

Lawyer's Guide for Social Media Rainmaking

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Today, clients find lawyers who have a decent website, are on social media, blogging and using these tools to build and grow a contact list, and then marketing to it. The Internet and social media are the fastest growing ways divorce attorneys are finding new clients. Small firms need to define their ideal client, use the terms that prospects are using to search for legal help on the Internet, and do the necessary marketing to make sure that those searching online find them first.

Here are seven rules that every attorney and small firm should know about social media. Use them to guide your efforts.

#1 – Different social media platforms reach different markets.

LinkedIn has more than 500 million users worldwide (128 million in the U.S.). The average household income for a LinkedIn user is over \$100K. LinkedIn represents a group of highly educated, highly affluent professionals and a perfect place to connect with potential referral sources.

One of the best ways to use LinkedIn is to become active in groups. For example, if you practice family law and live in Los Angeles and want to connect with psychologists and marital and family therapists for potential cross referrals, there is a LinkedIn group with more than 3,000 members you can join – for free. There's another group with a similar membership in Southern California with more than 6,000 members. Once you get involved in these groups, you can connect with the members in your local area and invite them to meet over lunch or coffee.

You also can use Facebook to connect directly with potential clients using Facebook's pay-per-click (PPC) function. Pay-per-click is a common form of advertising first used by Google (known as Google Adwords). Each time someone clicks on your ad, you incur a predetermined charge, hence the term pay per click. We have clients who are generating five to seven leads per week directly from Facebook PPC by directly targeting people who express a need for their services. Social media allows you to build a larger platform faster than you ever could with more traditional networking methods.

#2 – Don't use social media as just another advertising channel.

To effectively use social media, you must have a deft touch. Too many attorneys simplistically view it

as just another advertising medium to push their “Hire me! Hire me now!” messages. Social media is about engagement, building trust and establishing relationships, not ambulance chasing. While having a live chat button on your website or social media page to allow interested prospects to easily connect with you is a good thing, you must be careful not to see social media as just another platform for pushing those annoying ads.

#3 – Produce great content.

The quality of the content you provide on social media is a direct reflection of how people perceive the quality of your law practice. When you put something out on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter, it must be something your prospects and followers find valuable, informative and interesting. We recommend that 80 percent of your content be educational and nonpromotional. If you’re posting or retweeting another’s content – a great way to consistently add value – make sure that the content meets your criteria for excellence.

#4 – Engage with others.

If someone posts a comment or response to your article or post, be sure to respond in kind. You must give as well as you get. The first word in social media is social! Don’t fall into the trap of only connecting with people you already know. Use social media to expand your sphere of influence.

#5 – Focus.

Specializing in your area of practice helps you to build trust and authority, so focus on messages that reflect what your practice is about. If you have multiple practice areas, spend 80 percent of your time promoting the area that makes up 80 percent of your business.

#6 – Be authentic.

Write for those people you want as clients or referral sources, not for other attorneys. Let your personality come through in your posts. I don’t care what other attorneys think of your website or your blog posts. I care about what your potential clients think and so should you.

#7 – Learn the culture.

Each social media network has a different culture, and most successful legal marketers know how to use it to their advantage. For example, LinkedIn is very professional and very different from the casual nature of Twitter. In general, focusing on two to three social media networks is a good idea for most practitioners – figure out where your target market spends most of their time and be there.

For most attorneys in small to mid-sized law firms, online lead generation and lead conversion have dramatically changed over the last decade. If the rest of the legal industry has yet to catch up, this creates an even greater opportunity for attorneys to use social media to generate quality leads and convert them into clients. Social media is a great tool for connecting with referral sources, keeping in touch with prospects, and driving more traffic to your website. If you follow these seven rules, you will be well on your way.

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