

# Social Media as Strategic Public Relations for Law Firms

By: Gina F. Rubel, Esq.

I recently had the privilege to present *Strategic Public Relations for Law Firms* at the Association of Legal Administrators National Conference in New Orleans. It was such a pleasure to spend time with industry colleagues and clients and to develop new relationships within the legal industry.

This article is not meant to recap the entire program as it is available via ALA in audio format. Instead, I have compiled some of the more important take-always – at least in my opinion. These tidbits of information come from those moments when I saw many people taking notes, from the questions asked and answered at the program and the questions I have received since.

The majority of the questions weren't about traditional public relations for lawyers or the ethical considerations – but rather – they were about the use of social media in legal communications.

## Social Media Considerations

The two most important things to understand are first, your firm's corporate culture and whether or not it maintains a social media policy, and second, the ethical implications of social media engagement.

Approximately 30-40% of law firms currently block access to social media sites which is a huge misstep in today's age of digital communication and participation. These firms are neither utilizing social media to increase business nor tracking what is being said about them and their clients in these online venues – a big mistake. If you are a thought leader in your law firm, consider speaking to management about the benefits of adopting a social media policy and then providing in-house training for the associates, partners and administrative staff.

## Social Media Statistics

Here are just some of the statistics that I shared at the ALA conference:

- 105,000,000 Americans now participate in social media
- 150,000,000 – # of Facebook users & growing
- 150,000,000 – # of videos on YouTube
- 2,700,000 - # of articles in Eng. on Wikipedia
- 6,000,000 – # of Twitter users & growing
- 225,000,000 – avg. # of daily Tweets
- 35% of adult Internet users have a profile on at least one social networking site (USA Today '08)

## Social Media Opportunities

Social media engagement by law firms provides the attorneys and staff with many opportunities. They include:

- Client / Referral Source Relations
- Community Relations
- Crisis Management
- Event Sharing
- Information Sharing
- Issue Advocacy
- Media Relations
- Network Building
- Referral Relations
- Reputation Management
- Thought Leadership

## LinkedIn for Lawyers and Legal Administrators

LinkedIn is an interconnected network of experienced professionals from around the world. It is one of the oldest and most established professional networking sites on the Web. LinkedIn is conservative, professional, business-oriented, adheres to a strict set of rules, highly visible in search engines and an easy point of entry for lawyers. You can find, be introduced to and collaborate with millions of qualified professionals in more than 200 countries. Many of whom are beneficial to network with in order to accomplish your professional goals. Some LinkedIn resources include:

How to set up a profile (Video): <http://tinyurl.com/cjmzon>

Make your LinkedIn profile work for you (Article): <http://tinyurl.com/cjmx5>

Why and how to use LinkedIn (Video): <http://tinyurl.com/d4gbgq>

## Facebook for Lawyers and Legal Administrators

Facebook is a great way to communicate however; it's a much more informal platform than LinkedIn. One of the things that I repeat often is that people do business with people they know, like and trust. This is a fact of life. So it is important that people who know, like

and trust you and your lawyers on a personal level also have a good sense of who you are and what you do on a professional level. Since legal services are “needs based” services, when someone is looking to consult a lawyer – they usually start with the people they know. Facebook is a great tool because it gives people access to their contacts’ personal and professional information instantaneously without them having to pick up the phone and ask a friend for a referral. And if they’re connected to you on Facebook, chances are they already know, like and trust you, making them that much more inclined to do business with you. That said, some professionals prefer to use Facebook for personal communications and not for business. There is nothing wrong with that decision – as long as attorneys understand the public relations value of social media and make conscious and educated decisions on how to use each platform. Some

Facebook resources include:

How to set up a profile (Article & Video): <http://tinyurl.com/c3slwm>

You Should be on Facebook (Article): <http://tinyurl.com/c8yrlh>

### Twitter for Lawyers and Legal Administrators

Twitter is a social service for people to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of 140-character answers to one simple question: What are you doing? The idea is to have a conversation with the people you follow and those who follow you. My Twitter “handle” is [ginarubel](#), but if someone tweets to me on Twitter, it will say [ginarubel](#). There is a ton of jargon specific to this topic, but it’s easy to learn. Just Google (verb) “Twitter language” and you’ll find tons of articles.

Twitter is one of the fastest growing online social networks. At the time I presented at ALA, there were more than six million Twitter users.. There is much controversy about lawyers using Twitter and I do believe lawyers and administrators need to use it cautiously, it’s not for everyone. The bottom line is that Twitter should be employed within the confines of a social media policy and the applicable rules of legal ethics should always be kept in mind. However, if done right – Twitter is a great way to leverage strategic communications. Some Twitter resources include:

How to use Twitter (Video): <http://tinyurl.com/asa8co>

Twitter for lawyers (Articles): <http://tinyurl.com/cfb2b3>

### Blogging for Lawyers and Legal Administrators

To blog or not to blog? That is the question.

If you are considering blogging for your lawyers or firm, the reasons you should blog are:

- For exposure
- To establish practice area expertise
- To establish thought leadership
- For search engine optimization
- It is low cost
- For brand reinforcement
- For competitive differentiation
- For reputation management
- Because you or your lawyers enjoy writing

The reasons you or your lawyers should NOT blog are because:

- You believe it is too time consuming
- You or your lawyers are not committed
- It is against firm policy
- The firm has no real blogging strategy
- The firm or blog will have no real focus
- Your firm management is Internet-phobic
- You and/or your lawyers don’t enjoy writing

If you decide to create a firm or practice area blog, you need to commit to do it frequently and well. My colleague, [Gil Marquez](#), Law Firm Administrator for the [personal injury law firm](#), Feldman, Shepherd, Wohlgelernter, Tanner, Weinstock & Dodig said recently that, “The only thing worse than no blog is a stale blog.”

I maintain a blog at [www.ThePRLawyer.com](http://www.ThePRLawyer.com) and I write for [The Legal Intelligence Blog](#). You can also find me on LinkedIn at [www.linkedin.com/in/ginafuriarubel](http://www.linkedin.com/in/ginafuriarubel) or follow me on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ginarubel>.

**About the Author:** *Gina F. Rubel, Esq., is the owner of Furia Rubel Communications, Inc., a [public relations and marketing agency](#) with a niche in [legal communications](#). A former Philadelphia trial attorney and public relations expert, Gina is the author of [Everyday Public Relations for Lawyers](#) and the co-author of [6 Essentials for Success in Business and Life](#). Gina and her PR firm have won numerous awards for legal communications, public relations, media relations, strategic planning, corporate philanthropy and leadership. For more information, go to [www.FuriaRubel.com](http://www.FuriaRubel.com).*