

Creating Brand Addicts with Social Media

If social media were a drug, your branding efforts should have your audience in rehab.

Social media can accelerate brand awareness and increase brand equity more rapidly than any other marketing tactic. It's the "hyper drive" for branding. If you know this, then you are sharing your story effectively with the world, and your audience will be compelled to listen and respond.

Branding has become more important during the current technology/social media revolution. Social media has made brands more accessible, vulnerable, exposed and manageable. Legal marketers have to acknowledge this and react accordingly.

Branding and Social Media Marketing

Let's talk about creating brand addicts through the use of social media. With social media, our goal is to create a **branding strategy** that amplifies engagement with your law firm through content. As you and your followers share content resources, you spur that addiction in your audience – that need for more!

Getting your audience high on your brand via social media has its ups and downs. Being exposed leaves you vulnerable, but it also makes you accessible. This is why, when using social media tools for branding, you have to be engaged 24/7 to manage your brand's reputation.

Establishing a Law Firm Brand

Before you begin experimenting with combining branding and social media, be sure your **brand characteristics are clear and true** so they resonate with your clients and the general public. This isn't marketing spin. This is emotion, culture and values at work. Be sure to follow these four key points to branding:

- Consistency – Know your law firm's identity, and let it inspire a verbal and visual presence throughout all your marketing channels and outreach activities.
- Authenticity – A brand's worth is contingent on its authenticity. Ensure that the attributes you are emphasizing are true to your firm.
- Relevance – Your brand not only has to represent your firm truthfully; it must also resonate with your audiences, including clients, prospects and potential recruits
- Differentiation – Uniqueness is critical to separating yourself from the competition. Identify your firm's story and convey it through visual and verbal forms of communication.

We talk a lot about **using social media as a legal marketing tool**, but I don't believe we have found the perfect way to use it yet. Why are law firms struggling with this digital and



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social transformation? I think firms still doubt its value. I think law firm marketers avoid social media marketing because of the perceived commitment and the fear of being creative in this environment.

One reason for this struggle is the concern about changing the legacy way of doing things. The typical language of the resistor is to say, "If it isn't broken, why change it? It will cost us more, and take up too much of our time." Related to this is that technology provides new avenues to execute marketing strategies, and that can be overwhelming to some – so overwhelming that they avoid educating themselves about the benefits of the new technology. Finally, many marketers are too focused on short-term results rather than a long-term vision, which is where content and social media marketing excel.

Creating Brand Fans

With these concerns in mind, how do we use social media to create brand junkies?

This addiction is about creating and sharing things that matter to others – not to things that matter solely to you. This strategy creates followers who need and demand your resources, stories and thought leadership. To get their trust and loyalty, you have to be sure you are giving them what they want. Here's how to do that.

1. Define the purpose of your social media brand campaign/messaging.
 - Why are we doing this?
 - What do we want our audience to do?
 - How will we measure results?
2. Set clear expectations, and send relevant information through the proper channels. Put yourself in the recipient's shoes and ask:
 - Who is sending this to me?
 - Why am I getting this?
 - Does this provide me with value?
 - Is this the way I want to receive this information?
3. Make an emotional connection with your audiences.
 - Use language that speaks to your audience.
 - Consider personalization, not-one-size-fits-all.
 - Add interesting and personal touches with images or GIFs.

What to Avoid with Social Media

If you are planning to use social media to achieve the ultimate branding buzz, avoid these four biggest mistakes that social media marketers make.

1. Not Researching Your Audience:
 - Who (title, location, age, goals, who they are following)
 - What content are they interested in?
 - When are they online and when are they engaging with content?
 - Where (social channels, forums, webinars)?
 - How will you engage and measure?
2. Not Listening to:

- Client support inquiries
 - Engagement
 - Industry-related questions
 - Mentions
 - Competitors
 - Influencer and other content-sharing activities
3. Megaphoning:
- People want high-quality, educational content, not a sales pitch.
 - Social isn't about barking at your audience.
 - Listen and engage (social is two-way).
 - Don't communicate from a soapbox.
 - Remember that social channels are not created equally – you get a different high from each, so know your channels and how to use them.
4. No Visuals:
- We want visual content – include relevant images on every post.
 - Incorporate video.
 - Tweets with images receive 150 percent more retweets than tweets without.
 - Facebook posts with images see 2.3 times more engagement than those without.
 - LinkedIn post with images receive 200 percent more engagement than text-only posts.
 - Instagram has the most engagement per post compared to any other social network, due to its visual platform.

Pushing Your Brand

Now I think you're ready to get your audience addicted to your brand via social media. Remember that branding – and differentiating your firm properly – has become more important than ever due to this technology and social revolution, making our brands more accessible, vulnerable, exposed, manageable and interactive. People on social media want to connect with people, not brands, so humanize your branding activities. And don't forget to make it extremely easy to find and engage with your brand.

For guidance on how to get your people high on your brand through social media, contact me, [Terry M. Isner](mailto:tisner@jaffepr.com), at tisner@jaffepr.com.