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Social Media and the Law

One of the world's oldest and most revered professions – the legal profession – has been able to withstand change over the ages. Legalese is a language unto itself. Old and quirky customs are still common place both in and out of the courtroom. Lawyers are conservative and slow to accept new ideas. A cloud of mystery shrouds the legal profession and no one or thing seems able to shake it. Until now...

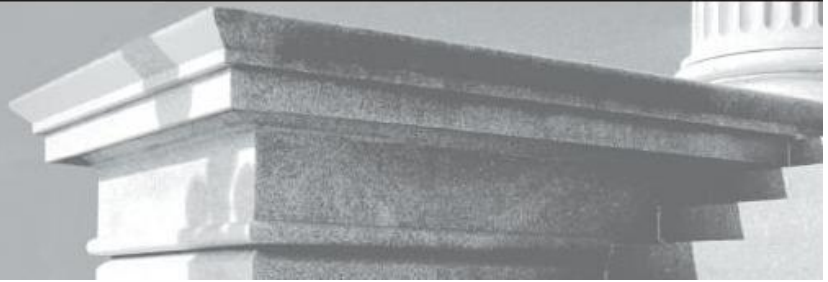
Social media is helping to democratize the law by improving access to lawyers and legal services while giving the public more information about the law which they have been craving. Take the following three examples of how I use social media to achieve various different goals for myself, my peers, and the public...

Example #1:

I receive a new message from a classmate on www.Facebook.com. The classmate asks me whether I know a good employment lawyer. I type back: "Try my website, www.DynamicLawyers.com, where users can freely and anonymously post their legal issue(s) and have Ontario lawyers respond with free information and quotes. Lawyers compete for the work. There is no obligation to select a lawyer. Think of it like a specialized www.Craigslist.org but for accessing legal services and lawyers". I send the message and, the next day, the classmate makes a post on www.DynamicLawyers.com. Within a few hours, a few different local lawyers (who pay a small fee to access the website to respond to posts) provide some feedback and quotes as to how much it could cost for their legal services. The classmate ends up meeting with and retaining the lawyer who initially impressed him with their robust online presence: a website, blog, articles, twitter account, and facebook profile dedicated solely to employment law issues.

Example #2:

I put the final touches on a new blog post (www.DynamicLawyers.com/DL_blog) about trademark law in Canada. The blog post is part of a series I'm writing on the topic to better educate the public, raise my personal profile, and help draw traffic to www.DynamicLawyers.com. As soon as the blog is published, my Twitter account (www.twitter.com/michaelcarabash) is automatically updated with the title of the blog and a backlink. At the same time, my Facebook group and LinkedIn profile are automatically updated. I then submit the blog post to a number of social media websites and article databases – again creating backlinks.



Example #3:

I publish a new free eBook on www.DynamicLawyers.com entitled “4 Steps to Online Legal Marketing. For Lawyers. By Lawyers”. I want fellow lawyers to download my new eBook so that I can gain notoriety as an expert in online legal marketing and so that lawyers will retain me for consulting services and also join www.DynamicLawyers.com. With the help of his peers and professional network, I am able to spread news of the free eBook to my target market through prominent legal blawgs (e.g. www.Slaw.ca, www.Lawiscool.com, and Toronto employment/family lawyer Garry Wise’s blog www.wiselaw.blogspot.com), legal forums (e.g. www.lawbuzz.ca and www.AdviceScene.com), and other social media websites (e.g. on twitter, where the story was re-tweeted by lawyers more than 45 times). A number of lawyers follow up with me about helping to promote their law practices online.

How the Law and Social Media Connect:

In all three of these examples, social media and the law intersect to satisfy a number of needs for myself, other lawyers, and the public. Such needs include helping lawyers and prospective clients to find each other, raising a lawyer or law firm’s profile in a particular legal area, and educating the public through free legal information in the process. Social media has other functions as well, such as allowing lawyers to keep abreast of the latest developments in various legal areas (e.g. by following legal experts on Twitter, reading new blog posts in legal forums and lawyer blogs, or watching videos and listening to podcasts of legal experts, etc.) and sharing information and ideas of their own with their peers. Social media also allows the public to share their experiences (e.g. through legal forums, lawyer rating and referral websites, etc.) with other potential purchasers or legal services. Finally, social media can help law firms and lawyers stay ‘top of mind’ with existing clients (i.e. their bread and butter). Overall, social media creates a two-way dialogue between the legal profession and the general public.

Social Media - The Great Leveler:

Social media tools, applications and strategies can be a great equalizer for solo and small firm lawyers. Unable or unwilling to compete with established law firms by invest big dollars in conventional marketing (e.g. Yellow Pages, newspapers, radio and television), solo and small firm lawyers can reach out to a broader audience in a targeted manner and at a fraction of the cost through search engine optimization tactics – a big part of which is the use of social media. More specifically, offering high quality and regularly updated content, coupled with disseminating such content through social media, results in higher search engine rankings for certain targeted keywords.



The Importance of Social Media Today:

Some lawyers have not embraced social media and the opportunities it offers to help them achieve their goals. These lawyers, still clutching their old fashioned ways, have the attitude that “this isn’t how I have historically gotten clients” or “those clients are the lowest hanging fruit – looking for a deal online” or “law is a profession, not a mere business and should not be marketed as one in a tacky manner on the internet”. In response, I say: admittedly those lawyers are right – but only for now. My generation – a tech savvy and wired generation – is comfortable with searching for deals online. They have no loyalties to established service providers when it comes to getting a deal. They are comfortable using e-mail, search engines (e.g. www.Google.ca, www.Yahoo.ca), instant chat interfaces (e.g. Yahoo! Messenger, MSN), personal posting and social networks (e.g. www.YouTube.com, www.FaceBook.com, www.Twitter.com), rating and feedback websites (e.g. www.eBay.ca, www.amazon.ca, www.imdb.com, www.Tripadvisor.com, www.Gigpark.com), and blogs and wikis. Whether the legal profession likes it or not, this generation will be their future clients. Those in the legal profession who embrace social media today will have a competitive advantage over those who don’t, and the latter will be left behind wondering who stole their cheese.

About Us:

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