

I've just made a cup of tea!

Is anyone really interested?



*If you can imagine it
you can achieve it!*

Are you really interested in hearing from someone on Twitter or Facebook telling you they've just made a cup of tea, won a cow in Farmville or stepped on the cat?

There are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of social media sites on the internet and marketing people would tell you not to engage in too-wide an advertising or marketing campaign as you'll dilute your opportunities. This is sound advice.

So should law firms engage with social media as a business opportunity or ignore it as a waste of time and only for people to let everyone know the tea was good and the cat survived?

Traditional

The legal profession has always been a traditional place, a place where clients return time and time again; a place where it's 'always done that way'. Business has now changed so it is almost unrecognisable to its predecessor, particularly for professional services firms. Clients are now much more sophisticated and willing to move to another service provider (yes, law firms are now 'service providers of legal assistance') to achieve greater customer service, greater value for money and communication in the way 'they' want it.

Damn phone never rings!

A forward-thinking – and therefore surviving and growing – firm understands this and will actively engage in some social media sites. But, it's not just about creating an account and putting your picture up! Imagine opening a brand new legal office, kitted out with desks, state-of-the-art phones, copiers and computers; then creating your letterhead and business cards. Now just sit there, don't tell anyone you exist, never go out to tell people of your new venture; just wait for the phone to ring! You know it's never going to happen!

This is what people do when they create a profile on social media but don't actively engage with people through that profile. If a potential customer doesn't know you exist, they won't look for you; therefore, they're not going to find you!

Social media and networking

Social media is really just networking – but done at a computer screen and not face-to-face. You wouldn't dream of turning up to a networking event and ignoring everyone who was there; well, I hope you wouldn't! Let's take the words 'social media' away and replace them with 'networking online'. Engaging with people at a 'live' networking event is about introducing yourself, asking them about their company, what they do, why they do it. In that conversation there is likely a time when that person will ask you the same questions; so you've got a dialogue going. The same applies to 'networking online'. Start to just 'talk' to people!

Show and share

There are many, many groups on the social media sites, so find one that will mean you can show your knowledge and then share that knowledge. This is not about showing off, being pompous or talking down to people, it's about offering some free intellectual property to get people 'chatting' to you. I regularly add a comment to someone else's comment and that starts a conversation, exactly the way I do when I am networking, and this has resulted in business. This is where you can then start to build relationships with people, even though you've never met. You could even create your own group and invite people to join it!! It's a good idea to try to add bits to the group discussions but to add a link to your own website where the full article can be found to get people moving from the social media site to your website.

Raising profile

Engaging with people, even if you're not talking about your company or what you do, is a great way to raise your profile and that of your practice. Raising your own profile, and that of your staff through the 'firm' profile you have created for them, means you will be sending out consistent messages to entice people to engage with you. This raises their profile, your profile and that of the practice. One way of doing this is to offer small snippets of legal knowledge!

I've just heard a squeal!

'We can't give advice, openly, like that!' I am sure this has just gone through someone's head. Maybe a case has recently gone through the court that 'could' alter the way all other similar cases are then dealt with! Maybe a piece of legislation that 'could' change how people operate! Maybe a new law that 'could' challenges the validity of older laws! Maybe an employment case that 'could' alter the way you advise your customers!

You receive, I'm sure, the folded guide on the budget changes from your accountants each year. Why not create the legal equivalent on a social media site? The articles you create for the monthly newsletter could easily be placed on a social media site or offered to the groups you belong to, in a condensed format, with the full article on your website.

Don't push, pull - make it personal

Remember the days when a midweek knock on the door at 6.30pm meant someone trying to sell double glazing, loft installation or central heating? Meeting people, in the flesh or online, is no longer about 'pushing' your message out. Selling your services starts with just talking to people, getting to know them and developing relationships without the emphasis being business, but personal. How many of you would have 'tied the knot' had you asked on the first or second date? It took time to develop the relationship, which would not have developed in a positive way had you asked, each time you saw your partner, whether they were ready to marry you yet. The same applies to business! Pushing sales messages or just talking at people will only turn them off.

Pull people towards you by seeing them, and acting with them, as a person and not a business card. Find a personal link you can use to get to know them. Move the conversation away from business and onto a personal level; this will help you to develop a quicker, deeper relationship which can then move onto a business level. I do this constantly with great results and it's even easier to do online than in the flesh because people talk more online about what they did at the weekend or what they're going to do, so you have information ready to use.

Is what I've described in 'Don't push, pull – make it personal' about a face-to-face networking event or within a social media context? Well, it could be either because that is how you will get people engaging with you in both situations and, if they are in the market for your services, buying from you.

Yes...

...is the answer to the question at the beginning of this guide. Legal services organisations should be engaging with social media sites to promote themselves, raise their profiles and engage with existing and potential customers. As more and more people use online services to converse, your market is reducing if you don't enter the conversation and 'talk' to them!



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Stewart Graham will help you to enhance your service, increase your profit and reduce your costs through coaching and presentations.

Stewart is a business, schools and people developer, developing business owners, MDs, CEOs, Partners, Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Senior Leadership teams resulting in a more efficient and customer-focused organisation, decreasing costs, increasing profit and retaining more customers.

Stewart has managed organisations at the highest level for over 15 years. He is a regular speaker on networking, successful pitching, successful networking, selling more with little effort and no cost and presenting to be remembered as well as other management and motivational topics. He is also a published author.