

Blogging Attorneys Share Niche Expertise

POSTED: 08:40 AM Thursday, August 15, 2013

BY: [Maria Clark, Reporter](#)

A niche blog can do a lot to advance a law practice. A report published by American Lawyer Monthly earlier this year showed that nearly four out of every five of the top 200 law firms in the United States have topic-driven websites or lawyers who blog. The most popular sites, extending to readers outside of the profession, tend to be about labor and employment issues, according to the report.

Experts agree that focusing in on one specific practice area can be more beneficial than developing a more generalized blog on several topics for a law firm.

Ernest Svenson, a New Orleans attorney who was one of the early adopters of law blogs in New Orleans, writes about technology and its impact on the profession on his websites paperlesschase.com and erniethattorney.net.

He says a successful blog can serve as a marketing platform and a way to disseminate clear and pertinent information to people, even those who aren't lawyers.

"To start with, it makes you more visible and also gives the attorney control over what people learn about them on the Internet," Svenson said. "Many small businesses have no websites, and the same applies for solo and small-firm lawyers."

In Louisiana, there are few limits to the content a lawyer can post online. The general rule is limits imposed on traditional advertising do not apply online because Internet users have the option of logging into a website, thus the content isn't considered unsolicited communication, said Dane Ciolino, a professor at Loyola University College of Law.

He also publishes a blog, lalegalethics.org, covering ethical issues for lawyers in Louisiana and compares lawyer advertising on the Internet to the Wild West, saying the rules are still in flux.

"The principle restriction in general is to avoid publishing anything that is false and misleading," Ciolino said. "Because attorneys get a lot of their business by word of mouth, this should be an avenue to highlight their knowledge in a specific practice area."

In recent years, larger firms have turned to blogs to disseminate information. Those firms need to be seen as leaders in the field and blogging can help, said Jon Robinson, an attorney with Mouldoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett.

“Lawyers however should not depend on readers to stumble on their blog,” said Robinson, who contributes to the firm’s blog, navwaters.com, which covers admiralty and maritime law issues.

“You just don’t want to put yourself in a situation where it looks like you are giving legal advice,” Robinson said.

Larger firms can benefit from having more staff and resources to maintain a blog and frequently update its content, he said.

Jeff Richardson, who runs iphonejd.com, a blog on Apple mobile and tablet devices, blogs independently from work at Adams and Reese.

“For individual lawyers, blogging unquestionably helps the firm,” Richardson said. “Most clients hire a lawyer because that person is known in their field.”

Richardson said this could apply to younger attorneys, who are looking for a way to stand out.

“If you are putting out useful information, it can result in new business,” he said. “People should blog to help others understand them better, not just to show up more frequently in Google search results.”

Svenson notes in his book, “Blogging in One Hour for Lawyers,” that a professional-looking blog can be set up and designed for around \$3,500. Small firms can start a blog for under \$500, with annual hosting and technical costs of about \$200, he said.

The growing popularity of certain blogs has helped establish credibility for attorneys as news sources.

The SCOTUS blog, which follows the U.S. Supreme Court, was the go-to source for many readers, not only lawyers, following the Supreme Court’s decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act. It scooped major news outlets like CNN and Fox News, who infamously reported incorrect information.

“It was a shining example of how a niche blog has helped these lawyers prove their expertise on their subject of choice and develop a following beyond the legal industry,” Svenson said.

Attorneys Tom Goldstein and Amy Howe founded SCOTUSblog.com in 2002 and have obtained funding from the Bloomberg media company. Howe and Goldstein have their own law firm and receive significant contributions to the blog from attorneys at their firm as well as law students at Stanford and Harvard.