

A New Approach to Law Firm Social Media

Let's be honest. When it comes to social media marketing, strategy is often based on the trial-and-error model. While it may seem somewhat unscientific – and certainly doesn't provide a tried-and-true recipe for success – experimentation has allowed marketers to keep pace with the evolution of social media usage. As social media marketing matures, we need to stay committed to the experimental model and keep evolving with the changing patterns of social media behavior.

The Battle for Clicks

In content marketing programs, a common objective for social media posting has been to amplify content distribution and drive website traffic. With content overload bombarding social media streams, we have more and more brands vying for our attention – and our clicks. Maybe people have become desensitized to promises of engaging content or maybe the sheer volume of content has cluttered our feeds to a tipping point, but getting people to *click* on a social media post is becoming increasingly difficult.

Many websites analytics show a downward trend in visits from social media sites:



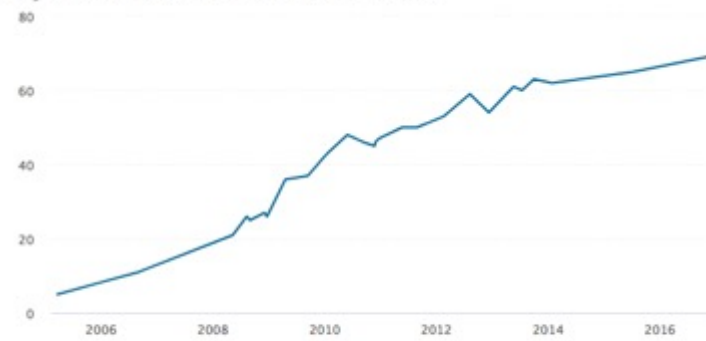
This downward trend isn't the result of fewer people on social media. Quite the opposite, actually. Pew Research Center reports an [upward trend in social media usage](#):

Looking at this inverse relationship leads to one conclusion:



Melanie Trudeau
Executive Vice President
Client Relations
970.376.7746
mtrudeau@jaffepr.com

% of U.S. adults who use at least one social media site



Source: Surveys conducted 2006-2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

It's time to rethink social media marketing.

As social media marketing matures, law firms need to adjust their social strategies and start thinking of social media as a way to deepen their relationships with their target audience instead of just using it as a vehicle for pushing out marketing messages.

Here are a few tips to consider when developing your law firm social media strategy.

Strive for Authenticity

Nobody wants to engage on social media with a robotic corporate account. Think about your own behavior on social. Would you rather connect with real human beings or with business accounts? Brands that are relatable, engaging and thought provoking stand a much better chance of attracting followers.

Law firms that simply post their own firm news run the risk of appearing self-promotional and tone deaf to their audience. Start by putting yourself in the mindset of your target personas:

- What social media content would be helpful to see from a law firm?
- How can you phrase messages and create images that will engage, entertain or inform your audience?
- Which messages will be a turnoff?

Don't be afraid to highlight your firm's unique "personality" and showcase the talents of the individuals behind your brand.

Create the Best Posts Ever

As social media posting becomes less about getting people to click to your firm's website and more about engaging your audience and building brand awareness, the content of individual posts becomes more important.

Since fewer people will arrive on your firm's website, where you have more flexibility and space to convey your brand message, each social media post should stand on its own.

Consider the following tactics to create more engaging posts:

- **Write a catchy headline.** As with any article, be thoughtful and clever with your social media headlines. See WordStream's [tips for writing great headlines](#). Above all, reduce the use of legalese in headlines, and speak to the average person.
- **Include an engaging image.** While stock images are quick and easy to source, unique images are more authentic. Try to use images that connect with the headline and content of the piece. [Canva](#) is a helpful resource for sourcing and editing images for social media posts.
- **Include a video.** Keep in mind that while video engagement is up, consuming video content requires more time commitment from your audience. Make sure the videos embedded in your social media posts are relatively short (less than 30 seconds) and grab the viewer's attention.
- **Tag people in posts.** If you are posting pictures of people, be sure to tag them when possible. Tagging usually increases the post's reach and level of engagement.
- **Use hashtags.** Be thoughtful when identifying hashtags. Do some research on each social media platform when determining which hashtags will be the most appropriate for your post. Prominent hashtags on Twitter may not be useful on Instagram or LinkedIn.
- **Include variety.** Develop a good mix of content to post on social media. Everything from firm announcements and firm blog posts to community events and media quotes give your audience a well-rounded view of your firm.

Monitor Social Media Channels

Think of social media as a two-way communication channel. Responding to comments, liking people's posts and sharing other content gives the impression that there's really a person behind your brand. These small gestures go a long way in reflecting the personality and authenticity of your firm.

Notifications directly from each social platform can keep you up to date with activity, but more robust tools like [Hootsuite](#) or [Mention](#) enable more detailed monitoring features.

Stalk Your Competitors

While common with the under-20 crowd, social media stalking can also be handy for spying on your competitors' activities. Facebook Insights even has something called "Pages to Watch" that allows administrators to compare other pages against their own. For LinkedIn, note that the profile default setting is to show people who have viewed your profile. If you want to stalk someone on LinkedIn without being "seen," be sure to turn off profile visibility before clicking on someone's profile.

When looking at competitors' social media platforms, track the following:

- **Activity:** How often do they post? Do they respond to comments? Do they share/retweet posts from other people or companies?
- **Type of content:** Are they only posting firm-generated content? What percentage of posts are promotional versus informational?

- **Voice:** What point of view do their posts take? Do they only post as a "brand" or do they let individuals post content?

While this information may not sway your firm's social media strategy, occasionally a competitor's social presence will trigger a good idea or spark your creative energy.

Measure

As with any marketing tactic, it is crucial to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) and monitor these metrics. Without a strategic approach to measurement, you are flying blind, unable to adjust tactics and improve performance.

Here are some of the common KPIs to track in a social media campaign:

1. Followers
2. Brand mentions
3. Engagement – comments, likes, shares, retweets
4. Post reach – usually measured in impressions
5. Referral traffic to your website

As social media continues to evolve, tracking these metrics will help position your firm as a leader, create efficiencies in social media activity and drive better brand awareness.

This article originally appeared on the National Law Review website on October 16, 2017.