

# Social Media Marketing for Attorneys

## Part 1 -- Introduction to Social Media

Social Media has the potential to be a powerful marketing avenue for attorneys and other professionals as the medium gains in popularity with the general public. Social Media is a place where people can find reliable information and niche discussions, where individuals establish and defend their credibility and ideas. It is a place where expertise is exalted and pariahs are punished.

Many people who use social media may not know it by this name. Social Media is a broad term that encompasses the terrain of "**user generated content**." It takes on several broad forms, namely:

- 1) Blogs
- 2) Social Networking Sites (Myspace, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc)
- 3) Social News Sites (Digg, Reddit, etc)

**Blogs**, as you may know, are like flat, online publications. A blogger writes an entry and publishes it to her blog. The blog is generally organized around a theme, say "freelancing," and each entry would be categorized into a sub-theme, say "time-management" or "marketing." If this blogger allows it, readers will comment and the comments will display under the bloggers entry for all to read. This is the second "Network Effect" of blogs. The first network effect comes in the entries themselves. A good blogger, adhering to the ethos, will write about other blogs in her entries. And when she does she'll include links to the referenced blog. This creates dialogue between blogs and credential-izes the referenced blogs as her readers travel through the links to these new, and tacitly "recommended," blogs.

**Social Networking Sites** are places where users can create profiles -- pages -- for themselves that live on the site. The user identifies herself as a "musician" in "Michigan" who is "married," for example. This is the second network effect of social networking sites; being able to search for people with similar interests/ location/ religion as yourself. She also creates links to her "friends" in her friends list. Through this list she is able to see her friends' interests and friends. This is the first network effect.

**Social News Sites** are looser in their relationship model -- they are more about popularity -- but they do gravitate around certain content. These sites are essentially fast changing lists of popular web content. Users submit a link to a news piece, or a blog post, or a youtube video, along with a snappy title. Users trawl through the site, reading submissions, and vote them up or down. The most popular submissions climb to the homepage. The links on the homepage receive torrential traffic during their fifteen minutes of fame. For a better understanding of this, visit [digg.com](http://digg.com) .

Within each of these forms are nichey collectives with their own sets of etiquette. And it's this specificity that is the power and potential peril of marketing through Social Media. Social Media sites place a lot of stock in Trust. They hate tacky solicitors. But they love information. They love bite-sized, expert information.

In Part Two of "Social Media Marketing for Attorneys" we'll discuss the potential avenues that attorneys can pursue to market their services through social media. We'll examine successful strategies, the meaning of "success" in this context, and the amount of time these strategies require.