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SOCIAL MEDIA: MOVING FORWARD WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Social Media: Moving Forward With Social Media

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“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

—Alvin Toffler, author of *Future Shock*

Attorneys who ignore the social media landscape deprive themselves of significant opportunity and information while operating outside a cybersphere experiencing warp speed growth. Previous columns in this five-part series (published in previous issues of *GPSolo eReport*) outline marketing, research, and litigation tips as well as resources for legal professionals. My mission in this final column is to offer a few suggestions designed to motivate the hesitant to move forward and to assist the more experienced as well.

1. **Begin by Articulating Specific Objectives and Building a Strategy Designed to Achieve Them.** Instead of tweeting, linking, and friending randomly, decide what you want to accomplish. The strategy of an attorney with the objective of building a referral network will vary greatly from one who wishes to merely “monitor the buzz.” The strategic aspect can include the attorney’s specific time commitment to the endeavor.
2. **Equip Yourself With the Proper Tools.** Neophytes may wish to consider hiring a consultant on a short-term basis to assist with the initial set up and orientation with respect to platforms including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Be sure to take advantage of some of the timesaving options available such as Hootsuite, which allows the user to broadcast content over several different platforms.
3. **Establish a Law Firm Social Media Policy.** Attorneys who choose to delegate social media initiatives to another lawyer, staff member, or outside vendor must keep in mind their ultimate responsibility for compliance with ethical standards. Case law and ethics opinions throughout the nation make it abundantly clear that ethical obligations cannot be delegated. A well-crafted social media policy as to online conduct should be extremely clear with respect to all expectations.

4. **Consider Social Media as a Practice Area.** Attorneys seeking to expand their practices may wish to become schooled in the far-reaching implications of social media in various legal arenas. Clients need counsel to develop internal social media policies on their behalf, to advise with respect to employee issues, and to otherwise oversee compliance with the newest onslaught of statutes and regulations. Litigators (civil and criminal alike) also face interesting issues in the social media arena.
5. **Develop a Cyber Filter.** Learning to filter out unimportant or irrelevant information that comes your way is crucial. The social media world is indeed noisy. Beware or you will find yourself caught up in nonsense like watching the [“100 Most Viewed YouTube Videos of 2013.”](#) (Yes, it still happens to me.)
6. **Learn How to Handle Online Criticism.** Those who avoid establishing a social media presence out of fear that it exposes the firm to negative online comments are deluding themselves. Adverse remarks can be posted whether or not your firm has an online presence. [Reputation control strategies are discussed in this 2013 blog post authored by Micah Buchdahl.](#)
7. **Measure the Effectiveness of Your Social Media Initiative.** What is your firm’s return on investment (ROI) taking into account the time and money being expended? A number of tools are designed to monitor various analytics beyond revenue. This topic is covered in Chuck Price’s excellent article [“Social Media ROI: 11 FREE Tools for Measuring Social Media Success.”](#)

Conclusion

Attorneys who fail to advance in the social media sphere will be increasingly out of touch—especially in light of the influx of younger lawyers comfortable with social media outlets. Certainly, it is too late to be an early adopter of this platform in the law office setting. However, now is the time to jump on board and equip yourself with the proper tools so that you and your law firm can remain relevant and modern.