



# AND THE ART OF LEGAL NETWORKING

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INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON  
*Relationship Building  
within the International  
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## Two Ways Content Marketing Can Advance Your Professional Brand

BY LINDSAY GRIFFITHS ON MARCH 15, 2016



Last week, I was speaking with one of my lawyers about content marketing and social media, and he wanted to know whether “all this blogging and social media stuff” really brings in work for lawyers. It’s a question I get a lot from my lawyers, and one that ties in nicely with an article I was just reading this afternoon, so I thought I’d share my answer with you here as well.

While there are those one-off stories that you hear, when the timing is just right that a lawyer blogs about a topic and an in-house counsel is looking for an expert in that area at the same time, and they find each other and a matter is secured, that’s certainly not the norm. I’ve never suggested to my lawyers that they engage in social media because it’s going to directly lead to more work coming in. What I do tell them is that it enhances their existing word-of-mouth reputation. When I was speaking with my lawyer last week, I said

to him what's much more likely to happen is that a potential client will be looking for a referral, and someone that they know, like, and trust will give them a name.

As we all do these days, the potential client will then Google that lawyer. When they do so, if what comes up is a series of well-written, thoughtful blog posts on the subject matter that the potential client is interested in, a robust LinkedIn profile that showcases the lawyer's expertise in the area, and a Twitter feed that shows that they engage with thought leaders in the industry and share relevant content (both their own and others) that puts them on the cutting edge, then the potential client will feel more confident and comfortable in giving the work to that lawyer. It's human nature – we want to have our choices confirmed so that there's as little risk as possible in making them.

As lawyers, although you have the strength of your firm name behind you, your professional brand is what drives your clients to continue to work with you and potential clients to choose you over other lawyers. While content marketing isn't the sum total of your professional brand, of course, it can be a means of strengthening and amplifying your brand for you, particularly online. Rebecca Lieb on Marketing Land wrote an excellent piece that looks at two ways that “[Content marketing and personal branding go hand-in-hand.](#)”

## Tip One: Audit Your Content

Lieb suggests that any time you're going to embark on a content strategy, you want to start with an audit, and this is as true for your professional brand as it would be for your firm. I agree that this is great advice, and it's fairly easy to follow – there are a couple of steps to take to identify where you are at the moment:

1. Google your name.
2. Review your social profiles.

### Google your name

This is a good general practice, because it's helpful to identify what is being associated with your name. Do you have a common name that would encourage you to include your middle initial when attributing your work? Is there someone else who shares a name with you who is appearing higher in search results than you? Are the topics that you want associated with your name appearing the highest ranked?

Take a look at the images that are associated with your name when you google it, and also look at the bottom of the first results page to see what other terms people are searching when they look for your name. For example, with my name, people also regularly search for:

- Lindsay Griffiths marketer
- Lindsay Griffiths international lawyers network

These are both good search terms, because that means they're looking for me specifically.

Positively, I also represent eight of the top ten search results on the first page of Google, with the remaining two being another Lindsay Griffiths on Twitter, and the general list of "Lindsay Griffiths" available on Facebook. The results that are coming up are the ones that support my professional brand – my LinkedIn profile, my blog author page and main blog page, links to the ILN website and our most recent press release where I'm quoted, and my Twitter account, where I primarily post content related to the legal industry. Also included is a link to my photography blog, which I also consider to be part of my professional persona. All of these things are part of my professional brand, so I'm happy with the first page results as they stand.

## Review Your Social Profiles

The next step is to look at your social profiles, and these include any and all social media sites that you have a profile on, whether you use it for professional or personal reasons – if your full name is associated with it, you should assume that someone looking hard enough will find it and consider it part of your professional brand.

Mentally review the types of content that you're sharing on these profiles – Lieb offers some good guidelines here:

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**What types of content are on what channels and platforms? How does it represent you, both as a person and professionally? Is it clean, with a minimum of typos and spelling mistakes?”**

You may find that you want to post different content depending on which platform you're using – what's appropriate for Facebook may not work on LinkedIn, and vice versa. You may be more comfortable sharing more frequently on Twitter, and this would be received better by the Twitterverse, whereas posting 20 status updates to Facebook in a day would result in a few people hiding or unfriending you.

There is a blending though – the lines between professional and personal have blurred, and it's okay, and even encouraged, to open yourself up personally in your social media usage as long as you are careful and strategic about it. Lieb says:

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**A personal content strategy must strike the often delicate balance between who a person is, professionally,**

**and what that person is like – often revealed on more personal social platforms. It goes without saying that overly personal or salacious material belongs on an account that’s not under your real name, shared with close friends but not the world at large.**

**What’s too personal? What kind of content crosses the line? It’s a judgment call. A musician will have boundaries that differ from a banker’s.**

**Often, a show of vulnerability makes you more human and approachable, even on a professional level. We’re almost all at a stage where, when confronted by milestones such as death, disease, addiction, job loss or other personal tragedies, social sharing must be informed by asking, ‘Would I want my boss or clients to read this?’, just as many companies ask employees to run the ‘Would I want my grandmother to read this?’ check on social media messaging.”**

As you review your social profiles, keep in mind what image you’d like to project to the world. Are you staying within your own guidelines for professional and personal content? For example, I know many people who think I share everything on social media, but I have a carefully vetted mental list of what personal things I am willing to share online (my dogs, running, travel, cooking), which makes people feel as if they have a window into my entire life when they actually only get to see a small piece of it. That list is what I consider to be my “professionally personal” list of things that are fairly non-controversial and allows people to get to know me better so that we can build a relationship, without offering too much of a peek into my personal life.

## Tip Two: Share Original, High-Quality Content

Lieb’s second suggestion is one that we talk about all the time here at Zen – sharing original, high-quality content. This is the key to becoming a thought leader in the industry – but it’s not just about finding anything and slapping it into a tweet and hoping someone reads it. It’s much more strategic than that. As Lieb says:

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**Don’t just share headlines – add value. It can be a line or two of thought about what a new piece of legislation might mean, or the implications of that acquisition or an innovative piece of technology.”**

There are a number of ways that you come across relevant content – someone else shares it, one of your colleagues writes it, you yourself write it – whenever you have something that you want to share, and it falls into the industry topic that you want to be known as an expert in, remind yourself to always be thinking of your audience and add value.

Say something, in one or two lines, about why you're sharing the content – ask a question that will encourage people to engage with you on the relevant platform, take a counterpoint if you don't agree with the commentary, add your own thoughts about what it may mean or why they should read it, and include the link, as well as relevant hashtags so that people who aren't connected to you can also find and participate in the discussion. You're adding value in several ways:

- By finding the content and sharing it.
- By putting your own spin on it.
- By inviting people in a social space to engage with you in conversation about it.

All of those things set you apart as someone who knows what's going on in x industry, and who can speak intelligently about it.

Lieb mentions two other areas to look at:

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**'Lessons learned' is another category for content exploration. How did that job or project or client help you to better understand your role or industry or a future trend?"**

**Consider gaps, not just media and frequency, when carving out a niche for personal branding initiatives. What are the uncharted topics in your industry that matter – that you can speak to with interest and passion?"**

As experts in your field, you should be able to easily identify both the lessons learned in the industry, as well as any gaps that you can fill.

Although we're generally certain of the path that we're on when it comes to our own content marketing, and how that relates to our professional brand, it's important to check in periodically to ensure that we're sticking with the plan that we set forth and delivering on the message that we'd like to communicate. Auditing your social media profiles and sharing original, high-quality content with the added value of your voice are two ways that you can enhance your professional brand today.

How else are you using content marketing to enhance your professional brand?

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