

I'm not thinking about walking under ladders or spilling salt as this Halloween approaches. The things that scare me might surprise you, or maybe not:

1. **Managing your practice without financial targets.** Folks, this is like hoping you make enough money. Hope does not build a practice or a lifestyle. If you're self-employed, you need to know that you are creating enough income to support yourself and meet your obligations to other people and the future. Think emergency fund, college savings, and retirement savings. All of these need to be covered by your income on a reliable basis. If you don't know what your financial needs are, you are much less likely to meet them. Here's a free 20 minute audio- it's aimed at taking the scary out of setting financial targets:

<http://www.successfullysolo.com/reruns>

2. **Procrastinating about backups and ensuring the security of your business information.** Do I need to say more? All it takes is one disaster to really screw up your practice and your reputation. One disaster is too many, so please learn the lesson without going through the scary stuff. Make a plan to audit your practice to find areas of weakness and address them by the end of the year. Create processes, checklists and calendar the activities that will keep your practice safe. Don't know what to do? Then the first thing on your plan is to locate the expertise you need. Put a deadline on it.

3. **Relying too much on your website, your blog or other e-platforms to build your business.** You're faced with an overwhelming amount of promotional information promising massive results from the latest marketing channels and techniques. Facebook, LinkedIn, even Pinterest – especially for lawyers. We both know there are even more options out there to help you build your business online. The velocity of marketing messages you're getting is fast and furious. HOWEVER. Online marketing is just one tactic in an effective marketing strategy. For most of you, it shouldn't be your primary focus or investment. Step away from the monitor. Be rigorous in finding meaningful ways of marketing and measure your actions to ensure that they're delivering the leads you need in order to add enough clients and matters to meet your financial goals.

It's the end of October, two months left as we head to the end of the year. By now, you know a lot about how you're ending the year. You can start thinking about priorities and themes for next year. As you do, please remember anything that you can relate to here. Deal with it.

After all, we wouldn't want anything BAD to happen... Scary, right?



Barbara Nelson is a disruptive influence. If you're in need of a dose of constructive disruption, check out:

<http://www.successfullysolo.com/>

Life is short. Business coaching works.

Bad SEO Tactics Can Be Scary for Lawyers

If your law firm has a website, you probably want to make sure that it performs well, and website performance begins with ensuring that your website is returned in online search results that drive traffic. The method for doing so is called search engine optimization (SEO).

Chances are that if your firm has a website, you've already been contacted by a number of "SEO professionals." But SEO can be scary for a number of reasons. Done wrong, rather than optimizing your site for search, some of these tactics can get your site blacklisted by Google and other search engines.

Since lawyers are trained in the law and not in SEO, many lawyers don't know what to ask of potential SEO service providers and are unaware of the potential effect of some commonly used SEO tactics on the lawyer's practice, reputation or website viability.

Recent updates to Google's algorithm, specifically with respect to how websites link to one another, have made it even more important for lawyers to be well-informed about the strategies their SEO providers are using to boost their firm website's search engine rankings. Some of those companies are using SEO tactics that are questionable at best, even though they may have yielded short term results in the past. Google Algorithm Changes – Panda and Penguin

As with all Google updates, the new updates (called Panda and Penguin) are designed to return more high quality search results. These updates concentrated on identifying (and penalizing) duplicate or plagiarized content and artificial link building – tactics easily employed and often used by many SEO companies in the past.

So what SEO strategies should you employ? Here are a few:

Links. Links are still important, but not just for the fact that they are links. Unrelated backlinks, often the result of paying for links, using link farms or exchanging links with anyone who asks, regardless of relevance or value to your audience is the best way to drop your Google rank or get you banned completely. Google wants content that is rich, genuine, valuable and informative. Links should be a natural part of the content and lead to other relevant content.

Provide people with something they WANT to link to. Provide the kind of site that they WANT to tell their site visitors about (articles, free services, quality content, quality blogs, etc.). Once you are doing this, you can easily ask people to consider linking to your site.

Fresh content. Google likes fresh content. Search engine results are constantly being updated – your website needs to be as well. This is why 'static' websites don't perform well. Your rank today won't be your rank tomorrow.

Write for humans, not search engines. Write for the actual people you want to visit your site – not for search engines. If your copy is stuffed with keywords and doesn't flow, Google knows you're trying to 'game' the system. Be engaging. Write about the things your clients, potential clients and referral sources want to hear about.

Improve your "on page" SEO. There are some SEO strategies that still work. If your site is low in the rankings, there are some basic steps you can take that might help improve them, including using title tags, descriptions, header tags, and image alt tags on your web pages.

Use social media to your advantage. Social media has become an increasingly important factor in SEO. Receiving links, likes, comments or other engagement on social media is 'social proof' that the content linked to (or Liked, Shared, etc.) is trustworthy and authoritative content. As a result, that content receives a higher ranking. Focus on building a community; respond to the people who engage with you.

Optimizing your site for the search engines doesn't have to be scary if you know where the potential traps are.



Allison C. Shields, Esq., President of Legal Ease Consulting, Inc., helps lawyers avoid lawyer meltdown and create productive, profitable and enjoyable law practices by improving their productivity, procedures, and business development and marketing strategy.

Going Solo Doesn't Have to Be Scary!

Starting your own firm can be overwhelming; especially if you're starting a solo practice. If you're just starting out or leaving a larger firm with a mass of resources, becoming a one-man show can be daunting. Thankfully, there are a number of virtual solutions that can help you feel less overwhelmed and give you more freedom and time to focus on what you do best!

A virtual office. Do you need a brick-and-mortar office? Chad Burton recently wrote a fantastic article for the ABA GP Solo Division on the benefits of virtual law practices. He asked, "Do your clients actually care where you do their work?...What do clients really want? To hire a lawyer or firm who will do their work, do it right, communicate often, and not drive them into unnecessary financial hardship?" Note: Your state may have different rulings on virtual offices, so you may want to double check before you break your lease.

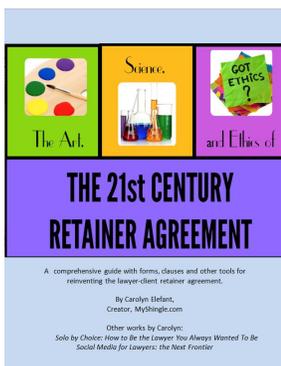
A virtual assistant. Virtual assistants can free up your time by preparing drafts for your court documents and pleadings, transcribing witness statements, taking dictation for hearing notes, and much more. Unlike an in-house employee, you choose when you'd like a little help, and turnaround time is typically within 24 hours or less!

A virtual receptionist. Don't worry about waiting by the phone; a live virtual receptionist service can cheerfully answer your calls, transfer them to you wherever and whenever you like, perform basic new client intake, and confirm appointments on your behalf. You'll have peace of mind that a friendly, professional person is answering your calls, and your clients will be impressed by your responsiveness and exceptional customer service.

With the virtual solutions available today, you can put together a nimble, impressive solo firm at a fraction of the price of a Class A office suite and full-time employees. You don't have to have a monstrous budget to make your practice look good!



Katie Wilson is a Sales and Marketing Associate at Ruby Receptionists. Harkening back to an era when every call to an office was answered by a friendly receptionist, Ruby Receptionists provides personalized live, virtual receptionist service to small businesses and professionals throughout North America. Visit: <http://www.callruby.com> to learn more.



The Retainer Agreement is one of the most important contracts that you'll ever draft or sign as an attorney.

From the terms of the Retainer Agreement to its design, a Retainer Agreement is a reflection of your practice and the way you do business - making it a potential selling tool for your firm. Most of the retainer agreements for free online or even those drafted by various Bar Associations can provide a good starting point, but many do not address the multiple issues that lawyers must consider when dealing with 21st Century problems and do not generally reflect 21st Century form or style.

In this ebook, you will find a discussion of the changes that are driving the need to reinvent the retainer agreement as well as language that you can cut and paste or modify and use in your agreements.



<http://ow.ly/dNseF>



The Rural Lawyer : Ghosts

But psychoanalysis has taught that the dead—a dead parent, for example—can be more alive for us, more powerful, more scary, than the living. It is the question of ghosts. -- Jacques Derrida

It is that time of year when thunderstorms roll across the prairie to herald the forthcoming fall, dropping rain and trees with joyful abandon and walking across the night sky on legs of electricity and light. As I bumped into my office on the morning after a particularly raucous example of the species had traipsed its way across the county I was greeted by the sound of silence, a sound that brings a certain sense of trepidation to the digitally dependent for silence is often a harbinger of loss.

There is something eerily peaceful about silicon at rest, when the last watt has left the UPS, the fans and disk platters lie still, the ever-present fog of white noise has lifted from the office, and the ghosts of software abruptly and prematurely terminated slowly ebb from RAM. It is the type of peace that wants to lull you into tranquility so that it may more easily let the monsters in. For some where in the quiet dark lies a fault, some malevolent *dues ex machina* waiting to bring chaos rather than resolution and the scary thing is that until the power is restored there is no way to know if the lurking daemons bring the silicon equivalent of hiccups or a stroke.

So I sat and waited bathed in the glow of my iPad, like the heroine's second best friend in a teen slasher movie, for some stranger in overalls to reach through the ether and unleash the daemon lurking in my desktop. And when the lights broke through the gloom, that daemon extracted a terrible revenge as it was exorcised from its silicon domain, leaving behind a trail of broken links, bad inodes, and unrecoverable disk faults.

And when the lights broke through the gloom, that daemon extracted a terrible revenge as it was exorcised from its silicon domain, leaving behind a trail of broken links, bad inodes, and unrecoverable disk faults.

Yet I had no fear of this daemon and its random damage for, in my hubris, I assumed that I need merely call upon my backup system, my knight in shining bits, and such trifles would be dealt with. But this daemon's handiwork had been to rip the very heart from my champion's chest; not content to tear gaping holes through my data, this daemon had rent asunder my backup disk.

With the phone company's repair crews trailing many hours behind those of the power company I had little hope of the cavalry (in the form of my remote, off-site backup) coming to the rescue, recovery was destined to be a hard, byte level slog through my disks with only a data recovery program left over from my geek days as my guide if I wanted to get any real work done that day.

It's been some time since the horror visited my office and, for the most part, things are back to normal - yes, the missing data came flooding back once the internet was restored, and on occasion, I still run into a remnant of the damage (incorrect permissions, a missing link), but these are just ghosts of the daemon's passing. There have been a few changes - there's a RAID array on order to replace my backup system's single local disk, I am burning closed files to DVD (just in case), and I'm making better use of my UPS's ability to command my computers to shutdown cleanly in low voltage conditions - but overall, the digital part of my office has healed.



Bruce M. Cameron Having decided that going to law school and opening a solo law practice would be a sufficient response to the male midlife crisis, Bruce now practices Collaborative Family Law and Estate Planning in rural Minnesota. When not in the law office, he can be found on his small farm where he and his wife are at the beck and call of a herd of horses, a couple of cats, a few dogs and one extremely spoiled parrot. <http://www.rurallawyer.com>



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FALL 2012 WEBINAR SERIES

WEDNESDAYS

12:30 - 2:00 PM ET

November 7 - eDiscovery 101 - you know you need to know about it, but when will you have the time? A basic understanding of eDiscovery can literally save you and your client's \$1,000's and Kelly Twigger is just the attorney to teach you.

November 14 - Social Media Best Practices. Are you or someone you know new to social media? Do you wonder if you're doing it "right" or do you feel like you're spreading yourself too thin? If so, sign up and learn the best practices from Jennifer Ellis, Esq.

December 12 - PDF - Tech and Techniques. You know you should be more digital less paper, but just can't seem to get yourself there? This 101 on pdfing is for you!

TLCxn subscribers may enter promo code TLCxn and attend any webinar for free.

More info or to register: <http://ow.ly/dKm3u>

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