

Practical Success

Cordell M. Parvin

Practical Guide To Using Social Media

In my February column, I shared with you the how and why of using social media. I mentioned that lawyers can use social media to become visible and credible to potential clients and referral sources and build relationships with “weak ties.” In this article I will share with you some basics on using the LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter tools.

LinkedIn

You may have heard that LinkedIn is for business, while Facebook is for personal relationships. That may have been true, but Facebook is increasingly being used for business also. LinkedIn is a tool to reconnect with former colleagues, law school, college, and high school classmates, members of industry and civic groups and people you meet at the next networking event you attend.

The first step to use LinkedIn is to prepare a profile. Once you have a profile you can search your contacts from Outlook or whatever mail/address program you are using and see which of them is on LinkedIn. Then you can invite them to link to you.

The next step you might take is to search for groups that are focused on areas that interest you. If there are none, you can even start a group. When



you join a group, you will see the group has a discussion page and a news page. If you are blogging you might link to your latest blog post on the news page. If you have a topic to discuss or you just did a presentation on a topic, you might mention it on the discussion page and offer to send your materials to anyone who is interested.

You can also link to your blog or materials when you update your status on LinkedIn. Your status is where you write what you are doing. I have seen lawyers write that they just finished a trial or they are on their way to make an appellate argument.

I find that people do not go on their LinkedIn page as often as they go on their Facebook page. So, it may be harder or less likely that people will find any content or materials you put there.

Facebook

My first reaction to Facebook was that it was for younger people (college age and 20s). I recently read that boomers are the fastest growing segment of people going on Facebook. So, each day there is a better chance that your clients and contacts are on Facebook.

You might be concerned about privacy issues on Facebook. You need to learn about the privacy settings that let you decide who you want to be able to see what you post.

I like Facebook because it is an efficient way to stay in touch with “weak ties.” I spend at most 15

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to 20 minutes a day on Facebook staying in touch with people ranging from high school classmates to lawyers I am currently coaching. I also stay in touch with former colleagues and client friends.

I use Facebook for business and you can also. You can either start a group or a fan page. I have done both, but more recently I am spending my time on the fan page rather than the group page. Instead of sending out emails, I post links to my blog, my podcasts, and YouTube videos I have created and links to other reading materials.

Twitter

Twitter has been described as a mini-blog in that users can only post 140 characters. First, I use Twitter as a research tool. I can find what experts, influencers and others are saying about topics that interest me, and I can go to the links they include in their Tweets. Second, I use Twitter as a tool to get my content out to more “weak ties.” If I post a blog, I can say something about it and link to it on Twitter. I use Tweetdeck as the tool to link my blog and other materials I believe people who share my interest will find valuable. Tweetdeck automatically shortens the URL so that it takes less of my 140 characters.

Most of the people following me on Twitter are lawyers. So when I find something I know will interest lawyers, I retweet it, meaning that I forward it and make sure the originator knows I have forwarded his or her tweet.

I have met several lawyers on Twitter. I have never talked to them in person or on the phone, but

we communicate on Twitter. I can see what they are doing, and they can see what I am doing. I see their links to materials they have written including blog posts and e-books, and when I think they are informative, I let them know and I retweet them to people who are following me.

Ethics

Kevin O’Keefe with LexBlog posted a blog suggesting that new ethics rules are not necessary for social media. I agree. In his post, Kevin listed the ethical issues lawyers should consider:

- Don’t blow client confidences;
- Don’t give legal advice (just general information for educational purposes) when speaking among the public;
- Don’t do anything where a reasonable person could argue that there is an attorney-client relationship;
- Don’t say anything misleading about your capabilities or any other matter;
- Don’t solicit work; and
- Don’t violate conflict of interest rules.

The best way to get started on social media is to join LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter and see how others are using each tool. If you join, link with me on LinkedIn, join my Facebook coaching page, and follow me on Twitter. Watch to see how I am using each tool and determine how you can use the tools for your practice.

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