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How to start a blog in 3 steps

According to the results of the most recent American Bar Association Technology survey 23.9 percent of firms have law blogs. While the statistics are encouraging, there is still a lot of room for blogs devoted to legal topics.

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As we continue to watch the numbers, now is a good time to share a list of best practices for creating a blog, especially as we're seeing more and more law firms realize the benefits of publishing original content and sharing it with key audiences on a regular basis.

STEP 1: Planning

- Define your goals and expected challenges, and be sure to designate a point person to oversee the content initiative, which includes managing the content ecosystem (i.e., regularly identifying new topics and relevant content assets the firm is generating, leveraging e-marketing and social media to distribute new blog content on a consistent basis, etc.). Will that role be performed by one of the attorney-authors or someone in the marketing department?
- Identify your target audience, and outline your measurement of success. Are your social channels having more relevant followers; have the efforts spawned a few media hits; is the firm starting to rank for a few key search terms; has traffic to the website increased; has the firm has received more business-related inquiries? To gain any worthwhile measurements from your efforts, you'll want to set up Google Analytics to track a variety of custom key performance indicators.
- Define the blog's voice: Will the blog be personal, practice-specific, firmwide or an industry-focused blog that incorporates insights from attorneys from across a variety of practice areas?
- Take stock of the resources you've got: Clearly identify the people, software programs and current content inventory (articles, slideshares, video, podcasts, infographics, white papers, planned webinars, e-books, etc.) that can be incorporated into the blogging effort. Be realistic about the amount of time authors are willing to invest, and plan accordingly.
- Create an editorial calendar to help team members collaborate, plan and fill in any gaps of missing content.

STEP 2: Execution

- A major goal of a legal blog should be to provide your audience with enough quality content for them to talk about and engage with. To do that, most law firm blogs publish at least twice a month, and more frequently to accommodate breaking news. If you post less regularly, you run the risk of losing followers and being "scooped" by other sources.
- Content should be relevant, substantive, informational, entertaining, engaging, original, thought-provoking and ***brief***! It should have a call to action. If at all possible, it should tell a story. But most importantly, you should write about content that affects your

clients and helps to position you as a valuable resource.
- Conduct keyword research to understand which words people are using to search for your topic. Incorporate your target keywords naturally into your text so search engines connect your blog with keywords that people search for.
- Try to stick to a posting schedule so people in the firm are held accountable to deadlines, but be flexible enough so there is room for trending topics that might need to bump previously scheduled pieces.

STEP 3: Promotion

- Now that you have a beautiful new blog set up, you need to make sure people will see it. Start with an email campaign to a targeted list of contacts outside the firm, notifying them of the new resource. Internally, let your firmwide audience know that new content is available so you don't miss a possible cross-selling opportunity.
- Issue a media advisory to let reporters know that the blog will be a good resource for content and for access to attorneys who can provide source commentary for their stories.
- Let other experts in the field know about your blog and give them the opportunity to repost your content to their sites. This could be other bloggers, industry associations, trade groups and other influencers.
- Make sure the blog encourages two-way conversation and discussion. To do that, be sure the blog—and each individual post—is equipped with RSS feeds and social sharing buttons so the content can be easily shared by email and liked, reposted and retweeted across all social networking platforms.

Follow these simple steps, and you will soon see that you have a robust blog following. If that's not the case and you feel you need a bit more guidance, contact Vivian Hood at vhood@jaffepr.com.