



Pinterest social-media site offers a more personal approach to Web marketing

This virtual bulletin board of photo collages can promote your practice as it allows your creative side to show through

By ANAYAT DURRANI

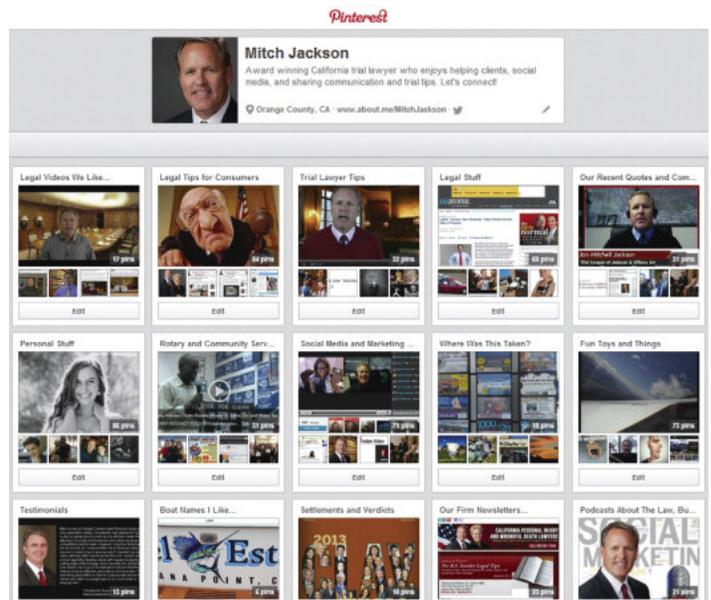
Pinterest’s concept is simple. It gives users a virtual bulletin board and pins to create an endless photo collage of whatever strikes their fancy. Since it was launched in Palo Alto in 2010, Pinterest has skyrocketed in popularity, with over 70 million users and over four million visitors daily. Surprisingly to some, lawyers are among the more frequent “pinners.” Piqued by its concept of social content curation, many lawyers have embraced Pinterest as a source to showcase their particular interests or hobbies and for relationship building. And, its growing use among attorneys just may make lawyers appear a little more “human” in the process.

Lawyers have other interests too, right?

On the surface it may look like another social media site. But with Pinterest it’s all about visual stimulation. Pinterest has capitalized on the old adage that “one picture is worth a thousand words.” Its image-sharing platform consists of a board or boards of “pinned” photos created simply for personal enjoyment. People use it to collect the things they love, organize them or plan upcoming projects. Think of it as a virtual refrigerator door to organize all those random favorite quotes, inspirational snapshots, or thought-provoking poems collected on your home fridge (and probably held in place by your customized law-firm magnets).

Interestingly, women make up 70 percent of Pinterest’s user base, according to Nielsen figures. One Washington Post columnist described it as “digital crack for women.” But it’s not all recipes, DIY home décor projects, and wedding planning, nor is it just for women. Many men have a Pinterest presence and it’s not just the closet Trekkies either. Graphic designer Mike Dew (aka tempspaz) is the most followed man on Pinterest and has 27 boards and well over three million followers. Then there are the numerous lawyers and law firms – both males and females – that have found a happy space on Pinterest.

Personal injury and wrongful death lawyer Mitch Jackson of Jackson & Wilson, Inc. in Laguna Hills has two Pinterest pages;



his personal lawyer page and his law-firm page. On his personal page he has 24 boards and over 400 followers. His boards range from “Legal Tips for Consumers” and “Legal Stuff” to “Fun Toys and Things” and “Where Was This Taken?”

“I really enjoy social media and look at the different social media platforms as different and distinct welcome mats to the law firm and frankly, my life,” said Jackson, who has been a trial lawyer for 27 years.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Google+ have all figured into the marketing arsenal of many law firms. But, Pinterest may be another social media site worth investing time in. The site is the “fastest growing Website ever” according to *Forbes*, and drives more referral traffic than Google+, LinkedIn and



Jackson



YouTube combined, according to a report by Shareaholic.

“It’s a great way to share good content, help others and expand our sphere of influence. Using social media, I get to help the consumer, and people around the world, while building a positive reputation and long-term trust with others,” said Jackson.

Pinterest is all about visuals. And for the lawyer seeking to stand out and build relationships with clients and potential clients, Pinterest may be a good option.

Jackson has a social media presence on several sites including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, SpreeCast, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Vizify and a blog. To help drive traffic between social media sites, having a link to your blog and other sites from your firm’s Web site for example, as Jackson does, is a good strategy.

“The idea is to share a bit of yourself, firm and information at each of these platforms,” said Jackson. “After all, you could share the best information in the world on Facebook but if all of your potential connections are over on Twitter, what good is that going to do you?”

Once upon a Pinterest

Pinterest was born as an invitation-only site, however, registration is now open to all. The original purpose of Pinterest was to develop a space to categorize and organize collections and share them with others around the world with similar interests. Pinterest CEO Ben Silbermann said in an August 2013 interview with *BusinessWeek.com*, that the pinned photos, “end up saying a lot about who you are and where you’re going in life.” His personal page has 69 boards and over 800,000 followers.

“Lawyers don’t always realize this, but they need to show their human side and Pinterest is a great way to do that,” said Oakland Attorney Randy Wilson of DSD Pro Web Services (his personal Pinterest page is on Oakland history).

Wilson thinks lawyers have been slow to embrace Pinterest because it’s, “a visual



Wilson

medium and lawyers are all about text.” Another factor, he adds is that, “lawyers are generally phobic about technology and that includes the Internet.” Wilson, who earlier this year presented at a Contra Costa Bar Association

program on the subject of social media, says there are a number of things to consider when using Pinterest.

“I think it’s a demographic question for lawyers. Are your clients social media savvy? Do you have consumer clients, (for those practicing) estate planning, personal injury, family law? If yes, then it makes sense to use Pinterest to reach out – and most attorneys aren’t, so it’s a good way to stand out,” he said.

Next, Wilson said lawyers should determine whether they are trying to reach out to their community in a positive way and not just about looking for clients. If yes, then he recommends having a Pinterest board that’s related to a charity or pro bono efforts. Also, lawyers should consider whether they can feature content that is visual, such as “recipes, photos of people participating on a walkathon, shots of dangerous toys kids shouldn’t play with, etc.”

Attorney Catherine Tucker practices reproductive law and makes full use of her Pinterest boards. Her page has a hundred followers and nine boards ranging from “Infertility Books” to a “Just For Fun” board that has photos of sperm and egg cookies and other infertility-related humor. Tucker calls Pinterest a “novel social networking medium” since its focus is on visual images rather than the written word. Apart from the occasional visuals used in trial work exhibits, she says attorneys spend the majority of their time with the written word, “from writing contracts and pleadings, to reading case law and statutes.”

“Many of our clients prefer visuals as they make grasping complex concepts easier. As they say, a picture is worth 1000 words,” said Tucker. “As a trial

attorney by background, with close to 100 trials under my belt, I’ve learned that simplifying complex legal concepts into the understanding of regular persons is an invaluable skill.”

How Pinteresting!

Lawyers using Pinterest don’t have to share anything related to their business or legal matters. They can pin things based on their interests – such as a favorite book, things that inspire them, projects, etc. – to create a virtual scrapbook of the things they like. Users follow other pages that inspire them and are instantly connected by a shared interest. For lawyers, their inspirational boards can help them connect with random people and establish a reputation of trust and build relationships.

“I think Pinterest offers excellent potential for law firms to set up a more personal approach toward the public, rather than just relying on a more traditional, and often monotonous Web presence,” said Tucker.

Pinterest is like dress-down-Friday, informal and relaxed. And in this way, it should be different from your regular more formal Web site. Many lawyers and law firms pin a collection of case study stats and infographics amidst various other random, unrelated boards. Some create a virtual pinboard of their offices, along with photos of art, sports, humorous posts, bucket lists, wishlists, travel destinations or photos of nature.

“We initially put up the Pinterest site as a response to another lawyer’s query about whether that platform was one that could be successfully used by law firms,” said Tucker. “We have found that our site has garnered an overwhelmingly positive response from both the public and other attorneys. We aim for our site to be both educational and fun, and we strive to maintain a mix of our original work and repins from others.”

Social media and business lawyer Sara F. Hawkins describes herself as, “one



of very few attorneys back in the mid-'90s who fully embraced the Web." She's on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest and has a blog (sarafhawkins.com). She has over 200 followers and 22 boards on Pinterest, ranging from "Blog Law" to "Bullying – Creating Change" to "Staycations."

"The public perception of lawyers is often negative. However, by curating content that I find enjoyable, helpful, interesting, and relevant I'm providing different connection points," said Hawkins. "Being a lawyer is what I do, it's not who I am."

She believes Pinterest provides lawyers and law firms many benefits. She thinks the site gives potential clients a chance "to vet and evaluate a lawyer or law firm before contacting them." Pinterest, she said, also gives law firms and attorneys an opportunity to display their work and offer valuable information and resources to the public.

"If people keep coming to your articles for insight, when they have a need for legal services they'll already feel a connection," said Hawkins. "In addition, there is an opportunity to share information from qualified third-party sources, such as compiling important government resources in one place."

Depending upon a lawyer's focus, Pinterest boards can be tailored to provide content related to their practice. For example, a personal injury firm can have boards of picturesque photos of places that heal or medical information on specific injuries, verdicts and settlements, or a board on auto safety. Among those boards could be included inspirational music, videos or photos. Pinterest should also showcase a lawyer's interest or personality.

"I think it allows lawyers and law firms to humanize themselves by curating

other areas of interest," said Hawkins. "For example, for law firms with multiple offices it's a way to highlight the cities and culture where they are located, their charitable work, or even share music, art, or crafts that firm members make.

Lawyers are prolific writers and now we have a place to share our work in a place and in a way readers want it."

To pin or not to pin

And while many lawyers and law firms use Pinterest, not all see the usefulness of the site in terms of obtaining prospective clients. Attorney Aaron Hall has a personal Pinterest page with 20 boards and over 400 followers and a link to his law firm. Other than two boards on law and legal rights, most of his other boards reflect his various personal interests and family.

"Pinterest is a waste of time for most lawyers. Unless your target market is on Pinterest and you can post content that resonates with them, Pinterest will not help grow your practice," said Hall. "The problem is, the law and Pinterest are fundamentally different. Law is based on solving problems, but Pinterest is based on happiness and style, not problems. People use Pinterest to find products they want, not services they need."

Pinterest is not without its controversy. Because of its focus on image-sharing, Pinterest has raised some copyright concerns. Kirsten Kowalski, a Georgia attorney and photographer, made headlines for a blog she penned on how she deleted her Pinterest account in 2012 because of the site's terms of use. However, lawyers have argued that their terms are no different than other social-media sites such as Facebook.

"Just like any of the other social-media platforms, rules and laws should be followed. Just because it's easier to

post a picture on Pinterest doesn't mean the State and Federal rules and regulations shouldn't be followed," said Jackson. "It really doesn't matter what platform you're using, the game is really the same."

In a blog on the subject, Hawkins offers the following suggestions to avoid copyright pitfalls: 1) Don't cut and paste, 2) Pin the original source, 3) Don't copy an image from Pinterest to use on your blog, 4) Don't attribute copyright to the wrong owner, and 5) Make sure to watermark your images.

"Most smart people and companies understand the power of having others share their images or pictures of their products and services," said Jackson. "I think smart business owners welcome other people sharing images of their products and services with friends and connections. The long-term and wide distribution of likes, interests and recommendations is powerful and should be embraced, not limited."

And for men, if Pinterest still isn't your thing, there's always Manteresting.com ("nails" and "workbenches" anyone?).



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