

**Roundtable Discussion**

***Networking and Marketing in the Digital Age:***

***How to Leverage Social Media to***

***Expand Your Network and Develop Your Brand***

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**University of Connecticut School of Law**

**Janet M. Blumberg Hall**

**Discussion Leaders**

* **Attorney Meghan Freed,** Freed Marcroft LLC
* **Attorney Kimberly Knox,** Horton, Shield & Knox, P.C.
* **Ms. Jeanne Leblanc,** Communications Director,

University of Connecticut School of Law

* **Attorney Daniel Schwartz,** Shipman & Goodwin, LLP

**Regional Co-Hosts**

**Dean Timothy Fisher Attorney Barry F. Armata**

University of Connecticut Brown, Paindiris & Scott, LLP

School of Law

**What is Social Media?**

Social media is an umbrella term that can be used to refer to websites and applications that enable users to interact with the platforms’ content and to engage with other users.[[1]](#footnote-1) Currently, there are a number of websites that host content and encourage users to interact with that content by sharing their ideas. For example, there are:

* **Social news sites**, such as Reddit and Digg, which allow users to vote for and comment on articles;
* **Social networking sites**, such as Facebook and Linkedin, which allow users to create profiles and connect to other users, as well as join discussion groups; and
* **Social photo and video sharing sites**, such as YouTube and Flickr, which allow users to share their photos and videos, and comment on other users’ submissions.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Social media has the power to enable individuals and businesses to reach new audiences, but the interactivity of social media and the generation of unmoderated comments and reviews may be concerning to some users.

**Is Social Media Here to Stay?**

As of December 2014, there were more than **2 billion active social media users** with **28% global penetration**.[[3]](#footnote-3) Specifically, it is estimated that there are **1,320,000,000 active Facebook users, 343 million active Google+ users**, **300 million active Linkedin users**, **271 million active Twitter users**, and **230 million active Tumblr users.[[4]](#footnote-4)** Unsurprisingly, **18% of social media users** check their Facebook pages every few hours, and **16% of users** rely on Twitter or Facebook for their morning news.[[5]](#footnote-5) Given that Twitter users post more than **500 million** tweets per day, and Linkedin supports **2 new members every second**,[[6]](#footnote-6) social media appears to be here to stay.

**Overview of Select Social Media Platforms**

**Facebook**

Nearly all brands now have a presence on Facebook. Individuals can have personal pages on Facebook, which enables them to “friend” other individuals and exchange messages and content. A business can sign-up for a business page, which enables other Facebook users to “like” the business and receive updates when the business posts new content.

On Facebook, users can post text, photos, and videos, comment on users’ posts, post links to blogs and articles, and feature reviews. On Facebook, attorneys may have personal pages and then separate pages for their firm or professional pursuits so as to avoid intermingling between personal and professional content.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Linkedin**

Linkedin is often considered a “professional Facebook” as many of its features are similar to Facebook’s, but Linkedin is primarily used for maintaining and expanding one’s professional network. On this site, a user’s profile can contain his or her headshot, employment history, education, skills, publications, and awards. Users can view other users’ profiles and connections. Users can also “connect” to other users, thereby adding them as contacts. Each user also has access to a newsfeed, which regularly populates with updates about the user’s contacts.

Companies regularly post job openings on Linkedin and use the site to actively recruit candidates. In addition, an organization can form a “group” on Linkedin, which would enable the organization to post content that may be viewed by members of the group.

**Twitter**

On Twitter, a user can post 140-character “tweets,” or messages, to his or her followers, who are users who have agreed to view the tweets. Followers can then “re-tweet” and “favorite” tweets. By “re-tweeting” a “tweet,” the original “tweet” will appear in the follower’s Twitter feed, which then enables all of the people who follow that user to see the message, even if they do not follow the user who originally posted the “tweet.”

People often use Twitter to post brief comments about their personal pursuits, but news organizations and professionals now use Twitter as a vehicle to provide news and commentary by tweeting about current events or sending links to publications.

**Instagram**

With an Instagram account, users can share photos with their followers and can view other users’ content. A user can see his or her followers’ photos on a main home page. In addition, users can see the photos that their followers have liked on their personal newsfeed.

To use the application, users simply take a photo with their phone, choose a filter, if desired, caption the photo, and then post it to the application. Users can also post 15-second videos. In addition, users can search for other users to follow by searching for a user’s specific name or by searching for a specific hash tag. Some law firms create hash tags that they use across all marketing platforms to generate name recognition.

**Blogspot, Tumblr and Other Blog-Hosting Sites**

There are a number of sites that enable users to create blogs on which they can post text, photos, videos, and links. Some users post links to articles housed on other sites, while other users create their own content and publish personal commentary. Blogs can also vary in formality; blogs on sites such as blogspot.com tend to be more informal in comparison to blogs that are housed on their own websites.

**Pinterest**

Pinterest is a site that enables users to maintain “boards” on which users can “pin” photos and links to information that users find on the Internet and on Pinterest. Users will often use this site to find and keep track of craft ideas, workouts, and recipes. Users can also follow other people who have Pinterest accounts, so that users can then see the different pins that their friends have saved to their boards.

**YouTube**

Users can upload videos to YouTube, which are then, by default, publicly-accessible to any Internet user. Users can create YouTube channels, which allow users to post all of their videos in one central location. Users can also subscribe to YouTube channels so that they are notified whenever new content is posted.

**Google+**

Maintained by Google, Google+ allows users to send messages, post links, and share photos with people who are in their “circles.” This platform is very similar to Facebook. One unique feature of Google+ is that a user can categorize his or her contacts into “circles.” For example, a user can place co-workers in one circle, clients in a second circle, and family members in a third circle, which enables the user to tailor his or her communications to the specific audience. Instead of having a traditional webpage, some businesses maintain only a Google+ page to save money.

**Interested in Learning More? Check Out These Resources**

**American Bar Association Social Media for Lawyers Resource Center**

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/departments\_offices/legal\_technology\_resources/resources/social\_media.html

*Resources on social media basics, legal and ethical issues, and articles on Twitter, Facebook and Linkedin.*

**Webinar: How to Make Social Media Work for Your Law Firm**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyU91XBdt\_8

*Sponsored by the American Bar Association Law Practice Division*

**Social Media Guide for Lawyers**

http://www.meritas.org/ForumDocs/SMGuide2011w.pdf

*Published by Meritas*

**How Law Firms Can Successfully Leverage Social Networking**

http://www.androvett.com/clientuploads/advertising-marketing-white-papers/how-law-firms-can-successfully-leverage-social-media.htm

*By: Robert Tharp, Androvett Legal Media & Marketing*

**5 Social-Media Hacks to Boost Your Brand Starting Right Now**

http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/242551

*By: Brett Relander* *(February 10, 2015)*

**3 Tips to Better Use the Social Networks You Use Every Day**

http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/244113

*By: Cynthia Johnson (March 20, 2015)*

**9 Social Media Considerations for Lawyers**

http://www.legalproductivity.com/legal-marketing/9-social-media-considerations-lawyers/

*By: Jason Krause (March 31, 2014)*

**Social Media for Attorneys, Good Business or Ethical Minefield?**

http://www.forbes.com/sites/insider/2014/11/10/social-media-for-attorneys-good-business-or-ethical-minefield/

*By: Catherine Foti (November 10, 2014)*

**7 Things Lawyers Can’t Do on Social Media**

http://www.dexmedia.com/blog/7-things-lawyers-cant-do-on-social-media/

*By: Jeff Copeland (January 9, 2015)*

1. Daniel Nations, *What is Social Media*, About Tech, http://webtrends.about.com/od/web20/a/social-media.htm ; Catherine Foti, *Social Media for Attorneys, Good Business or Ethical Minefield,* Forbes (Nov. 10, 2014), http://www.forbes.com/sites/insider/2014/11/10/social-media-for-attorneys-good-business-or-ethical-minefield/. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Nations, http://webtrends.about.com/od/web20/a/social-media.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Shea Bennett, *Social Media Addition: Statistics & Trends,* Social Times (Dec. 30, 2014), http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/social-media-addiction-stats/504131. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Id. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Id. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Id. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *E.g.* Adrian Lurssen, Law Firms on Facebook: 5 Examples of ‘Doing it Right’, JDSupra (Aug. 16, 2011), http://scoop.jdsupra.com/2011/08/articles/law-firm-marketing/law-firms-on-facebook-examples-of-doing-it-right/. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)