



The four most important Web 2.0 tools for lawyers

Want to be on the cutting edge of social networking? These tips will help you maximize the latest trends in communication.

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The paradigm shift to Web 2.0 and social media networks is changing the way companies communicate, conduct business, and leverage their brands on a global basis. Yet with all of the positive changes, breakthroughs, and important new opportunities available to individuals and businesses, many remain reticent to adopt social media practices due to the sheer volume of social networks available. The following is a brief look at the historical perspectives, uses and tips of what we believe to be the most important tools available to attorneys and law firms today.

Blogs

Blogging is the most dynamic and multi-faceted tool any lawyer or law firm can utilize. In order to understand the importance of blogging, you must first understand the definition of a blog. The term *blog* is a contraction of the words web and log. Blogs are simply Web sites that publish articles which are displayed in reverse chronological order. Blog platforms allow the blog author to:

- Add fresh content and articles, made up of written word, audio, video or pictures. Content can be added at any time and as often as desired



- Engage and communicate with readers in order to form “community”
- Measure the number of visits, unique visits, page views and time each reader spends on a site

Blogs: Historical perspective

Blogs, in historical perspective, were the beginning platform for Web 2.0 and social media. Blogs were the evolution and manifestation from Web 1.0 static Web sites and the challenges Webmasters faced. They are the revolutionary tools that provide attorneys and firms:

- A writing platform
- Control of their information and brand
- A marketing tool for their products and services
- A delivery system for their expertise and message(s) of value

Adoption: Your hub and centerpiece

The first and simplest tip is to adopt blogging as an important integral tool, recognize the opportunities, and step into the technology.

The true power of blogging is the fact that a lawyer or firm can build and own their writing platform, own their content that reflects their expertise, and create an ongoing tool that will support them throughout their business career.

Unlike social networks, which are owned by the site owners and participation hinges on their rules, bloggers have the opportunity to create their own “publication,” build their own rules of engagement, and establish their format with their target market or goals as parameters.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the most valuable business niche social network in social media today. With over 40 million registered users, Compete.com ranked LinkedIn one of the top five social media sites for traffic growth in the first quarter of 2009. Analytics firm, comScore.com, estimates LinkedIn receives 16 million unique visits per month and growing. The opportunities available to individuals and firms willing to engage on LinkedIn make it a vital business tool.



Historical perspective

Originally considered a job seeker's networking tool, the widely held misconception that LinkedIn remains a job seeker's tool utilized during a job search, is no longer accurate. LinkedIn is based on an architecture of visibility. Simply stated, LinkedIn allows you to see your networking partners' network of connections. This visibility creates a number of opportunities for entrepreneurs, small businesses, and large corporations:

- **Q&A:** Allows companies and individuals to showcase their expertise.
- **Groups:** Network with your peers or prospective clients by joining groups.
- **Profiles:** Create an individual or company profile that highlights your interest in collaborating, partnering, or sharing information.
- **Internal search engine:** Keywords enrich profiles and titles to maximize exposure within the site.
- **Applications:** Utilizes free tools that allow individuals or companies to stream their blog content into their profile pages, create workspaces, and establish content libraries for sharing documents with connection.

Personalize your invitations

LinkedIn's power comes from your ability to see your connection partners' network of connections. The "6 degrees of separation" often uncovers fantastic new opportunities, networking partners and business deals. When building your network, personalize your invitations:

- Delete the default text and write a custom message to each individual you invite to your network. Reference how you met and be memorable.
- When adding more than one individual, write a message that has a reference point that each connection can relate to you. If you met your "group" of would-be connections at a meeting, reference the meeting as a point of common interest.

Facebook

Facebook currently reigns as the

largest social network with over 200 million active users. Facebook reports that 100 million users contribute to over four billion minutes that are spent on the site every day.

Today's fastest growing population segment is age 35 and older, whose spending power is attracting businesses of all sizes to develop a Facebook presence.

Historical perspective

Founded in early 2004 by Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook has evolved from being a social platform for students to a viable networking site for professionals involved in businesses of all sizes and niches. Facebook enables individuals, businesses, public personalities and brands to build robust profiles from which to share, engage and create opportunities for viral exposure.

Key opportunities for attorneys:

- Create a personal profile with links to your Web and blog sites for networking with other attorneys, colleagues, former classmates and friends.
- Create a Facebook business page to develop and maintain relationships with colleagues, clients and potential clients, share information and resources, generate viral marketing and keep yourself top of mind with your network for referrals.
- Participate in groups relevant to your practice to share information, develop beneficial business affiliations, and gain exposure to potential clients looking for the expertise that you have.

Showcase your expertise and share resources

The robust functionality of Facebook enables you to post files, photos and video on both your business page and personal profile. Leverage this opportunity for client development, building professional relationships, recruiting, differentiating yourself or your firm, and

presenting a human touch to make you more approachable. Here are five easy steps to start:

- Create a business page from your personal profile.
- Add information about your practice, education and provide links to your Web and blog sites.
- Invite your Facebook friends, LinkedIn connections and other networking contacts to visit and "fan" your page.
- Post or stream your blog articles or other resources of value.
- Write on your "Wall" frequently to inspire your fans to engage, which fuels Facebook's viral marketing power.

Twitter

Twitter is a social network based upon a micro-blogging platform that provides users real time, instant messaging utilizing a 140-character format. Although Twitter's registered user count, rumored at 10 million, is far below that of Facebook's purported 200 million plus, Twitter is the fastest growing social network according to Compete.com. From March 2008 to March 2009, Twitter experienced a 2,565 percent growth rate.

Historical perspective

Twitter's amazing growth and popularity evolved from two main factors.

First, it is an easy tool to utilize. Twitter requires very little technical savvy and the writing skills required in micro blogging are far less demanding than those required to author a blog.

Second, Twitter provides instantaneous broadcasting, breaking news and connectivity to conversations. The ability for people to broadcast messages, find content, or connect instantly makes Twitter a major component of any social media campaign.

Tune in to conversations

Twitter is the cutting-edge social network behind the growing popularity



of the new search frontier: semantic conversational search. Semantic search allows people to search for conversations, in real time, relevant to their keyword. Unlike a Google search that can return links to old information no longer relevant to a search, Twitter has a third-party open source search tool called Twazzup.com which identifies relevant conversations. Try these steps to tap into conversations that could lead to new clients, collaborations, or opportunities:

- **Keyword list:** Create a list of relevant keywords that would identify conversations your consumers, audience, peers or competitors are participating in.
- **Twazzup.com:** Input your keyword(s) and keyword phrases and identify relevant conversations that you wish to fol-

low. These results should provide new individuals and companies to follow as well as new conversations.

- **Google Reader:** Establish a Google Reader account that will hold your RSS subscription feeds for the conversations you want to follow on Twitter. (RSS feeds are summaries of frequently updated web content that are gathered into one place for the RSS subscriber to see and click on if they wish to go to the Web source to learn more.)
- **Twitter search:** The internal search engine on Twitter allows you to RSS subscribe to a conversation. Take the data you mined from Twazzup and input it into the Twitter search engine. When you find a relevant conversation, subscribe to that conversation via the RSS chicklet on the right sidebar.



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