

Social Media Roundtable



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What has been your greatest social media success?

Simone Fell: Our lawyers operate Megawatt (a Renewable Energy blog), The Legalist (a blog hosted on BC Business's site and focused on employment issues), the Canadian Trademark law blog (IP issues) and BCBlawg (business and IP litigation, run by one of our associates). We are also starting up an Estates & Trusts blog within the next few weeks. The firm has LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Google Plus accounts. We still have a long way to go in building our social media presence, but a number of bloggers and journalists are connected to us through these vehicles and have approached us for commentary or republished our posts/tweets. Links to some of our blogs are featured as 'resources' on different industry sites. This has definitely raised the profile of certain individuals, increased the number of subscribers to our newsletters and improved SEO by driving traffic to our main website.



John Buchanan: Probably blogs. Even though we only have one blog currently (a former associate started a blog that was so successful that he left the firm to be a consultant to the mortgage insurance industry), blogs, I think, can be a great way to provide useful content to current clients and to

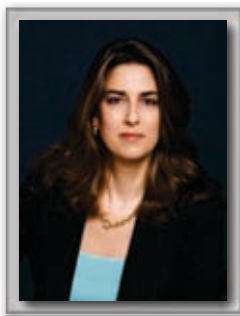
demonstrate depth of knowledge and experience in a way that's different from your typical marketing materials. We've also found that reporters are using bloggers more and more as sources for stories – so blogs can be an important component of your strategic media relations program.

Jeffrey Hild: I believe our General Counselor blog has been an excellent first blog for our firm. General Counselor is an employment law blog for in-house attorneys, business owners and executives with special attention to Illinois employment law. The blog is maintained by attorneys within our Labor & Employment Law practice group.



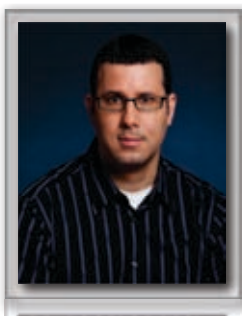
We have also been quite pleased with the RSS feed submission techniques we have employed to optimize our Web site with search engines and drive traffic to our site.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: Our Labor Law department owns and operates a very active



LinkedIn group under the title "Labor Law Israel". The group was created about a year ago and now has 368 members. The platform is being used to promote the Firm's expertise in this field and enables the department to circulate news and updates to targeted audience without having to overcome anti-spam restric-

tions. Additionally, we already held two professional meetings to which we invited the group members. These meeting were a great success. Based on the success of the Labor Law group, our Firm recently created another group in the field of Internet and Computer Law. Another use of social media is the Events platform available through LinkedIn by which we can circulate various events held by the Firm.



McDonald Hopkins: Launching and managing all of our social media channels would be considered

our greatest success. We actively participate and post on Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Linked In, and we have just launched a Labor and Employment blog. With so many different channels, we have been able to keep our messaging consistent as well as post useful information to our followers, fans, clients, and groups.

What has been your greatest social media challenge thus far, and how did your firm tackle it?

Do Kim Dung: The greatest challenge for Leadco is to get agreement within the firm as to what should be posted online.

Simone Fell: Agreement within the firm with regard to what should be posted online and who should be responsible for drafting and managing content. Truly meaningful content is usually generated at the individual and practice/industry level, where 'experts' in those areas update topic-specific postings and seek out useful information for their target audience. This is much trickier to do at the firm level as the audience is so broad and our marketing team does not have the time to seek out keywords associated with the firm's brand and reach out to everyone talking about those topics with a personally crafted tweet, track the activities of our clients in the media and post items of interest to them (which would definitely require vetting by a group of lawyers), nor do they have the expertise to generate legal commentary. As a result, our general firm accounts repost articles and news items that can already be found on our website.

John Buchanan: Our biggest challenges are bandwidth-oriented. We have a small Marketing Department so trying to be really proactive with social media is difficult, as all of the members of my department have pretty full plates already. On the attorney side, we also have some bandwidth issues, as well, as our attorneys are often so busy with client work that getting more involved with social media often falls to the bottom of their "To Do" lists. I think this bandwidth challenge will become more and more acute as time goes on, so it may be necessary for us to examine our ROI on so-



cial media vs. traditional marketing when making both budget and personnel resource allocations.

Jeffrey Hild: I would say that the greatest difficulty we've had is educational. Initially, we had to convey to attorneys the benefits of utilizing social media tools including the creation of blogs and creating LinkedIn profiles. Then, the difficulty became, with our blog, providing enough fresh content to keep it optimized on relevant search engines.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: We try to encourage members of the firm to increase the use of social media tools, open LinkedIn profiles and keep them updated, create professional groups, publish posts and articles and comment on posts.

McDonald Hopkins: Launching our blog has been the most challenging aspect of our social media efforts thus far. It required a lot of time and coordination with our Labor and Employment group. However, now that the blog has gone live, our group does an excellent job of posting on a regular basis on timely topics.

Do you have a social media policy in place? If so, how are you handling training on both policies and proactive use of social media and tracking of results?

Do Kim Dung: Leadco does not yet have a social media policy.

Simone Fell: Not yet, but it's in development. We already have policies regarding employees use of technology and some of the issues would be covered under that. We used to track social media as a firm but we now have a number of lawyers with individual accounts who tweet/blog about a combination of personal and work-related issues, which why it's even more critical that there be a formal policy in place. We have done some training on how to use social networking tools, which highlighted best practices (eg be conscious of who's in your audience and don't broadcast every thought you have without considering the impact) and have offered pointers at our business law and litigation department meetings. We expect lawyers to take a common-sense approach to their online business development activities and consider the same Law Society guidelines that govern other mediums.

John Buchanan: Almost. We have a set of "guidelines" that are in draft form, which describe the

firm's attitude toward social media and provides suggested strategies about how our attorneys should approach social media. Whether firms like it or not, having a clear Social Media policy or set of guidelines is important. Without policies or guidelines, "www" more nearly stands for "Wild, Wild West," where anything goes.

Jeffrey Hild: We do have a social media policy in place within our Arnstein & Lehr Manual for Attorneys. We have provided significant training in classes and individually for approximately 1.5 years on the benefits of LinkedIn and regularly work with attorneys to promote their LinkedIn presence. We do not have a tracking program currently in place to monitor results.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: Currently, we do not have an office policy in respect of the use of social media.

McDonald Hopkins: We do have a social media policy in place and it is included in our employee handbook and is posted on our intranet. We have taken a proactive approach to social media by not only stressing the importance of having a policy but we have also done two roundtable programs and selected alerts on the subject for our clients and friends of the firm. Our attorneys are encouraged to participate in social media networks, especially LinkedIn. In the coming months we will be conducting an in house training for our attorneys on participating in LinkedIn.

How do you and your firm connect with your firm's top clients and top prospects via social media?

Do Kim Dung: Leadco, as a firm, does not have connection to our firm's top clients and top prospects via social media. Certain partners and associates within the firm do use Facebook and LinkedIn in their professional capacities to connect and communicate with clients and colleagues.

Simone Fell: As with Leadco, lawyers connect with clients and prospects individually through LinkedIn and their personal Twitter accounts. We have not done much to advertise our social media presence. This will likely only change once we have a policy in place and have determined a better way to generate timely and interesting information that top clients (who already get our newsletters) will want to read.

John Buchanan: Similar to the other respondents, the firm itself doesn't use social media to actively connect with clients. Our attorneys do (mainly through LinkedIn). I think, though, as we begin to promote our Twitter page more, we might end up having some clients follow us on Twitter. Given that social media is really relationship-based, it's hard for clients to have a "relationship" with a firm. Clients are more likely to have relationships with specific attorneys, so it makes sense that social media tools are going to be more widely used by individuals.

Jeffrey Hild: Arnstein & Lehr also does not have a specific firm-level initiative to connect using social media tools. We have secured a firm Facebook page, but merely in an attempt to ward off use of the firm name by disgruntled former employees and turning it into a forum for discrediting the firm. We do provide LinkedIn training for individual attorneys and several have created profiles on the site. No attorneys that I am aware of have personal Twitter accounts.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: We do not use social media to communicate with our clients, although, on an individual basis some of the attorneys are connected to various clients. We do use social media, mainly LinkedIn, as a tool to connect with potential clients. This tool enables us to overcome ethical restrictions related to soliciting.

McDonald Hopkins: We do not use social media to contact our clients directly. We predominantly use email to disseminate our timely client alerts and roundtable/webcast invitations to our clients and contacts. On all of our email campaigns, we include the links to our social media pages so they can choose to follow or friend us.

Have you faced any ethical concerns from your attorneys? How did you handle these?

Do Kim Dung: The only ethical concern from our attorneys is the possibility of mixing personal and professional communications in the online context. It is often very easy, and tempting, to mix professional and personal communications online.

Simone Fell: Nothing major yet, although any time a client or potentially contentious issue are the subject of a Twitter post, the marketing team seeks the necessary partner approvals. The issue of 'recommendations' through LinkedIn has come up though. Some of our lawyers have already re-

ceived online recommendations from clients and contacts, or have been asked to provide them. There are some Law Society guidelines governing the use of client testimonials for marketing purposes, and we have certain HR policies surrounding references for staff, so this is something we'll need to resolve shortly.

John Buchanan: We haven't encountered any problems to date – but we do caution attorneys about using social media in our guidelines. There are some risk management issues at play with social media and I think we will soon see law firm insurance companies asking for copies of social media policies. I think blogs are area where it's really important to have some kind of policy or guidelines. We've had a couple of blogs and are talking about starting up a few more. We don't monitor the blogs or what the bloggers post –but we've made sure that there's a disclaimer on the blog so that readers know that the posts are the opinions of the blogger – and not of our firm. We don't require the blogs be "firm branded," either, which is a bit different than other firms. We felt that being less heavily branded, our lawyers' blogs would be a bit more personal and maybe readers would be less likely to look at those blogs as propaganda.

Jeffrey Hild: None that I am aware of. If so, we would work with the firm's general counsel to resolve.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: None so far. As we mainly use LinkedIn, the social media activity of members of the firm remains mainly professional rather than personal.

McDonald Hopkins: We have not faced any ethical concerns from our attorneys but we are very careful about the information we post and it is all approved before it goes out.

What have been the greatest roadblocks to getting buy-in from the firm? How did you overcome these?

Do Kim Dung: A significant roadblock we have experienced to implementing more social media results from different levels of knowledge, expertise, and understanding of social media, and what such media may offer the firm.

Simone Fell: To second Leadco's response, the lack of understanding of how social media works. My view is that law firm tweets/posts should deliver breaking news of interest to the firm's clients, pro-

vide links to reports of interest and importance to their industries, or spread the word about upcoming events and opportunities. Savvy authors 're-tweet' good updates from other Twitter accounts, follow the feeds of other relevant Twitter users they like, and of the clients and potential clients they hope will follow them back. Some even post information from their competitors (heaven forbid!). Recently there's been an increase in the number of lawyers joining LinkedIn and we've hosted a series of training sessions for them (and their secretaries) on how to use it effectively, but many are still of the mindset that the content should focus entirely on us and worry about the amount of non-billable time spent on maintaining a social media presence.

John Buchanan: I don't think we've had any significant roadblocks in connection with rolling out any of our social media marketing. I think that's because, for the most part, most of our lawyers are comfortable with technology. I credit our successful CRM/e-marketing initiative with helping all of our attorneys – from the most senior to the newest associate – be in a place where social media is not a wholly alien concept. I also think it's important to remember that social media are just tools – they aren't silver bullets. In order for social media to be effective in marketing and/or business development, the users need to understand both how to use them and the business case for doing so.

Jeffrey Hild: I think the firm itself has gradually bought in to the benefits of social media through the individual education of attorneys as to the benefits of specific social media. As a result, there has been little push back when suggesting a new social media effort. The only concern is that it be a useful, productive effort to assist the attorney or group achieve their business development goals and objectives.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: The main roadblock that we encountered is lack of motivation by members of the firm to use social media and devote the necessary time and attention to this tool. We often find that many of the attorneys are unaware or underestimate the potential of the use of social media as a business development tool.

McDonald Hopkins: Our leaders were excited about our use of social media as an additional marketing tool.

Do you see social media as a way to build relationships and be social, or to share

content?

Do Kim Dung: Yes.

Simone Fell: Both. The open exchange of news, ideas and insights is at the heart of social networks. If something is good, we should be spreading the word about it, regardless of where it came from, because our goal is that those who follow/read us are enriched for doing so. If there's something in Canadian Lawyer, BC Business or the Globe & Mail that our clients would be interested in, we should be linking to it. Of course, it then becomes the responsibility of the author to ensure that external links are verified, do not connect to anything inflammatory or pose any significant risk.

John Buchanan: At this point, I see social media as a way to share content with clients. By sharing relevant content, you can strengthen your relationships and your reputation. I think it remains to be seen if a social media platform like Facebook can become more "business-oriented," as I see it more of a "personal" social tool. One real world example (and this is a true story) of the potential problems that arise when personal and professional worlds collide : an Associate at a Big Firm called in sick one morning, telling the partner she worked most closely with that she thought she was coming down with the flu, etc. She then promptly posted on Facebook about how hungover she was. And, of course, she had "friended" the partner she worked most closely with. Oops. Caught.

Jeffrey Hild: I see it more as a tool to share content on a professional level.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: Both. This is a way to personalize professional communications.

McDonald Hopkins: Both. Social media is a way to share content and keep our clients and contacts apprised of key issues and changes in the law.

What processes/tracking methods do you have in place to take advantage of social media in a meaningful way?

Do Kim Dung: The firm is currently developing a strategy to take advantage of social media.

Simone Fell: Our webmaster runs analytics to see who is following us, re-tweeting or posting our con-

tent, clicking through to the firm website etc and has set up a series of Google Alerts, but we are still in the initial stages of formal strategy development.

John Buchanan: We're not doing a whole lot of tracking at this point. That's on our long list of things to do – but at the moment, we're just trying to keep up with posting where we need to and supporting our current social media activities.

Jeffrey Hild: We have not yet developed a formal tracking process, though we do informally monitor our analytical data to see if our website traffic is impacted by our social media efforts.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: None. We feel that we should invest the efforts in order to develop and implement such methods.

McDonald Hopkins: We use several different programs to keep track of our social media efforts. We have notifications set up to let us know when McDonald Hopkins has been mentioned on different platforms. Our website analytics keep track of what websites are driving traffic to our website so we are able to track how many people are coming via our social media platforms.

What tools do you recommend for other marketers to streamline their use of social media?

Do Kim Dung: We are in the early stage of learning to apply social media to our firm. In addition to the firm's website, where we post regular legal updates, we are looking into blogging, and making greater use of Facebook and LinkedIn to connect with potential clients.

Simone Fell: I'd recommend that the marketing department involve practice groups and individual lawyers more in creating content that can be easily modified for distribution through different mediums. There are certain programs and plug-ins that connect your social media vehicles and allow you to update LinkedIn, Twitter and FB at the same time. Pick the vehicles that make sense and that people can realistically commit the time to managing – individual lawyers don't necessarily have to be on all social networking sites in order to reach their clients and prospects.

John Buchanan: We use bit.ly for our Tweets and our new web site has RSS capabilities. That's about it at the moment. As we use social media more, I'm sure we'll start looking at tools to help us figure

out how to get more mileage out of our social media.

Jeffrey Hild: Educate the lawyers as to how to utilize social media, so they aren't reliant on the marketing team to submit blog posts, improve their LinkedIn profiles, or submit RSS items.

Miriam Hackmey & Kobie Rafaeli: Our experience so far shows that creation of groups is a very efficient tool for generating social media traffic and establishing new connections with potential clients.

McDonald Hopkins: What has been effective for us is to keep our messaging consistent across all platforms and to put new information out on a regular basis.