

To Friend or Not to Friend – Social Media for Lawyers

By Gina F. Rubel, Esq.

Part 1: The Considerations

As an avid user of social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Plaxo, Flickr and others, one of the questions I face regularly is “to friend or not to friend?” In some instances you will see a name of someone you “know” in the friend finder and you ask your self, “Is this someone I want to connect to?” At other times you will receive a friend request and have to decide if you want to connect with that person in a public forum.

Interestingly enough, I used social media to gather data for this article. I posted the following using the tool www.HelloTxt.com to all of my social networks: “How do you decide who to friend and follow in social media and micro blogging?”

One client responded, “It can get awkward.”

A legal marketing colleague, Beth Huffman, said, “It's difficult and I almost feel like I need two sites: one for friends and one for business acquaintances.”

So how do you decide what is right for you and your business - with the word business being the key? The answer is not an easy one.

The factors that you should consider are your company's culture and policies as well as your business goals, while keeping in mind that every social media outlet has its own benefits.

Your Company's Culture and Policies

It is very important to understand your firm's corporate culture and whether or not it maintains a social media policy. According to the pending survey results from Stem Legal and attorney Doug Cornelius as quoted by Doug Jasinski in a presentation to the Legal Marketing Association of Vancouver, approximately 30-40% of law firms block access to social networking sites. This may also mean that these law firms are not 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. Barry Hurd of 123 Social Media (www.123socialmedia.com) has compiled links to 15 social media policies at <http://twitpwr.com/2Ff/>. I recommend you check them out as a way to get started.

There are many benefits to social media engagement if used and managed properly. It is time for lawyers to get on board and not be left behind. Just think – it took us until 1978 to ethically be permitted to advertise. Let's not repeat the same mistakes.

Your Business Goals

The most important question you need to ask yourself is: why have you decided to maintain online profiles in the first place?

Bill Tilley, a fellow member of the Legal Marketing group on LinkedIn and Partner with Amicus Capital Services, LLC of Los Angeles said, "For attorneys I think it depends on what they hope to accomplish with social media. Are they looking to expand their brand and ultimately generate leads for cases directly from individuals or the target client or are they looking to create a network of attorneys to promote and generate partnerships with. The former option will generally result in a larger, less screened network and the later will require more research and a smaller more qualified network."

I agree. And it is okay to use different social media outlets for different purposes. For example, you may decide to maintain a profile on Facebook which is not open to the public and with which you only connect to actual friends and family. Even if you do that, remember to always keep your posts clean and professional as anyone can capture the content of a page and send it to someone else. You will always be faced with the prospect of knowing that business contacts are on Facebook too – but you can politely tell them – if asked – that you only use Facebook for family and non-business-related communications but you would be happy to connect on a platform that you use for business networking.

You then may consider using LinkedIn as a means for professional networking with colleagues, other attorneys, vendors, clients (depending on your practice areas), alumni of your firm, business associates and so on. LinkedIn is one of most professional networking sites on the web. If you were to choose only one network on which to have a public profile, this is the one I would suggest. Even on LinkedIn, you will be confronted with the questions of whether or not to connect to varying individuals. One nice thing about LinkedIn is that when you answer a request, you can choose the "I don't know this person" option. As with all of your public communications, be strategic.

The Social Media Outlet

In the next several posts of "To friend or Not to Friend – Social Media for Lawyers," I will address the ins and outs of different social media tools. I will choose a few of the more popular social media outlets – as well as those that I believe can be used in a professional manner to communicate who you are and what you do. It will not be an inclusive list of all social media outlets – as that topic can be covered in a book.

Please feel free to post your questions and comments to this blog. I will do my best to address them in future topics. So, to learn more about LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and others, stay tuned to The Legal Intelligencer's Lawyers and the Media blog.

Part 2: LinkedIn For Lawyers

In this post of "To friend or Not to Friend – Social Media for Lawyers," I address LinkedIn for lawyers.

According to the LinkedIn Web site, "LinkedIn is an interconnected network of experienced professionals from around the world." The site says that through its usage, "You can find, be introduced to, and collaborate with qualified professionals that you need to work with to accomplish your goals."

As of mid-February 2009, LinkedIn touted over 35 million members in over 200 countries and territories around the world; a new member joins approximately every second, and executives from all Fortune 500 companies are LinkedIn members.

So why does this matter to you?

In my book, "Everyday Public Relations for Lawyers, (<http://tinyurl.com/mba3l6>)" I use an analogy for strategic marketing and PR. I explain that it's like building a house. Your house needs to have more than one entry point. Ten –plus years ago, we saw Web sites as another entry point to our law firms (the other entry points being our front doors and telephone numbers). Today, you can have exponentially more entry points – including your professional profiles on sites such as LinkedIn – if you invest just a little time and a little strategy.

LinkedIn is one of the oldest and most established professional networking sites on the web. If you were to choose only one network on which to have a public profile, this is the one I would suggest. LinkedIn is conservative, professional, adheres to a strict set of rules, business-oriented, highly visible in search engines and an easy point of entry for lawyers. For the most part, it serves as an online curriculum vitae (C.V.) or resume which can be linked to your firm's Web site.

Barry Hurd of 123 Social Media shares a great 123 Guide to LinkedIn at <http://tinyurl.com/6fyuws>. You can also learn the ins and outs of this how to use LinkedIn and read the users guide at <http://learn.Linkedin.com/>.

LinkedIn also provides applications such as an online contact database, resource sharing such as the "Reading List by Amazon" tool, and group forums through which you can engage in thought leader dialogue with colleagues all over the world. You can share presentations, be a resource by connecting colleagues to one another, let people know what you're up to professional using status updates and gather and provide professional recommendations. To learn about all of the available applications, go to <http://learn.Linkedin.com/apps/>.

And a comment about recommendations: the nice thing is that if someone volunteers to provide you with a testimonial in his/her own words, that testimonial should be exempt from the Rules of Professional Conduct as it is neither you, "the lawyer," providing the information, nor is it "an advertisement." Caveat: This is not legal advice. I have not found precedence to support my claim. This is my opinion only and I'm sure another attorney could argue in the alternative.

In answer to a question on LinkedIn to the Legal marketing Group, "How do you answer: To friend or not to friend, Janet Steinman, a New York lawyer said, "You are supposed to know the people who you 'friend'. It is completely appropriate to ask for introductions. If you do not know

someone and do not have someone who could introduce you, send a message stating why you would like to connect with this person. Ask them to request a connection if they are interested.”

Robert Nigro, also a member of the LinkedIn Legal Marketing group and Marketing Communications Manager at Pepper Hamilton LLP said, “I know people personally who are on LinkedIn, but they aren't a good enough professional match for me to want to be linked to them; I do not use LinkedIn like some people use Facebook. ” He continued, “On LinkedIn, I've tried not to link to many people outside of my current field, legal marketing, or any of my past ones (journalism, broadcasting, freelance editing), even if I know them, if they don't meet some criteria. Could linking to them help me? Or could being linked to me help them? If the answer to either question is no, I don't link.” He concluded, “I have to know the person personally, and, more importantly, know them as a professional, either by direct experience or reputation.”

My opinion is that you should stick to connecting with people that you know, like and trust. That way, when you're asked to make a connection between colleagues, you can do it with confidence. However, opinions differ greatly on this subject. You should also check out “Allen's” comments (<http://tinyurl.com/arvh34>) from Part 1 of this series.

If you are going to engage in social media, set aside ten minutes per day when you are in the office. It is important to include social media as a part of your everyday public relations. Be strategic and productive with your time.

If your company blocks social media sites from your Internet browsers, now is the time to speak with management about why social networking is of value to building and maintaining business.

Part 3: Facebook

In this post of "To friend or Not to Friend – Social Media for Lawyers," I address Facebook for lawyers. The questions that I receive on a regular basis and will address in this post are: 1) Who do I friend if I decide to go on Facebook?; 2) How do I respond if I don't know someone?; 3) Can I unfriend someone?; and 4) Isn't Facebook a waste of time?

1) Who do I friend if I decide to go on Facebook?

In Part 1 of this series I mentioned that, when asked to "to friend or not to friend?", a legal marketing colleague, Beth Huffman, said, "It's difficult and I almost feel like I need two sites: one for friends and one for business acquaintances."

A colleague of mine who prefers to remain anonymous decided to do just that. She set up a second Facebook profile. She said, "I had been operating on the LinkedIn for work; Facebook for family and friends but was missing out on colleagues who wanted to link to me but who I have not worked directly with enough to be 'LinkedIn' to them." As a result, she has created one Facebook profile for work and a second for family only. She said that the work profile excludes family photos, does not include wall postings and remains highly professional.

I have thought about doing that too. The thing is, people do business with people that they know, like and/or trust. As a result, when people you know personally (alumni friends, family, etc.) know that you're a lawyer, they are more likely to come to you when they have a need. I also find that people like to know that you're a real person. The fact that you may have kids, you may participate in community programs, you have interests other than work, etc., can all lead to conversations which can also lead to business. My anonymous colleague makes a great point. She said, "As many in our family live out of the country, we use our profiles to keep everyone abreast of happenings. There is no half way access point with Facebook – it is very much all or nothing and I am not prepared to release access to all at this stage."

After having this dialogue and nearly completing this post, it was brought to my attention that the Facebook "terms" (which have come under great scrutiny recently), state that you agree not to "register for more than one User account, register for a User account on behalf of an individual other than yourself, or register for a User account on behalf of any group or entity." These terms will certainly present a dilemma for many – and as a result, I cannot recommend splitting yourself in two.

2) How do I respond if I don't know someone?

I was recently sent a request to connect to someone I didn't think I knew on Facebook. Here is an example of how I handled the request. For sake of anonymity, I have changed the name of the "requestor." I politely sent a message saying, "Hello Joe. I saw your friend request. Can you please remind me how we know one another? Thank you, Gina."

Then came the following response: "I am just another student networking and trying to get a job. It is ok if you do not except (sic)."

I responded: "Joe - I prefer to use Facebook for people I know personally. Thank you for understanding."

Three thoughts come to mind: First, if you are reaching out to someone and that person does not know you well, be sure to include a personal message with the request. Second, Facebook does not include a spell checking feature so try to proofread. I have more than once deleted my own status updates after finding typos. And third, you are under no obligation to connect to anyone – so trust your gut.

3) Can I unfriend someone?

My answer is a resounding YES. If you are not comfortable being connected to someone for whatever reason, you should absolutely go to that person's name in your friends and delete them from your list. You have no obligation to be connected to anyone on a social media platform. However, I caution that you think twice about who you connect to in the first place. It's always easier to hit "ignore."

4) Isn't Facebook a waste of time?

Robert Nigro, also a member of the LinkedIn Legal Marketing group and Marketing Communications Manager at Pepper Hamilton LLP believes it is a waste of time as it relates to professional networking. He said, "I just joined Facebook and I find it amusing, addicting, very useful as a tool with getting back in touch with "lost" people but utterly useless as a professional tool. Even if you keep your own information above-board and professional, I've found the average professional will spend too much unproductive time working to keep their more personal information invisible (I'm talking Polaroids from junior high school posted by others) and culling the nonsense that inevitably collects on his or her profile, deposited there by 'friends'" I've found most of the stuff people do on Facebook to be reckless, silly and anti-professional. I doubt there's a good way to use Facebook as a professional networking tool."

In speaking to Robert's concerns as they relate to productivity, Neen James (<http://www.neenjames.com>), international productivity expert and consultant to attorneys says, "Facebook is a great productivity tool to increase your book of business activities, expand your network and provide a 'human face' to your offering. Decide to spend 15 minutes per day updating your status, posting articles of interest to your groups, share something about yourself and your practice and you will see your digital footprint expand." She says, "Do think carefully about who you do 'friend' as they are an extension of you and your brand. Invest time building connections, creating groups and sharing resources and people will appreciate the advice you give, then next time they need your services you will be top of mind – now that's productive"

This is all great food for thought and we look forward to hearing back from our readers. I, for one, believe Facebook, just like most social media tools, can be harnessed in a way that is useful for business but yes, it does take dedicated time and effort.

Part 4: Twitter for Lawyers

Twitter is one of the fastest growing social networks on the Web. Recent statistics show that there are more than six million Twitter users and in the average day, there are more than 225 million tweets. In fact, Twitter turned down a \$.5 billion buyout offer from Facebook even though their current business model is not income generating and VCs already have \$55 million invested.

What is Twitter anyway?

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. The term "follow" is used similar to "friend" on Facebook and "contacts" on LinkedIn.

Twitter is considered a micro-blog and it uses its own brand of language. A Twitter user is also known as a twitter-er, twitterer or tweeter. And when you want to reference a twitterer in a tweet, you prefaced their "handle" with an @ symbol. So, my "handle" on Twitter is ginarubel but if someone tweets to me on Twitter, it will say @ginarubel (<http://www.twitter.com/ginarubel>).

A tweet is either a noun: a message sent on Twitter; or a verb: the act of posting a message on Twitter. The people who tweet in general are considered tweople. And when you post something already tweeted by another twitterer, it is called a retweet or, for short, "RT". When you contact someone directly through Twitter it is called a direct message or DM. And when you want to host, participate in, group, filter and track a conversation you use a hashtag. (Hm, I wonder why it is not called a twashtag.) The twitterer creates a hashtag simply by prefixing a word with a hash symbol (#). Example: #hashtag. You can then track the conversation real-time at <http://www.hashtags.org/>.

And the six-plus million Twitter users as a whole are known as the twitosphere or twittersphere. For a more extensive list of Twitter language, go to the Twitter Dictionary, read Mashable's 66 Twitter Terms You Don't Need to Know (<http://tinyurl.com/6a6cmj>) and follow @twittonary (<http://www.twitter.com/twittonary>). For every day Twitter tips, follow @Twitter_Tips (http://www.twitter.com/twitter_tips).

To tweet or not to tweet?

As a public relations practitioner and lawyer, I do not believe all attorneys should spend time posting on Twitter. It is certainly a useful tool and an excellent way to expand your network, build your reputation, comment on legal issues and trends, and establish a relationship with members of the media and other thought leaders. It is also an excellent tool for you to research public opinion on many different topics.

On the other hand, everything you post is up for public scrutiny, you must be careful not to provide legal advice, and you must follow the Professional Rules of Conduct. Tweets used for marketing cannot directly solicit business, cannot be false or misleading, cannot omit necessary facts (tough to do in 140 characters), cannot compare one lawyer to another, cannot contain subjective claims and cannot create unjustified expectations.

And as I've suggested in previous posts, all law firms should be adopting social media policies for these very reasons and to protect their firm brands.

Do lawyers actually use Twitter?

Although Twitter is still a very new phenomenon, it is growing rapidly. Lawyers actually do use Twitter. In fact, there is a comprehensive collection of lawyers and legal marketers on Twitter at LexTweet (<http://www.lextweet.com>) which, as of this week has nearly 3,000 users in its "community."

I spoke with Julie A. Schaefer, Founder and President of You Manage Law (www.youmanagelaw.com), who said, "It is all in the results. Our colleagues are seeing them in the form of direct referrals and new business opportunities."

What do the experts say about Twitter for lawyers?

In order to get a broad spectrum of opinions, I posted the following tweet on Twitter and DM'd a few of my tweople: "I'm writing an article on Twitter for Lawyers. What do you think? Should attorneys tweet? Why? Why not? Consider your A permission to quote." (A stands for answer in my 140-character post.)

Here's what I received in response:

Paul Gillin (<http://paulgillin.com>), a long-time technology journalist, aka @pgillin (<http://www.twitter.com/paulgillin>) said, "Great way to promote expertise by commenting on timely legal topics. Any smart lawyer should know the bounds of what to say."

Russell Thomas of Earned Relevance (<http://earnedrelevance.com/>), aka @3rddeadline (<http://twitter.com/3rddeadline>) said, "They should Tweet to crowd source, listen, and exist at the edge of the business news cycle."

Lance Godard of Are Your Writing This Down (<http://writingthisdown.blogspot.com/>), aka @lancegodard (<http://www.twitter.com/lancegodard>) said, "Lawyers should be on Twitter and should use it to communicate with clients." Lance cited two blog posts: Aren't You on Twitter Yet? (<http://tinyurl.com/l6c62q>) and Shouldn't lawyers be tweevangelizing to clients? (<http://tinyurl.com/nvug8tl>)

In a comment to Lance's post, Doug Cornelius, the Chief Compliance Officer at a Beacon Capital Partners, LLC, and Compliance Building (<http://tinyurl.com/cz9afc>) blogger opined that "there may be some over-enthusiasm for Twitter as a client development tool for lawyers." He said, "I think there is a big variation depending on your practice. Chris Brogan (<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/>) gets lots of clients through Twitter because that is the nature of his business. He is a social media consultant. Kevin O'Keefe (<http://kevin.lexblog.com/>) gets lots of business through Twitter because he is in the social media business. I am a big fan of Twitter. But I am less sold on evangelizing it to clients."

Laure Fitton, owner of Pistachio Consulting (<http://pistachioconsulting.com/>) and a leading Twitter expert, aka @Pistachio (<http://www.twitter.com/pistachio>), said, "Twitter is just a new channel to communicate that has significant additional value over old channels. Twitter is socially networked, it is mobile and it keeps you in contact with a lot of people and a lot of ideas in a very fast, fluid way." She said, "Twitter is a tremendous way to circulate ideas, to listen and

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learn, to demonstrate thought leadership and to build a powerful network. It also has astonishing SEO value. Used well, it is a powerful tool for building reputation, leadership, trust and influence." I encourage you to take a look at Pistachio's Twitter for Lawyers reading list (<http://tinyurl.com/ap7r76>).

Others in my social network that I communicated with about Twitter for lawyers shared additional thoughts.

Cherry Manuel, a marketing consultant shared what she called a "compelling audio clip regarding Social Media, Twitter and Law Firms (<http://tinyurl.com/6y9fua>)." The clip is from Lawyer2Lawyer (<http://tinyurl.com/ojwjb>) sponsored by Law.com, hosted by Bob Ambrogi (<http://tinyurl.com/2nrkcz>) and Craig Williams (<http://tinyurl.com/mgzj8m>) in a conversation with legal marketing professionals, Heather Milligan (<http://tinyurl.com/66tws8>) and Brian Carter (<http://tinyurl.com/8j2vjh>) on social networking. If you do nothing else, listen to this audio clip. It is an excellent resource on social media for lawyers.

Francis Pileggi (<http://tinyurl.com/mo3grd>) of FoxRothschild said, "I am still learning the benefits as a lawyer of LinkedIn and Facebook and Twitter as an adjunct to my blog, but so far they play a supplemental role to my writing at Delaware Litigation (<http://tinyurl.com/6fh8rz>)."

Matthew Homann, founder of LexThink (<http://www.lexthink.com>) and author of the [non]billable hour blog (<http://tinyurl.com/ca3ypa>) said, "Twitter can be a tremendous resource for not only connecting with potential clients, but connecting with their influencers. Twitter, with effective use of search, is also better adapted to a lawyer's busy schedule." Check out Matt's blog: Ten Tweets About Twitter (<http://tinyurl.com/blu3nc>).

How can lawyers use Twitter?

The great thing about the Internet and social media is that there is no need to reinvent the wheel. If you type a question into a search engine, chances are, someone has already answered it. Chris Winfiled, the President and Co-Founder of 10e20 (<http://tinyurl.com/2rsb36>), presented "What is Twitter and How Can I Use It?" (<http://tinyurl.com/bxr6mz>) at LegalTech (<http://tinyurl.com/lhw9te>) along with Kevin O'Keefe (<http://twitter.com/kevinokeefe>) and Matthew Homann (<http://twitter.com/matthomann>). I encourage you to check it out.

As to how lawyers can use Twitter, my advice is that you need to determine if your target audiences, including clients, prospective clients, referral sources and the media, are using Twitter. If you find that they are, then this may be a very useful tool to incorporate into your business development practices. As with any communications, engage wisely. Allocate 10 to 15 minutes per day. Follow others. Listen. Learn. Then engage. To review a more detailed list of considerations lawyers should take when participating in social media, read Part 1 of this series (<http://tinyurl.com/arvh34>).

Part 5: YouTube for Lawyers

As of mid-March, YouTube ranked No. 4 among the top U.S. Web sites according to Alexa.com. YouTube is described as “the leader in online video, and the premier destination to watch and share original videos worldwide through a Web experience.” The site says it “allows people to easily upload and share video clips on www.YouTube.com and across the Internet through Web sites, mobile devices, blogs, and e-mail.” YouTube hosts more than 150 million videos.

Do lawyers really use YouTube?

Absolutely. When I searched YouTube using the term “lawyers,” I came up with 45,500 videos. When I typed in “Philadelphia lawyer,” I got 861 results; “Pennsylvania lawyer” gave me 3,180; “corporate lawyer” gave me 1,840; “personal injury lawyer” gave me 6,380; “criminal defense attorney” gave me 5,360; “divorce lawyer” gave me 3,080, and “employment lawyer” gave me 1,930.

Gerry Oginski, a personal injury attorney in Great Neck, N.Y., says, “Not only should lawyers use YouTube, but they should take every advantage of the free platform to get their educational message out [to their target audiences].” He said, “The problem with all lawyer advertising is that the message is truncated. There is no space to explain anything to a potential client.” Here are links to two articles by Oginski published on Law.com: Video Marketing Tips for Lawyers: No. 1 (<http://tinyurl.com/82ujrz>) and Attorney Video Tips: Cameras (<http://tinyurl.com/lydrya>).

What are the pros and cons for lawyers using YouTube?

As someone who is very big on practicing what I preach, I have been reaching out to my social media contacts to get their perspectives as they relate to this series of “To Friend or Not To Friend” blogs. As a result, I asked four different groups on LinkedIn: Should lawyers use YouTube? What do you think?

Adrian Larsen (<http://tinyurl.com/llwmy8>), the communications director at JD Supra (<http://www.jdsupra.com>), was the first to answer. I must say, he provided a lot of great insights so I am sharing them in their entirety. He said: “Yes, I think lawyers should use YouTube -- especially if seen as part of an overall strategy of ‘planting a flag’ in multiple social media platforms, thus making yourself and your expertise available to different audiences out there.

There are pros and cons to using YouTube, but I think, if you have the time for it, that the pros win:

- A video hosted on YouTube (and findable by users there) can also be embedded on your own Web site or blog.
- A short video by a lawyer gives prospective clients who might not have met you a chance to see the person behind the name.
- We live at a time when this type of media is so much part of the mainstream it can be a good way to augment your other content strategies. (Favorable decision in a case? Frame it quickly in a two-minute video -- and then post the legal documents that won the day.)
- A video on YouTube can be shared on Facebook, Twitter and elsewhere. The sharing is registered in viewers' activity streams -- so whenever your audience interacts with your work, other people notice.

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The opportunities for good, brief videos are as limitless as your imagination. (They should be brief.)

Some cons:

- Quality: People do not expect YouTube videos to be professional and slick, but if your video is too grainy, or the production quality is poor, it could become a liability. At a bare minimum, pay attention to light and sound.
- Time: If you launch a YouTube channel of videos, you're basically signing up for an entirely new editorial endeavor. You might have thought through the first video and what you wanted to say – but what about the next five? It is best to have a series of videos (people can subscribe to your channel) than to have just one posted last year and nothing since.
- Not writing. Whether you are blogging or posting legal docs to JD Supra, or both, that writing by its own nature and quality is a measure of your expertise. The words -- the text -- also happen to make their way into Google. This is all good. As a result, the video title might be picked up by Google, but not the content."

Another con is the loss of message control because of third party comments. There are far fewer controls for the user on YouTube than there are on LinkedIn and Facebook."

Larsen concluded that he would use YouTube and would specifically use it as part of a larger strategy in which he engaged his audience, and fed content, across multiple platforms. Then he would set about to connect the dots between those platforms.

I agree.

Should lawyers use YouTube?

As a public relations practitioner and lawyer, I do not believe all attorneys should spend time posting videos on YouTube. It is certainly a useful tool and an excellent way to build your reputation, demonstrate your talents, comment on legal issues and trends, share media coverage of you and your firm with copyright permissions and increase your Web presence.

On the other hand, as is the case with all forms of social media, your videos are up for public scrutiny. If you are not going to do it right and take the time to prepare quality videos, I would suggest that you do not do it at all. I am going to be so bold as to say please do not embarrass the profession by posting self-serving, promotional, "look-at-me-I'm-the-greatest-lawyer-in-the-world" videos either. I actually use them in CLE and social media training seminars as examples of what not to do.

And don't forget your state's rules of professional conduct. If your practice is multi-jurisdictional, you may have to refer to several states' rules. I detail the ethical issues of legal marketing in my book, *Everyday Public Relations for Lawyers* (<http://tinyurl.com/mba3l6>). In summary, you must be careful not to provide legal advice. You cannot directly solicit business. You cannot be false or misleading. You cannot omit necessary facts. You cannot compare one lawyer to another. And you cannot make subjective claims or create unjustified expectations.

And as I've suggested throughout the "To Friend or Not to Friend" series, all law firms should be adopting social media strategies for these very reasons and to protect their firm brands.

Part 6: Blogging for Lawyers

For those of you reading this blog – you undoubtedly know about “blogs” and “blogging,” but, for the inexperienced, “blog” is short for “Web log.” In the legal industry, they are also known as “blawgs,” short for “law blogs.” I maintain a blog at www.ThePRLawyer.com and I write for The Legal Intelligencer Blog (<http://tinyurl.com/nzxujf>).

Blogs started out as online journals where people could frequently update and share information about their lives. They have morphed into extremely valuable business development and marketing tools when executed with purpose, passion, planning, productivity, presentation and publicity (<http://tinyurl.com/l3ohbt>) in mind.

Blogs are great tools for attorneys to establish themselves as leaders in their fields of practice and to establish an online social discourse. They should be used to have online discussions with target audiences, including prospective clients and the media. What’s important to remember, though, is that your blog is “yours”. It should reflect your voice and thoughts, not those of a marketing or public relations professional.

In my book, *Everyday Public Relations for Lawyers* (<http://tinyurl.com/mba3l6>), I quote Kevin O’Keefe of LexBlog. He calls blogging “PR by participation.” That means getting involved and engaging yourself in the online social conversation. According to O’Keefe, “Blogs are imperative for attorneys who want to establish themselves in their areas of practice.”

However, Brian Solis (<http://tinyurl.com/mqx8ej>), the principal of FutureWorks (<http://www.future-works.com>) in Silicon Valley recently questioned if “blogs are losing their authority to the statusphere (<http://tinyurl.com/b5ga9v>).” He said, “A disruptive trend is already at play. While blogs are increasing in quantity, their authority—as currently measured by Technorati (<http://technorati.com>)—is collectively losing influence.”

Note: Technorati is an Internet search engine for searching blogs. Technorati indexes more than 1.5 million new blog posts in real time and introduces millions of readers to blog and social media content.

It is important to understand what Solis means by “authority.” He says, “Links from blogs are no longer the only measurable game in town. Potentially valuable linkbacks are increasingly shared in micro communities and social networks and it is detouring attention and time away from formal blog responses.”

Solis also concluded that blogs are “entrenched in the mainstream” and with this, I agree. What I find even more prolific is that many of us who are strategic legal marketing and public relations experts have been telling attorneys who have solid niche practices to blog for years. And although the medium for communicating is considered mainstream – we are still trying to convince many lawyers that this is a valuable tool to add to their integrated marketing plans.

What should lawyers consider before blogging?

Before you decide to blog, ask yourself a few critical questions:

- Does your firm have social media, marketing or public relations policies regarding blogs or other online discourse to which you are bound?

- Do you have a niche area of practice to which you currently or will in the future devote a substantial amount of your practice?
- Have you researched the market landscape and determined how you can create a competitive advantage?
- Is there an online audience who will care about what you have to say and be engaged by your commentary?
- Are you interested and willing to provide valuable, meaningful content to your target audiences?
- Are you willing to set aside at least 15 minutes a day, three days per week to blog?
- Do you have the time to commit long-term to manage a blog?

Once you've answered these questions, you will know whether blogging is right for you. Then, you need to commit to do it right. My colleague, Gil Marquez (<http://tinyurl.com/lk6yva>), Law Firm Administrator for Feldman, Shepherd, Wohlgelernter, Tanner, Weinstock & Dodig (<http://www.feldmanshepherd.com>) said recently that, "The only thing worse than no blog is a stale blog."

What are the best practices for legal blogging?

Joshua Fruchter, a former attorney, president of ELaw Marketing (<http://www.elawmarketing.com>) and author of the blog www.lawycasting.com, published an article on the best practices for blogging (<http://tinyurl.com/ns5etm>) in 2006. I asked Josh what he thinks has changed since then. He said, "The two biggest changes from 2006 are the increased opportunity for customization and the convergence of blogging and social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter."

In terms of customization, Fruchter said, "Being able to customize the look and feel of your blog, its title, description and most importantly its tags for the purposes of search engine optimization is a recent phenomenon that has catapulted many blogs onto the first and second pages of Google results. This means greater visibility and traffic."

As for convergence of social media and blogging, Fructer said, "With the convergence of social media and blogging has come an increase in platforms for disseminating your message. Now when you write a blog you can share it with your network in a matter of seconds, rather than wait for people to visit your blog."

In my most recent seminar, *Social Media for Lawyers*, I demonstrate Fructer's point. The example I use happens to be this blog. Using Part 4: *Twitter for Lawyers* (<http://tinyurl.com/chjj69>) as the example, I demonstrate that once the blog was published, I shared it on Twitter with my tweeple. It was then retweeted to others thus driving traffic back to the blog. I shared the blog as a note on Facebook and shared it with several relevant groups on LinkedIn. I also posted a status update using HelloTxt.com which updated all of my social media statuses with a link to the article. Within 24 hours, the blog post was picked up by *The National Law Journal* (<http://tinyurl.com/dcttng>) and then by the *Wall Street Journal* online (<http://tinyurl.com/mjwrqr>). And on and on it goes – where it will stop, nobody knows. That's the beauty of convergence.

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Part 7: JD Supra

I've called this series on social media for lawyers "To Friend or not to Friend." That makes perfect sense when you think of the subjects I've covered: LinkedIn (<http://tinyurl.com/mjwrqr>), Facebook (<http://tinyurl.com/mgbt38>), Twitter (<http://tinyurl.com/dcttng>), and other sites for lawyers to reach out, make connections, and network. JD Supra (<http://www.jdsupra.com>) is the focus of my next article. As with my coverage of YouTube (<http://tinyurl.com/c99zl9>) and blogging (<http://tinyurl.com/ktk2jv>), the question really might be: "To Publish or not to Publish?"

The answer, without a doubt, is: **yes**. But with a twist: JD Supra offers a very social and far-reaching type of publishing. As the company's director of communications, Adrian Lurssen, said to me in an email: "This is where *what you know* connects with *who you know*."

Not Just an Online Portfolio of Expertise

JD Supra allows lawyers, law firms, and legal professionals to post documents online to "reach new clients, colleagues, and the media."

The site includes work from solo attorneys in every practice field; firms such as Manatt, Morrison & Foerster, Lane Powell, and Mintz Levin; academics; paralegals; consultants; Law Practice support providers; and non-profit organizations such as EFF, CATO, and EPIC. Contributors upload all kinds of documents such as newsletters, briefs, articles, alerts, court filings, favorable decisions, and other substantive legal work.

JD Supra's homepage asks the question: "Thousands of legal documents, the professionals who created them: what are you looking for?" All the information is free to everyone.

Your written work is collected in a public portfolio that includes a professional profile listing practice fields, academic qualifications, contact information, and a description of service offerings. Unlike LinkedIn, your JD Supra profile does not link to other people, but to your work.

In other words, Lurssen says, "Every piece of useful information you distribute via JD Supra is *connected back to you*. And that's the point: Give content. Get noticed."

"Distribute via JD Supra" is the other key phrase in that sentence, according to Lurssen. Since their launch, the JD Supra team has been "opening channels to get this work in front of the people who should see it."

A recent blog post, *Where Does JD Supra Distribute My Work* (<http://tinyurl.com/c5hevv>), describes many of these "channels" – including everything from third-party news providers such as Newstex to pretty innovative ways of delivering legal content to targeted audiences on Twitter and LinkedIn. For example, Lurssen showed me a Twitter feed of Real Estate (<http://tinyurl.com/bae5bf>) law alerts followed by more than 1,200 real estate professionals - and an HR-related group in LinkedIn with more than 100,000 members that receive JD Supra's daily feed of Labor & Employment articles and alerts. This is just the tip of the iceberg. There are, for example, Twitter news feeds for every subject on the site, with audiences to match. This brings us back to the importance of the convergence of these social media platforms (discussed in *Blogging for Lawyers* <http://tinyurl.com/ktk2jv>).

"The web is one giant, open platform and content is porous. We are connecting the dots wherever we find a targeted audience for this top-quality, extraordinarily useful legal information," said Lurssen.

Attorney Aviva Cuyler (<http://tinyurl.com/nwg4yd>) conceived of the site late one night a few years ago, while writing a complicated brief. She says, "The idea behind JD Supra is that an attorney's written work is one of the best examples of his or her expertise. Sharing your documents online – making the work freely available to anyone who needs it – you are effectively marketing your expertise and service in an online landscape characterized not only by enormous reach but also by extraordinary noise. When you place substantive information in the mix, you cut through the noise."

JD Supra contributor Ronald Coleman (<http://tinyurl.com/mt5wq7>) agrees. A litigator specializing in commercial law and trademarks, Coleman says: "The most valuable thing I have is my work. It's something I take pride in and something I do very well. I have a whole career worth of it to put out there. JD Supra helps people understand exactly what kind of lawyer I'm going to be by showing them my work."

A quick search of the Web showed me that others agree. California defamation lawyer, Adrianos Facchetti, wrote last year in a guest post at Carolyn Elefant's My Shingle (<http://tinyurl.com/lbz2sq>): "My clients can even view documents that I've prepared and filed in similar cases on JDSupra... a recent client told me that he loved the fact that he was able to view some of my work-product before hiring me."

Just a week ago, Scott Wolf, Jr., founding partner of Wolfe Law Group, announced on Twitter (<http://tinyurl.com/knvzaj>): "...got a referral today from someone who found us on JDSupra.com" and was able to see his work.

I asked Lurssen about the concern some lawyers might have sharing their clients' court filings online. He wrote back:

"1. These are already public documents. We feel – and many lawyers seem to agree – that there is tremendous public relations value in being the primary source of the court filings. You get to control the message when you describe the documents; but also, if the decision is favorable, you get the credit. 2. You can always redact before posting; attorneys do that regularly. 3. Filings are just one part of the whole JD Supra-sphere. We're also seeing people upload newsletters, articles, press mentions, repurposed blog posts, presentations, and legal alerts – the full range of work showing what you know and what you are good at doing. Lately, this also includes an awful lot of legal analysis of what's happening in Washington."

In fact, I found an excellent article on Blogging for Lawyers (<http://tinyurl.com/nzq2um>) by Francis G.X. Pileggi (<http://tinyurl.com/mqw93t>), Partner with Fox Rothschild LLP on JD Supra.

Get Noticed

Lurssen was an early employee at Yahoo! (from 1996 to 2001). We've connected personally on Twitter and LinkedIn – he loves to talk about all things social media, especially when they relate to what's happening on JD Supra:

"When we launched a year ago someone wrote that we were the YouTube of law. A flattering analogy – implying, I suppose, that we are a user-generated platform that aggregates content from many sources and makes it available to everyone. As YouTube is to video, we might be to

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legal documents. What I like more about YouTube is that it's also a hosting platform that makes content *entirely portable*. You can share and embed it practically anywhere. More importantly, you can take it to your audiences, rather than waiting for them to come to you. That's something we take very seriously."

Lurssen explained what this means to lawyers interested in social media:

"Yes, JD Supra profiles and documents tend to rank well in Google – we help people to be found in Search. And yes, we distribute the work widely online. There's tremendous value in both of those things; you can just upload documents on the site and be done with it. But we also provide tools for people using JD Supra to take their work with them after they've uploaded it. Using RSS, widgets, and various plug-and-play applications, we allow users to connect their portfolios to other platforms, including blogs, websites, LinkedIn, and even Facebook."

JD Supra's Facebook application (JD Supra Docs-- <http://tinyurl.com/6f9ezt>) was well received when it launched late last year. Attorney and author Bob Ambrogi (<http://tinyurl.com/2nrkcz>) said at the time on Twitter: "This is the kind of innovation that other legal vendors should emulate." The application streams your portfolio and documents from JD Supra to Facebook. In another recent blog post (How Does JD Supra Help Me Distribute My Work Online <http://tinyurl.com/nsgjzh>) Lurssen lists all the other ways you can connect your JD Supra portfolio to other online platforms.

In my book, "*Everyday Public Relations for Lawyers* (<http://tinyurl.com/mba3l6>)," I explain that strategic marketing and PR is often like building a house. Every house needs more than one entry point (see an earlier reference to this in my LinkedIn article-- <http://tinyurl.com/mfj4wt>.) It makes good sense to understand online marketing in this context: every worthwhile presence online is one more door into your house. (For example, JD Supra professional profiles rank well in search, just like LinkedIn profiles.) Funny thing though – when I wrote the book, JD Supra was still in it's concept phase and many of the social networking tools used by lawyers today were in their infancy.

Lurssen describes the "front door" strategy as "planting a flag" in any of the places where prospects might gather.

He says: "A sound online strategy is one in which you plant a flag in any places you can find and build an audience – or, where you can claim ownership over your name. Then, as much as you can, you connect the dots between the sites. How? By feeding it content, lots of it. It takes less work than it sounds, because once each presence has been established they tend to run themselves."

Lurssen contends that social media and search engine optimization (SEO) connect at this point. "You get to make real connections with your audiences because you are providing meaningful information (and even engaging in actual dialogue, as on Twitter). And, the search engines begin to notice your content, too. You begin to take possession of your online resume (one of the most important resumes you have): the top search results in Google."

I asked Lurssen how JD Supra makes money, since all of the content is free.

"We're a subscription business," he said. Contributors pay for premium accounts – which have all of the features of a standard account (profile and unlimited document uploads) as well as other benefits, such as promotion throughout the growing JD Supra network; direct links to websites, blogs, and email; monthly traffic reporting; a document uploading service (JD Supra

uploads documents for you); online marketing support; monthly tips, tricks, and strategies for online optimization; and more. Firms are also able to pay to get all of their attorneys on the site with individual profiles and practice group profiles all connected to one firm presence.

When pressed whether contributors are seeing value in the premium offerings, Lurssen sent me this single line from Robert Kahn, Director of Business Development at Fenwick & West: "...one of our best online marketing investments."

Part 9: Social Mention

My colleague, Laura Powers (<http://tinyurl.com/III48e>), president of HG Marketing Group (<http://www.hgmarketing.com>) in Doylestown, Pa., recently told me about Social Mention (<http://socialmention.com>).

According to their website, "Social Mention is a social media search engine that searches user-generated content such as blogs, comments, bookmarks, events, news, videos, and microblogging services" like Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>).

The site says, "It allows you to easily track what people are saying about you, your company, a new product, or any topic across the web's social media landscape in real-time."

So, I immediately tested it out. I searched first for "public relations lawyers" not in quotes, in the blog category. The site generated a message stating, "Aggregating A-list ecologies..." Hmmm – more new Internet language. Note to self: find out what that means. Then it spat out 170 results of which [www.ThePRLawyer](http://www.ThePRLawyer.com) (our company blog) was number two. So I thought, "Very good." It also showed the results of the blog sources it searched (see below). Yet another reason why you have to make sure your blog is cataloged.

- 50 yahoo.com
- 47 blogsearch.google.com
- 24 blogcatalog.com
- 20 technorati.com
- 10 live.com
- 10 technet.com
- 9 wordpress.com

The next search I ran in the blogs category was for "Furia Rubel" (in quotes) which is my company's name. This time, I got the message, "Engaging beta-tested value...." Yet more language that needs to be interpreted. This time I found 65 mentions – not bad. I left my company name in the search field and then clicked on each of the various categories: Microblogs, Bookmarks, Comments, Events, Images, News, Video, Audio, Q&A and All. The results are very telling about where social media has been engaged well and where it can be improved.

When I searched "legal marketing" (in quotes), I got the message "Engaging citizen-media network effects..." Now, I'm starting to wonder, is all of this gibberish or it is going to be called socialmentionian? The first result was for an ABA article, "Law Blogs Are 'Cheapest Thing You Can Do' to Market Practice, Lawyer Says (<http://tinyurl.com/dx2ztb>)." The rest of the results on the first page didn't appear to be on point.

So far, I like this site as a social media strategy tool. It is clean, easy to follow, organized and allows you to identify trends. I also think it has some kinks that need to be worked out.

Powers said, "We have been using Social Mention to track client names as they are mentioned throughout the Web, particularly in blog posts. The fact that Social Mention aggregates the search on all these platforms makes it easier for us to monitor conversations and measure client impact in the social media arena."

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The site goes on to explain that, "search results are aggregated from numerous popular social media sources, including Google blog search, Twitter, Delicious, FriendFeed, Flickr, Digg, YouTube etc. and remixed as a single stream of information. The data is fresh, which means you can track conversations as they are happening in real-time."

In addition to web-based search results, Social Mention says that it "also features email alerts and personalized RSS feeds for automatic and instant updates." I found the RSS feed at <http://blog.socialmention.com/rss> (<http://tinyurl.com/nbh5gh>) and I found a Twitter URL at <http://twitter.com/socialmention>. At the time I drafted this blog, I had not yet found the "email alerts." Jon Cianciullo (<http://www.twitter.com/jonnyjon>), the developer of Social Mention, told me that they were "working to have the email notifications back up soon – especially because that is one of the most requested features."

All in all, Social Mention may prove to be a very valuable tool over time – but only time will tell.

Part 10: 20 Twitterers Lawyers Should Follow on Twitter

In my blog post *To friend or Not to Friend – Social Media for Lawyers, Part 4: Twitter for Lawyers* (<http://tinyurl.com/chjj69>), I explained what Twitter is, when and why you should Tweet, and what the experts are saying about Twitter for attorneys. Since then, I have received a slew of e-mails, Tweets, followers, and calls about social media and in particular, Twitter.

So, if you're just getting started or you're already an avid user of Twitter, here is a list of some of my favorite Tweople to follow on Twitter. These are just some of the people who have something to say – and for purposes of this blog – they have something to say of value to those in the legal community using social media.

Caveat: This is just a partial list sorted in alphabetical order with each Twitterer's self-proclaimed description in 140 characters or less. Since I currently follow more than 1,000 sources on Twitter, I highly encourage you to check them all out at @ginarubel (<http://twitter.com/GinaRubel>). I tend to follow lawyers, legal marketers, social media experts, members of the media, business consultants and experts, best selling authors, legal service providers, people talking about life and business in Philadelphia, public relations and marketing experts and a few others in categories of particular interest to me.

@22twts (<http://twitter.com/22twts>) – Helping lawyers tell their stories, one tweet at a time.

@ABAJournal (<http://twitter.com/ABAJournal>) – Continuous news updates from the United States' most-read and most-respected legal affairs magazine and website.

@amlawdaily (<http://twitter.com/AmLawDaily>) – The source for daily legal business news and analysis of leading law firms.

@aricpress (<http://twitter.com/aricpress>) – Aric Press is editor in chief of *The American Lawyer*, an Incisive Media publication.

@barrettdavid (<http://twitter.com/barrettdavid>) – The LinkedIn Lawyer; solid content and links in all Tweets mostly about social media with a few potential client referrals.

@dougcornelius (<http://twitter.com/DougCornelius>) – Chief Compliance Officer for a real estate private equity company trying to stay in touch and up to date with the world. GeekDad.

@jdtwitt (<http://twitter.com/JDTwitt>) – JD Supra. Ex Yahoo! Writer. Editor. Poet. All-around word guy.

@justiacom (<http://twitter.com/justiacom>) – Justia Website and Lawyer Directory Announcements.

@kevinokeefe (<http://twitter.com/kevinokeefe>) – Lawyer, dad to 5, husband to saint, Cubs-Packer fan. CEO of LexBlog, provider of professional blogs to law firms & operator of LexTweet & LexMonitor.

@lancegodard (<http://twitter.com/lancegodard>) – International legal business development and marketing consultant. I help law firms grow and prosper.

@legalblogwatch (<http://twitter.com/LegalBlogWatch>) – Blawgers Robert Ambrogi and Carolyn Elefant track, discuss and parse the latest developments in the legal blogosphere.

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@mashable (<http://twitter.com/mashable>)– The hottest Twitter news, Twitter tips and Twitter help. Plus, the best social media links around!

@mbeese (<http://twitter.com/mbeese>)– Leadership, Biz Dev and Marketing Consultant that works with lawyers and other professionals.

@michaelport (<http://twitter.com/michaelport>) – Bio father, friend, lover, revolutionary, big thinker... and best selling author.

@nancyfox (<http://twitter.com/NancyFox>)– Business Development & Networking Specialist and Connector.

@nancymyrland (<http://twitter.com/nancymyrland>) – Professional Marketing Advisor: Are you ready to grow?

@neenjames (<http://twitter.com/neenjames>)– International Productivity Expert.

@philacourts (<http://twitter.com/PhilaCourts>) – Philadelphia Court News.

@taxgirl (<http://twitter.com/taxgirl>) – Mom, tax lawyer, coffee drinker, manic blogger, iPod addict - not a sleeper.

@thelegalintel (<http://twitter.com/thelegalintel>) – The Legal Intelligencer is the nation's oldest daily legal newspaper.

Some other articles that may interest you on who lawyers should follow on Twitter include:

JD Scoop's 145 Lawyers (and Legal Professionals) to Follow on Twitter (<http://tinyurl.com/6oogwr>)

David Barrett's 10 People All Lawyers Should Follow on Twitter (<http://tinyurl.com/65k4g4>)

Social Media Fish's Who to follow on Twitter for Social Media & SEO tips (<http://tinyurl.com/opwerm>)

And there is a blog dedicated to the top "Follow on Twitter Lists (<http://tinyurl.com/mdrdew>)" which claims to highlight the top lists of who to follow on Twitter, in order of Google PageRank.

Another tip for following on Twitter is that every Friday, you can also Tweet using the "hashtag" #followfriday and then add those people you think others should follow on Twitter. It is a great way of sharing resources with your followers. Then, take a look at the "Trending Topics" on the right hand side of your Twitter homepage and check out who others are recommending for #followfriday.

Happy Tweeting.

Part 11: HubSTREET

In keeping with the social media for lawyers theme, I continue to uncover new online opportunities.

Today's blog is about HubSTREET (<http://www.hubstreet.com>) – a newly launched networking site for attorneys, accountants, and lenders / bankers – which is still in the BETA testing phase.

Since I started the "Social Media for Lawyers (<http://tinyurl.com/arvh34>)" series on The Legal Intelligencer blog (<http://tinyurl.com/dy5f3q>), I have seen hundreds of articles published and courses led on how to unleash the secrets of social media. What's also important to understand is that online networking needs to have a purpose and can serve as an effective business development tool for lawyers.

Just recently, I served on a CLE panel for the Pennsylvania Bar Institute (<http://www.pbi.org/>) where I delivered a marketing and public relations primer for lawyers. I continue to be amazed at the reluctance of attorneys to get on board with what I consider to be the future (at least for now) of communications. In fact, Nielsen issued its latest social media report for May 2009 (<http://tinyurl.com/n36cb3>) and reported that the national average time people spend engaging in social media has increased 67 percent since May 2008. Nielsen also reported that Twitter remains the fastest-growing Web brand, having increased 1,444 percent in one year from 1.2 million unique visitors to 18.2 million unique visitors. And Facebook remains the number one social networking site with 75.4 million unique visitors.

I've already addressed sites and tools such as LinkedIn for lawyers, Facebook for lawyers, blogging for lawyers, YouTube for lawyers, Martindale Hubbell Connected, Twitter for lawyers, and JD Supra. These sites have attracted thousands of legal professionals in search of increased visibility, referrals, and new business.

While each site does have advantages for the legal practitioner and other professionals (which I have outlined in previous posts), the new HubSTREET online community is targeted to the specific needs and interests of lawyers and other professionals. It provides relevant connections and potential for referrals, while also being user-friendly.

HubSTREET.com is an online community designed to "take the work out of networking for lawyers, accountants and lenders." Why these three groups? Because, according to site founder Nancy Fox, "It is these very groups that regularly and naturally refer business to each other." Of course, this is not an inclusive list of the industries that regularly refer business and having interviewed the Fox, she said the list of industries is likely to evolve over time.

One of the features I like about HubSTREET is that it is a vetted site. Lawyers, accountants, and lenders / bankers must be approved for membership. According to Fox, it is their mission to grow a high quality, relevant, thriving community.

So here's how it works. HubSTREET members identify their areas of professional focus and specialization so fellow members can easily decide with whom they'd like to connect. Members specify who their ideal clients and referral sources are to further develop the right contacts.

Fox, a seasoned business development coach and trainer in networking and rainmaking for professionals, personally assists members as they navigate the site. She will recommend connections, and host "Virtual Meet & Greets," so members can be introduced to one another

and learn more about the benefits of the site. These Meet & Greets are designed to be brief and focused for busy lawyers and other professionals.

Marcia Nelson, Senior Vice President Business Development for FMV Opinions, Inc (<http://www.fmv.com/>), in New York, and HubSTREET member said, "I am a big fan of HubSTREET. In my business, I primarily focus on attorneys and accountants. This tool helps me to productively keep in touch with my clients, post events I am hosting, get introduced to new contacts, and see what is happening and the trends being discussed in the industry." She said, "All this and I don't have to worry about being inundated with connection requests from members of unrelated industries."

Some of the features touted by HubSTREET are that you can:

- Connect with other professionals based on their relevance to your business.
- Share your articles, photos, and videos.
- Post a presentation or class you are leading or register for a course at the HubSTREET University.
- Attend Virtual Meet and Greets led by Nancy Fox, the "HubSTREET Coach."
- Get personalized guidance on navigating the site by asking the HubSTREET Coach.
- List and register for events.
- Participate in discussion via "Business Forums."
- Advance your career or learn about new career opportunities by building a high quality network, not just a bigger network.
- Tell the community what you are working on through status updates, and chat live with other members.

I don't believe social networking was ever intended to replace the special connection and bond that is built face-to-face. However, as an early adopter, I do believe HubSTREET has the potential to provide quality connections between lawyers and other industry professionals as an adjunct to in person networking. It could also serve as yet another excellent social networking tool for lawyers, perhaps one those who tend to be more conservative will be inclined to embrace.

Part 12: Legal OnRamp

I've been hearing a lot about Legal OnRamp (<http://www.legalonramp.com/>) lately so I decided to check it out.

According to the homepage of the website, LegalOnRamp is a collaboration system for in-house counsel and invited outside lawyers and third party service providers. There are lawyers participating from over 40 countries, and a rapidly growing collection of content and technology resources." It says, "Basic services are free, so all members are expected to contribute to the community as a whole."

Wikipedia (<http://tinyurl.com/lq54kd>) says, "the site was created in part by Mark Chandler, General Counsel of Cisco Systems (<http://tinyurl.com/dcpva>); the law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe (<http://tinyurl.com/l5hfeh>); and attorney Paul Lippe, currently the venture's CEO."

In an InsideCounsel magazine (<http://www.insidecounsel.com/>) article, titled, Net-Working: Web 2.0-enhanced sites get in-house counsel talking (<http://tinyurl.com/m9elmy>), Lippe is quoted as saying, "Lawyers, to a very substantial degree, live in the cloud; they live in their network. For GCs, that's people in your company, law firms and other companies. So you want to be as energized and engaged with that network as much as possible. And Web 2.0 is clearly a better way to do that than e-mail."

And in a recent post about Legal OnRamp (<http://tinyurl.com/lgu4hy>) on Adam Smith, Esq. (<http://www.adamsmithesq.com/>), Bruce MacEwen, Esq. (<http://tinyurl.com/kphu4p>), said, "Part of my fascination with Legal OnRamp stems from an observation many have made about our profession: That law firms won't fundamentally change until clients demand it. Legal OnRamp invites firms to change—at least in some respects—in anticipation of where clients are going: To go where the puck will be, if you will."

When asked about Legal OnRamp, Kim R. Jessum, Esq. of Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP (<http://tinyurl.com/kkbg7f>) said, "What is interesting is that I discovered Legal OnRamp through an article about the General Counsel of FMC Technologies using Legal OnRamp to solicit applications from firms open to alternative billing arrangements. After researching what Legal OnRamp actually is, i.e., a professional social networking site of in-house counsel and limited outside counsel, I decided to request an invitation." Jessum is still research the myriad of opportunities Legal OnRamp may deliver.

Timothy Corcoran with Altman Weil Inc. (<http://tinyurl.com/nqle5w>) says that he's a member and he has "spent a good deal of time working with firms as they ramp up their Web 2.0 and social media efforts, including Legal OnRamp." Corcoran calls it a "vibrant community that's not for everyone." He says, "It's definitely not a good use of time for lurkers or those who establish a profile but never visit. Those who engage, who participate in discussions, who link and invite colleagues, will generally have a better experience. Just as with live networking at client and industry events, active participation is critical."

Jayne Navarre (<http://tinyurl.com/lxlddb>), owner of www.LawGravity.com and www.virtualmarketingofficer.com agrees with Tim 100 percent. She adds, "You have to not only show up, you must contribute for it to be valuable. While it's certainly possible, it's not always practical to join and participate in every group in your city, likewise in the social networking space." Navarre says, "Attorneys should pick one or two [social media outlets] and focus on consistency of engagement. Legal OnRamp's demographic is attorneys, both private practice and in-house counsel. If that audience fits into the attorney's client base or referral base, then

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it's good placement. So, once you have placement, then you need to structure a strategy to brand your content." She says, "The key is to have branded content."

For those of you who are on Twitter, you can follow the quoted experts at <http://twitter.com/tcorcoran>, <http://twitter.com/jaynenavarre> and <http://twitter.com/kjessum> -- and you can follow me at <http://twitter.com/GinaRubel>.

With all of the social media tools, it is about taking the time to explore them. Then make educated decisions about which tools will benefit you the most.

You can't join them all and still practice law. So play it smart. And if you feel overwhelmed, check out www.NeenJames.com. You will find plenty of social media productivity information from Neen James who is also a contributor to The Legal Intelligencer blog (<http://tinyurl.com/maksho>).

Social media engagement is a give and take. You have to be willing to **engage**: hence why I call it social media engagement. It is about two-way communication: providing information and anecdotes of value for others and vice versa: then engaging in valuable dialogue and building relationships.

Part 13: Wikipedia Battens the Hatches – Social Media and the Law

A daily routine for my colleague, Leah Rice, and for me is to visit www.mashable.com and a few other social media and public relations sites. We're always seeking our daily dose of social media and PR updates. Leah brought to my attention an article by Mashable writer, Ben Parr titled, "Wikipedia to Add New Level of Editorial Insight." Parr's blog post referenced a similar article, "Wikipedia to Limit Changes to Articles on People," by Noam Cohen of The New York Times.

Wikipedia.com is one of the ten most popular sites on the Web. Unlike the standard encyclopedia, written by expert sources, Wikipedia articles are entirely community-built, often without restrictions. Approximately 60 million Americans visit Wikipedia every month. In fact, some people no longer reference the encyclopedia but instead choose Wikipedia as a source for information (something, however, that I do not recommend as one's only form of research).

Parr and Cohen discuss how within the next few weeks the English language version of Wikipedia will begin to add a layer of editorial review on articles about living people. The new restrictions are called flagged revisions. Soon, before anyone is able to update the Wikipedia page of a living person, a senior editor will have to approve the change before it goes live.

Cohen's article provides multiple reasons why this new level of editing is so important for Wikipedia.

Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, has this to say about the revision stage of Wikipedia, "It is a test. We will be interested to see all the questions raised. How long will it take for something to be approved? Will it take a couple of minutes, days, weeks? We have really become part of the infrastructure of how people get information and there is a serious responsibility we have."

What lawyers should ponder is whether this new level of security will affect Wikipedia's potential legal responsibilities. I read a 2008 article by John Timmer titled, "Judge puts defamation lawsuit against Wikipedia to the sword." In this case, the Communications Decency Act protected the online resource from defamation liability for content its users posted.

According to intellectual property attorney, Kim Jessum of Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, websites are usually off the hook for libel and copyright infringement lawsuits when third-parties post content. This usually includes comments posted by readers to various websites and updates to wikis.

However, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) does not specifically address wikis as they did not exist in 1998 (Note: the DMCA does not override libel laws).

It will be interesting to see how the approval of Wikipedia revisions by senior editors plays out in the legal arena.

Part 14: Egregious Lawyer Misuses of Social Media

Social media for lawyers and ethics issues continue to undergo scrutiny, change and evolution. John Schwartz of The New York Times shares: Legal Battle: Online Attitude vs. Rules of the Bar.

In his September 13, 2009 article, Schwartz shares Florida attorney Sean Conway's story where Conway posted an "intemperate blog post" stating that Judge Cheryl Aleman was an "Evil, Unfair Witch."

Schwartz's article is excellent and should be required reading in every law firm. He shares insight and information about some of the more egregious misuses of social media that affect the legal profession.

Suffice it to say that I'm not going to reiterate what Schwartz covered here. Rather – here are a few tips:

1. Every corporation, let alone law firm, should adopt a social media policy – large or small.
2. It is important to understand that what you say online is no different than saying it in the middle of Times Square on a loud speaker and having every national television network broadcast it live!
3. If you are not bold enough to walk into a courtroom and call a judge an "evil, unfair witch," then please don't try to hide behind the translucent veil of social media.

It never ceases to amaze me how green highly educated professionals can be when it comes to online communications down to "status updates" that report: "I'm having a bad day," "this jury really doesn't get it," "I hate my job," "my boss is an idiot," or "court is so slow."

Bottom line: If you wouldn't say it publically it is better left unsaid.

About the Author: Gina F. Rubel, Esq., is the owner of Furia Rubel Communications, Inc. (<http://www.furiarubel.com>), 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* (<http://tinyurl.com/mba3l6>) and the co-author of *6 Essentials for Success in Business and Life* (<http://tinyurl.com/n9bw4a>). Gina and her PR firm have won numerous awards for legal communications, public relations, media relations, strategic planning, corporate philanthropy and leadership. She maintains a blog at www.ThePRLawyer.com and is a regular contributor to *The Legal Intelligencer Blog* (<http://tinyurl.com/nzxujf>). You can find her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/ginafuriarubel or follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ginarubel>. For more information, go to www.FuriaRubel.com.