



# Blogs: Your superhighway to visibility

*A blog is the hub and centerpiece for messaging and broadcasting*

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In our article, *The four most important Web 2.0 tools for lawyers* (See, Plaintiff, July 2009), we briefly outlined the most influential and beneficial social media marketing tools: blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. It is our conclusion that a blog is the most important social media marketing tool for attorneys and law firms today. Consider these powerful benefits:

- Publishing platform
- Vehicle to deliver your expertise
- Reputation management mechanism
- Networking hub

## Your writing/publishing platform

Lawyers who have a public speaking presence understand the power that a speaking platform provides to their visibility. Consider that your blog will provide a writing platform that, while second to a live speaking presence, has the potential to reach a far greater audience. Many attorneys who recognize the power of blogging take the step to launch a blog without understanding that there are various environments in which to build your blogging platform. Before choosing (or sticking to) a particular software platform, you should be certain that it will produce the benefits you are looking for.

## Choosing a software platform

The first question to ask yourself as you consider launching a blog is what you want your blog to do for you. Along with

the other benefits that follow in this article, consider what we believe is the most powerful benefit of all: your blog's ability to gain Google ranking on your desired keywords and drive traffic to your firm's Web site.

We have talked to several lawyers who express satisfaction with their keyword placement as a result of paid search engine optimization (SEO) services. While it is not our intention to discount such services, the reality is that a lawyer or firm can achieve similar results organically through blogging techniques that leverage Google's keyword indexing methodologies. Not all blog platforms can deliver this valuable SEO benefit, however. In fact, there is only one solution that does, hosting your blog on your Web site domain. We recommend the free Open Source software downloadable from [www.Wordpress.org](http://www.Wordpress.org).

Bloggers who publish from sub-domain blogging platforms such as Blogger, TypePad, Wordpress.com and others are unable to capture the Google ranking benefits because their articles are published and indexed by Google with a URL attached to the sub-domain. This will drive traffic to the sub-domain blog and not the lawyer's or firm's Web site. Getting the reader to your Web site then becomes an obstacle to overcome.

Integrating the blog with your existing Web site can be as easy as adding a new navigational link from your Web site to the page which will hold your blog. Many third-party developers have created Wordpress templates, also called themes, which can be customized with your Web

site's color scheme to create an almost seamless experience for your Web site visitors.

## Vehicle for delivering your expertise

Once your article is published, you don't have to just sit and hope that it will be found. Think of your blog as the central hub of your publishing platform and social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter as channels for delivering your articles and driving traffic back to your blog/Web site.

Each of these social networks has a broadcasting feature which enables you to send messages to people you are connected to in the network. Twitter has perhaps set the standard message length at 140 characters as LinkedIn, once longer, has recently followed suit. Deliver your blog articles by introducing them with a brief statement and inserting a live link to the article, called a permalink, into the message. Most blogs create a permalink that contains the blog URL address followed by the date and/or title of the article, and the length of these permalinks can take up a good portion of your allotted 140 characters.

**Tip:** A URL shortening service can be utilized to reduce the length of the permalink by several characters. Our current preference is bit.ly because of its ability to track the number of times the link has been clicked.

## How to use the URL shortening service:

- Go to <http://bit.ly.com> (or another URL shortening service)
- Copy the URL of your article into the box provided



- The service will convert to a URL that will display <http://bit.ly/> followed usually by five or six characters.
- Copy the bit.ly URL into the broadcast area of the social network.
- Share the URL with a brief introduction to the article.

You can also gain visibility to your articles by participating in groups on LinkedIn and Facebook and leaving links to your articles in your discussions. Commenting on other blogs is another very effective way to gain exposure.

**Tip:** Use your blog's sidebar to inspire visitors to learn more about you and your firm. Add widgets to drive visitors to your LinkedIn and Twitter accounts and your Facebook business page.

### Reputation management

A blog is a publishing platform with extensive powers. One of the most important benefits of a blog is the ability to answer erroneous information or improper assertions online directly to the source. As we outlined earlier, your blog acts as a delivery system for your messages of expertise. Equally important is the role it plays in search engine optimization and controlling your Google placement for your firm and business name.

**Tip:** One of the most powerful methods of reputation management is to control your page-one Google search results.

Simply put, you should attempt to occupy page one, positions one to 10, on a Google search of your law firm's name and your surname.

#### **Best ways to accomplish this goal:**

- **Keyword list:** Create a list of keywords including firm, partners, attorneys' names, and law practice focus.
- **Enrich:** Sprinkle your blog articles, about pages, and categories with the keywords from your list.
- **Write:** Create articles and new content on a continuous schedule to attract search engine bots. The bots register your content, fueling your move up in Google rankings and indexing.

### Networking

A blog is the hub and centerpiece in which the majority of your messaging and broadcasting should originate. It is the central command post that drives your ability to connect within and outside the legal community. Networking is a vital piece to business development and developing new opportunities and partnerships.

**Tip:** Before you can expect to benefit from networking, with the results being business referrals and opportunities, you must first give value. One of the best methods to giving value is to comment on a blog within your niche that is relevant to your efforts to "connect" with your community.

#### **Best ways to accomplish this goal:**

- **Target list:** Research and target the blogs that will give your business the best chance to network and connect. Look for prominent attorneys, mass media publications and industry associations.
- **Read:** Actually take the time to read articles of interest. Make sure you understand the points and how you wish to provide feedback.
- **Comment:** Craft comments that are calls to action. Provide viewpoints and back them up with hyperlinks (see Vehicle for Delivering Your Expertise) to your content or separate authoritative articles pertinent to the discussion.



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