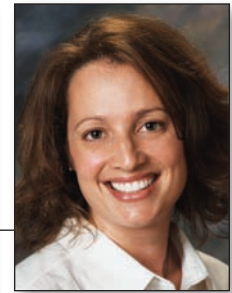


MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Finding Your Social Media Sea Legs

By Jeff Scalzi & Melissa Hoff



He Said

Ironically, I was an early adopter of social media. Perhaps, I was even one of the earliest, given that I was working in the technology industry when LinkedIn was founded in 2002. So when invited by a co-worker, I took the plunge and “linked in.” To what, though, I wasn’t sure at the time.

Now entrenched in the legal industry, I find myself more than linked in, but still not sure what I’m doing. I’m on Twitter, but I don’t tweet (I registered to track the activity of potentially rogue lawyers who had threatened to do so). I have a Facebook page, and as luck would have it, the May 3, 2010, glitch that made headlines fell on my birthday. Hence, the barrage of friendly “Happy Birthday” messages from “friends” near and far, and my responses thereto, were visible to those both inside and outside my network. I know this, having heard from a colleague that a former paramour (by no means my Friend) saw photos of my home and children posted to the page. Excellent.

Earlier this year, I abandoned my beloved Blackberry and purchased an iPhone. It’s been much easier, almost too easy, to keep up with the various comings and goings of my friends as they do such interesting things as go through the drive-thru at Dunkin’ Donuts, dread work on a Monday morning, or launch a campaign to become a fan of a TV show I’ve never even heard of (OK, I admit, I do know what *DC Cupcakes* is, having been mesmerized by a marathon of the show on a JetBlue flight a few weeks back.). But do I need to be a fan of it on Facebook?

I will, however, continue to embrace social networking, as I have witnessed firsthand its utility in the law firm. Having launched blogs, I’ve seen lawyers post clever and value-added content that has resulted in new business and media inquiries, and proven a critical prospect retention tool. I recently helped a lawyer use LinkedIn to re-engage with colleagues in Asia with whom he last spoke 20 years ago; he will meet with them in-person later this year to discuss ways in which we can work together.

Though keeping my seven-year-old out of the App Store on my iPhone (he seems to know when I change my password) has proven challenging, I will endeavor to find some time to send a tweet, do more than merely accept LinkedIn requests (perhaps even initiate some), and even find a TV show of my own to which I might become a fan. For now, I’m off to Dunkin’ Donuts, and you won’t hear about it anywhere but here. ■

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She Said

I admit I was a late comer to the social media scene. I joined Facebook long after most of my friends had done so, and I was skeptical that there was any real value. But when I reconnected with old school buddies and past workmates, I enjoyed the voyeuristic aspects of hearing about their mundane and occasionally exotic goings-on. Once I found my social media sea legs, I ventured onto LinkedIn where I have reconnected with colleagues, former colleagues and industry members.

Notice that I’ve said I have *reconnected*. Not connected. My personal experience with social media is this: It’s been a good way to maintain the network I have, but I haven’t *expanded* my network through use of these tools. I have gotten in touch with people who might have otherwise been lost to me due to geographic distance, job changes or simply time and space. However, I have not found new contacts and I don’t “friend” strangers or people I’ve never met personally.

While my skepticism about the value of social networking has subsided—I see the value—I remain convinced that the act of being social is ultimately a human one, not an electronic one. Relationship building, the real and meaningful kind, takes place over lunch, a night out with colleagues and business associates, or working together in the trenches on a project. While status updates might let me know that so-and-so is on vacation in Europe, is remodeling their basement, or is in line for an ice cream cone, it doesn’t answer the proverbial “what’s keeping them up at night” question which is, at least from a client service and business development perspective, of more central importance.

I’m an advocate of social media and I’m eager to see where it takes us—both as an industry and in our daily and personal lives. But like all new technological developments, it has its limitations. Further, the sheer volume of information precludes us from reading every blog, every Tweet or every status update. Good client service and relationship building still demand that we reach out with a call or a personal email to let a client know how a new regulation impacts their specific business or industry, or that we’ve started a new job, or just to say hello.

For now, though, I’m off to change my profile picture and announce to the world, or at least to my FB friends, that I’ve completed my long-overdue ‘She Said’ column for *Strategies*. I’m sure they’re all waiting with bated breath to find out what I’ll be doing next. ■

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