

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

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Build a better blog

Blog. Tweet. Post. Why do we do it? Many attorneys use these digital forums to disseminate legal news to colleagues. Others use them to inform laypeople of important legal topics. Still others use them in the ever-necessary task of attracting new clients. Perhaps we do it for all these reasons? I certainly do.

This year, our firm made a resolution to make our blog more interesting, topical and a part of our everyday practice.

Resolution is a word that we hear every January. Along with creating ridiculously long lines for the elliptical machines at the health club, most people start diets and resolve to conquer bad habits this time of year. Even attorneys are entitled to a fresh start. After all, we are human, aren't we?

Being an attorney these days means more than just knowing the law, writing briefs and trying cases. Don't get me wrong, I am not an expert on blogging or tweeting. Yet, I do understand that lawyers who ignore the power of creating a solid website, blogging or using social media sites like Twitter and Facebook, will eventually discover the consequences. Our firm's first blog post was on Sept. 8, 2008. While it was just a simple entry, over time it has grown into a blog with close to 600 posts.

Sometimes one of the most challenging parts of writing and publishing a blog or posting to Facebook and Twitter is coming up with content that is entertaining and informative — informative to an audience that on any given day is likely to be comprised of lawyers, nonlawyers and the judiciary.

No one wants to read a simple regurgitation of local and national headlines. The goal is to find that juicy nugget and provide unique and interesting commentary on the matter. Seems easy, right? But when dealing with the economic realities of running a law practice and trying cases on behalf of the seriously injured, it takes a significant amount of dedication.

Our blog, chicagoaccidentinjurylawyer.com, is meant to be more than a place to



Balancing Life and the Law

By [Jeffrey J. Kroll](#)

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highlight our firm's successes in and out of the courtroom. Think more infomercial than personal journal. I don't think anyone wants to hear about us traipsing to and from court or tweeting innocuous comments from depositions.

The exercises that make a good blogger are similar to those that make a good trial attorney. Do your research. I try to set aside a significant chunk of time each day to read the national and local news. My firm subscribes to publications from the ABA Journal to New York Magazine to Psychology Today.

All of the attorneys at my firm have smartphones that link us to Internet news sources. The firm also "follows" more than 1,000 people on Twitter — a source that alone provides us with countless tweets and links to interesting information.

Numerous tweeters also follow our firm. You might be surprised to hear that we have formed several business relationships with some of these tweeters. To get the most out of a site like Twitter, you must treat it as a two-way street. Just like presenting information to juries, once you create a blog, law firm Facebook profile or Twitter account, you put your firm out there as an information source and thereby generate a responsibility to share and provide.

I think that the most successful posts, just like the most successful opening and closing statements, are simultaneously content-driven, thought-provoking and possess a human touch — a snapshot of who you are as a person. Posts, like lawsuits, are not worth much unless the receiver comprehends the point you are trying to make.

With that said, it is imperative to create a theme for a blog. Our blog is about personal injury law, hence the name — Chicago Accident and Injury Blog. It is organized into subheadings that comprise the areas of interest of our firm. It is critical that almost every post relate to one or more of those areas of interest in one way or another.

As with anything, you have to be careful with what you post. About a year or so back, there was a rash of E. coli and bedbug outbreaks. I wrote a few blogs about these topics and hundreds of new case calls flooded the switchboards. I stopped posting about bedbugs after that ... and began scratching.

We all have a digital presence (like it or not). I encourage every reader of this article to type his or her name into a search engine, hit enter, and see what results pop up. Think about it, the first thing many of us do when we discover the name of opposing counsel in a new case is a Google search. I refuse to believe that any of us are so naïve to think that potential clients are not doing the same. In fact, I know they are.

Every post reflects on the reputation of your firm. As a result, the topics you write about should be those that you understand, believe in or want to discuss with your

readers. Just as when quoting case law, one should never rely on a case after only reading the headnotes. Similarly, every link, "retweet" or "share" should be one that you have thoroughly read. Furthermore, ask yourself if what you are posting is share-worthy.

By publishing a blog and tweeting, writing articles and giving speeches, I hope to exert the slightest bit of control over how my law practice is portrayed on the Internet. I think each of us should have a goal to leave this profession a little better off than when we got in it.

I started my blog back when I started my law practice. Every entry that I have made remains published on the Internet, probably for as long as the site exists and maybe even beyond. I'm not going to pretend to understand the digital lifespan of web content. Heck, my DVD player at home still flashes 12:00.

We all know that our own moms would hire us; but, the more evocative question is, would you hire you? I suggest that we all take a good, hard look in the mirror and really attempt to assess whether or not you would be confident if you were representing you. An initial step in making that assessment is to evaluate your web presence.

I know that having a great blog isn't the end-all-be-all for 2011. It is an important goal of our firm though and, yes, I want a more coherent and vibrant web presence. I enjoy integrating technological advances into my practice and while I may never be the next Mark Zuckerberg, I will do whatever it takes to keep the bedbugs from biting at night.

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