

Top 5 Reasons Law Firms and Lawyers Fail at Social Media

If the pandemic did anything positive, it was to convince the resistant naysayers that social media was (1) here to stay and (2) valuable to accomplishing their business development goals. In fact, lockdown proved to be an effective test kitchen that demonstrated social media isn't just for jobseekers and influencer wannabes. It's a never-ending virtual cocktail networking reception that allows attorneys and legal professionals to check in on their clients and referral sources anytime – and with no Outlook calendar appointment juggling.

But many law firms and lawyers continue to fall short in their attempts to connect in this very social space by using approaches that actually create distance and are off-putting the social media user. Never fear! We've identified the top five ways law firms and lawyers undermine their own efforts, and offer a few tips on how you or your firm can instantly improve how you engage with your social media audience.

1. Lack of a Social Media Strategy

One of the primary reasons why law firms and lawyers fail at social media is the lack of a well-defined strategy. Without a comprehensive plan, it can be challenging to develop a targeted approach to reach and engage with your target audience.

Don't let the word "strategy" intimidate you! This just means you need:

- Clear, identifiable goals and objectives that can be written down in short sentences and understood by your grandmother.
- A handle on who your target audience actually is – not who you think it is or assume it to be.
- The right number and mix of social media platforms for your message to reach your audience (Newsflash: you don't have to be on *every* platform!).
- A firm but flexible content calendar that maps out your posting cadence and content type mix.

The great thing is that you've probably already done most of this work while creating business development plans for the firm or its attorneys. (To learn more about how you can align your social media strategy with those business development goals, check out [Content Collab: How Business Goals Inspire Effective Social Media Content](#).)

2. Inconsistent Posting on Your Social Media Channels

A binge/purge approach to social media is unimpressive to both the human audience and the all-important algorithms of any social platform. Social media is all about building



Steph Maher

Senior Vice President
Marketing & Social Media
917.414.8206
slmaher@jaffepr.com

relationships and posting sporadically isn't going to cut it.

Think about the person who only shows up to one or two of your regularly scheduled breakfasts and happy hours. Now compare your reaction to them versus how you feel about the folks who can be counted on to show up every time with a funny story or interesting tidbit. You might be genuinely glad to see the stranger on the rare occasion they show up, but you're more likely to reach out to your steadfast friends when an opportunity arises.

Consistency is key. It's essential to post regularly to ensure that your content is visible to your followers. Establishing a consistent posting schedule can help you stay on track. Connect with your target human audience regularly and the algorithm that manages the backstage of your preferred social media platform will reward you.

Did you know your content is not seen by all your contacts on the very day it goes live? Social media algorithms prioritize which content to "promote," and a host of factors influence their choice. (For an overview of how these work, check out Jess Valenghi's helpful 2020 article, [Social Media Algorithms: Understanding What They Are & How To Post On The Top Platforms](#).) Keep in mind that these rules change often and inexplicably, but one element that has remained unchanged is – no pun intended – consistency.

3. Promotional Messages

One of the most egregious mistakes law firms and lawyers make on social media is overly promotional messaging. People visit social media platforms to connect with others, access news and information, and engage with their interests. As a law firm or lawyer, it's important to show your human side and be relatable to real live human beings.

Remember that cocktail reception metaphor? Have you ever experienced being trapped in a conversation with a ginormous bore who has an unshakeable focus on selling their product/service? Or some simpering diva who brings up how "humbled and honored" they are about receiving an accolade every time a new person joins the conversation? It's the same on social media.

While law firms and lawyers should absolutely share thought leadership and hard-won accolades, there is a way to do both that highlights a spirit of service to clients, society, communities and the like. Make your news and insights something everyone wants to celebrate.

Curious about why your writing style may be completely wrong for social media (or any) audience? Watch [Professor Larry McEnerney's simple equation for more effective writing](#) that will first blow your mind and then change it. Video courtesy of FinText. And check out [Stop the Scroll: Understanding the Four Elements of Every Social Media Post](#) for some tips about how to make the best of every post!

4. Failure to Engage with Social Media Connections

Social media is not a one-way street. Law firms and lawyers who only post and never interact with their followers, or – wait for it! – share **firm-produced content** will struggle to

elevate their social media presence. It's also important to respond to the social media activity of colleagues and peers, not just promote oneself.

Engagement is key to building relationships in any arena, but especially in the social media. Here are some ways to help you build stronger relationships with your followers and increase your overall online presence as a result:

- Show pride in the accomplishments of your colleagues.
- Praise community and industry leaders for moving their own missions forward.
- Be supportive and collaborative.
- Respond to comments and reposts.
- Share appropriate posts from friends of the firm.
- Engage in online conversations with employees and non-employees alike.

Don't be surprised when you receive gratitude for a virtual like, share or comment while attending your next in-person event – and don't be afraid of offering your own thanks when the opportunity arises. Genuine goodwill, on- and off-line, is what creates a destination profile – one that is sought out because there is an elevated user experience around it.

Note: By all means, though, exercise caution when engaging. Avoid combative interactions and keep comments positive. As practitioners of the law, if it isn't something you'd say at a business networking reception, don't put it in writing in a global forum.

5. Ignoring Social Media Analytics

Finally, failing to measure social media performance might not achieve a lawyer's or law firm's desired results. By tracking your social media metrics, you can identify how your content is performing and evaluate the reasons for the performance of various posts. Analytics can often reveal surprising truths about what your audience is really interested in and where you might want to adjust your content creation assignments/tasks or go-live protocols.

For example, while thought leadership pieces should always be part of the content mix, they don't always result in great engagement metrics. That doesn't immediately mean your audience isn't interested in the subject matter, but begs the question: *Why should* they be? Did the piece answer the question in the headline? Was the piece written in highly technical legal jargon? Would the information work better as a conversational video or a Q&A or infographic, rather than the thousandth blog entry on the topic? Was the caption of the post written in a way that allowed for legitimate tagging? Was it posted at 4 p.m. on a Friday?

Analytics may not reveal the answers to all of these questions, but they can point out underperforming content that might improve with some additional attention, which can then help you make informed decisions about your content strategy, posting schedule and target audience. (For more information about how to use analytics to refine your social media strategy, check out Mel Trudeau's [A New Approach to Law Firm Social Media](#).)

With just a few tweaks, social media can be a powerful tool for lawyers and law firms to

generate more business and build stronger relationships with their target audience. Developing a clear plan, posting regularly, creating engaging content, engaging with your followers and tracking your social media performance may seem like just another set of tasks to add to an already-demanding profession, but repurposing your business development plans and scheduling a few small windows of time to review and engage with social content can become habits that result in a robust social media presence and meaningful business growth.

Remember that social media is about building relationships and providing value. When done correctly, it can be a gamechanger for law firms and lawyers attending this global virtual networking shindig.

If you're interested in creating a social media posting schedule that puts your firm's authentic personality, talent and experience centerstage, feel free to contact Steph Maher via [email](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

Does your firm need a social media policy? Download a complimentary, editable copy of the [Jaffe Social Media Policy Template](#) to get started, and let us know if we can answer any additional questions you or your firm have.