



# AND THE ART OF LEGAL NETWORKING

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INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON  
*Relationship Building  
within the International  
Lawyers Network*

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## Two Ways to Make Social Media Work for You

BY LINDSAY GRIFFITHS ON APRIL 26, 2016



Although social media has been around for a while (and isn't going anywhere), there's still this idea in the legal industry and even among many legal marketers that it's a game, or a waste of time.

But social media, when used strategically and correctly, can actually be about relationship-building and

business development.

I could go into a long diatribe about why this is true, what the statistics say to support it, or even start a series about the various tips and tricks you could be using in your own practices for better use of social media – but I won't.

I will say that, like any other marketing tactic, it's not for everyone. It's a tool to be considered and used as part of your overall arsenal, if and when it meets with the goals that you've set out and the strategy that you've developed. Just as importantly though, don't discount it as being "for kids" simply because it's something that you've seen your own children using, or you think it's only big with celebrities, or you've heard that it's somewhere that people can waste hours.

No one embraced the telephone right away either, and now you keep one in your pocket.

(And if people are determined to waste time somewhere, they'll find a way to do it, whether it's on Facebook, or on personal calls, or playing games on a non-internet connected device).

All of that being said, this week, I'd like to talk about two concrete ways that social media can work for you – specifically and successfully.

## Tip One: Blogging as a Relationship Builder

Kevin O'Keefe of LexBlog has long espoused blogging as more than just a platform for putting your thoughts down on paper, so to speak. If used strategically, it's actually a way to meet the people that you want to meet. Let's look at an example – in January, I blogged about [Two Tools to Turn Trends into Topics](#), which was based off of a [blog post written by Ann Smarty](#) over at the [Content Marketing Institute](#). I often look to CMI for inspiration when I'm blogging, and it's the second time I've referenced Ann in a post that I've written for Zen – she writes good stuff.

Once I'd written the post, this could have gone two ways – I'll explain the way it did go in a moment, but Kevin's suggestion is that when you reference someone in your blogging, you reach out to them to let them know. Typically I do this when it's someone I'm actively working to connect with. You can connect with them on Twitter or through LinkedIn, for example. Let's say one of your goals is to enhance your reputation as a thought leader in your area of expertise, and you've identified other people that you respect in the same niche area. When you write, you reference their writing and then share those pieces back with them – you're starting a relationship with them that may lead to them sharing your work, collaborating on a future piece, or just being better connected.

Perhaps you follow a potential client who happens to write. Reference their writing in your blogging, and

then reach out to them and let them know that you thought enough of their work to respond to it in your own writing. The idea is that you're finding a new way to open the door, connect to them online, and then take those relationships offline at the first opportunity.

In my case, I hadn't reached out to Ann, but she came across my post fairly quickly and reached out to me. We connected on Twitter and exchanged a few direct messages about content marketing. Ultimately, she asked me to participate in a weekly Twitter chat that she does with her partner and chat editor, Sana Knightly. I'm familiar with Twitter chats from my early days on Twitter, though I'd never participated in one, but I said yes anyway and we agreed on a date and topic.

Through my blogging, I was able to establish a relationship with an author in the content marketing space that I greatly respect (Ann) and then even further, with the audience that I had the chance to engage with last week during the chat.

If you're looking to use blogging as a way to build your relationships, start first with your goals – are you blogging for business development? To enhance your reputation? To raise your profile? To get more work in a certain niche practice area?

Once you know what your goals are, choose five people that you'd like to meet, or who you'd like to have a better relationship with:

- Follow them on Twitter, if they have a profile.
- Set up an RSS feed for their name, and their company's name.
- Subscribe to their blog if they have one.

As they write, and you have something to respond to what they're writing (don't force it – it has to be natural), reach out to them with your posts as a way of connecting. Use it as part of a LinkedIn introduction if you're not already connected. If the person isn't writing directly, you can use issues that you know are affecting their business as fodder for your posts, and then share those with them because you know they'd be of interest.

## Tip Two: Social Media as a Testing Ground

After participating in the Twitter chat last week, my friend and legal marketer, Lance Godard, pointed out that social media is a great testing ground for lawyers and legal marketers alike. While blogging is something I'm typically comfortable doing when it comes to social media and content marketing, I've never participated in a Twitter chat before – because it was a new experience for me, and I was jumping in with an audience outside of the legal industry, it was an opportunity to test myself when it came to content marketing (these were some very content marketing savvy folks) as well as see how the mechanics of a

Twitter chat worked for me.

I learned a lot:

- Twitter chats are fast and furious – even when you’re prepped beforehand with the questions, new questions coming in will challenge both your ability to answer in short bursts, but also your ability to think on the fly in a thoughtful and intelligent way.
- The chat is popular long after it’s live – people were sharing the transcript, and engaging with me even days later.
- Even though I was the “expert” answering the questions, people had a lot of information to share too – I learned about a couple of new tools I wasn’t familiar with too that will be helpful to me in the future.

This tip isn’t about you going out and finding your own Twitter chats, though they CAN be an opportunity for you as well. But what it IS about is using social media to try things out. Last week, I mentioned in [my recap from LMA16](#) that Jonathan Fitzgarrald said that we should avoid big initiatives, and use our marketing committees as prototypes for the firm. That can apply to social media too – although in some cases it is possible to fail spectacularly, social media is generally a great place to play around a little bit and see what works for you, and what doesn’t, without spending too much time or resources in any one place.

We can all embrace the idea that our clients and our colleagues are on LinkedIn. Whether they’re using it effectively is a different story, but I think we accept by now that everyone at least has their name claimed on there. So maybe you’re thinking about starting a blog, but you don’t love the idea of committing to a branded blog, that the firm has to spend a lot of resources on, and you’re not sure if you’d really dedicate the time to it, or if you really have anything to say – sound familiar?

Why not use LinkedIn’s publishing platform, Pulse, to test it out? It’s automatically part of your profile, so all you’d have to do is find a rights free graphic that’s relevant, write your post (preferably with referenced links and quotes), throw in some tags, and hit publish. You can draft it in Word first if you’re more comfortable with that, but once you’ve published to LinkedIn, you can even share it other places too. Publish a couple of posts and see how you feel. Perhaps it’s right for you, and you’ll see comments, or lots of reads and likes, or shares. Or perhaps it won’t be right for you, and the worst case scenario is that you have a couple of “articles” that are attached to your LinkedIn bio.

Test out other social media platforms too:

- Look for some Twitter chats that might fit your niche, and maybe you’re not the guest, but you can participate by asking questions or adding your own thoughts to the tweet stream.

- Jump into Twitter at all if you're not on there – find 10 accounts to follow that make sense for you. These can be publishers, clients, competitors, etc. depending on who interests you. Even just follow funny people and see what they're saying for kicks.
- Check out Instagram and post a few photos – highlight the break room at work, or the casual Friday group. Take a shot of the charity work the firm is doing, or share a client's recent success. Test out video on Instagram too, or get really bold and try Facebook Live or Periscope.

While it's true that what happens online does stay online, it doesn't mean that you can't use it as a testing ground. Many of us started our forays into social media with strange or silly first postings. As long as you stay away from anything that could be controversial, ethically sensitive, or confidential, it's a good testing ground for getting your feet wet. As I started the post with, you may learn that some platforms are not for you, or that none of the platforms are for you – either because it doesn't fit your practice, or because that's not where your clients or goal audiences are. But like no other marketing tool, social media allows you to play around in a way that's easy and small before making a big investment of resources. And you may just surprise yourself!