

Marketing Technology

Making Connections, Keeping Clients

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Social Networks to Firmwide Collaboration: Insights from Law Firm Marketing Technology Leaders

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Despite many recent economic challenges, some law firms have found opportunities to leverage marketing technology with a focus on supporting and growing the business development efforts of their attorneys. A key factor in the success of such initiatives is a meaningful and productive relationship between the IT and marketing functions.

Among some of the top trends identified during conversations with technologists and marketers are the importance of firmwide initiatives, including SharePoint intranets to improve information sharing, enterprise relationship management (ERM) systems to better identify and grow key relationships and attorney-driven Web communications — including blogs and minisites — for improved audience reach and business development.

COMING NEXT

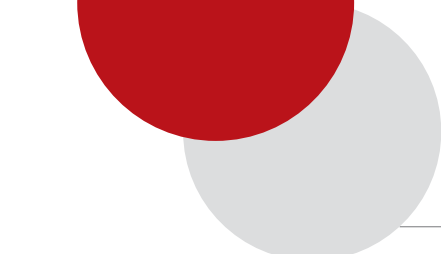
Social media are on everyone's mind. This is not surprising, considering that sites like Twitter have around 23 million members, according to *The Economist*. But law firms struggle to grasp the

opportunities social media present. The key, according to law firm leaders, is finding solutions that work for attorneys. Chief information officers (CIOs) and chief marketing officers (CMOs) in the legal field, many of whom encourage a close relationship between IT and marketing, are beginning to translate the advantages of social media and networks into terms legal eagles can understand. Social media aren't the only way for attorneys to increase their visibility, but integrating these tools with enterprise systems could boost a firm's business development efforts.

KEEPING ATTORNEY INTEGRATION SIMPLE

Judi Flournoy is the CIO at Loeb & Loeb LLP, based in Los Angeles. She has 16 years of law firm experience. When selecting marketing technologies, Judi said Loeb & Loeb's CMO often takes the lead with IT in a supporting role.

Judi noted that marketing technology programs, including client relationship management (CRM), can fail when attorneys are expected to use billable hours maintaining a system for marketing purposes. "It's just not going to happen — they may keep their personal contact lists up-to-date, but that's about as much as you're going to get out of them."



Loeb & Loeb leverages an ERM program to unearth key relationships without requiring any action from attorneys.

An opportunity presented itself for Judi to communicate the benefits of the ERM system to Loeb's attorneys when a partner was scheduled to attend a seminar. "We used our ERM system to identify who in our firm knew who was going to be at the event, based on the list of potential attendees," she said. "If, by using ERM technology, we're able to identify potential contacts that other Loeb attorneys may know and can provide introductions to them at an upcoming event, that's a huge opportunity we couldn't have gotten any other way."

A similar IT and marketing partnership occurs with Loeb's Microsoft SharePoint intranet. "LoebLink essentially identifies who you are and what your organizational role is, and provides you with content relevant to it," said Judi. Loeb's partners are presented with practice-specific information in the form of a dashboard interface, along with marketing information from the Loeb.com website, pulled directly into LoebLink from SharePoint.

Integrating enterprise applications with social media is just a step away. "We've looked at Facebook, and marketing has a LinkedIn presence," said Judi. "A lot of the firm's attorneys are already on LinkedIn, and it'll be interesting to see how they leverage those technologies." She added that as social media mature lawyers will better understand the value of using them to communicate ideas to clients and prospects.

TOO BIG TO IGNORE

George Gazdick is CIO at Squire, Sanders & Dempsey L.L.P., one of the largest global law firms with 32 offices spanning 15 countries. He has more than 20 years of experience in legal IT. Occasionally, a marketing technology makes an impression on the Squire Sanders technology team and is introduced to marketing. "But, more often, I'd say our business development group comes to us with a need or a problem or an interest, and we work with them to help find a solution," George said.

Work is under way to build a more comprehensive view for practice teams on the firm's intranet. Like Judi, George understands the importance of unifying information in a single portal for sharing and collaboration across the firm. "We use SharePoint as our primary intranet platform. We also use it for a number of client extranets and for legal service team collaboration spaces. We're working with SharePoint to build what we consider are comprehensive views of our practice areas, the industries our clients work in, our clients themselves and the relationships we can leverage," he said.

George said law firms can't afford to ignore social media for connecting people and building communities. Squire Sanders treats its blogs as thought leadership tools, for example. "Who knows," said Gazdick, "even Twitter may find its way into the law firm tool kit someday. Technologies that help to integrate data and knowledge using mash-ups and other techniques that help you provide a comprehensive view of industries, clients and geographies will really help us better understand our clients and anticipate their needs for legal services."

However, George acknowledges that those most likely to benefit from social media will probably only be swayed over time. "I don't know that you'll see people anxiously chasing them, as opposed to accepting them as they edge their way into the enterprise environment," he said.

EMBRACING THE OPPORTUNITIES

It isn't only CIOs promoting the partnership of marketing and IT and their combined role as proponents of marketing technology. Kim Perret is Director of Marketing and Business Development at Hunton & Williams, based in Washington, D.C. She has more than 15 years of experience in legal services marketing.

"Whenever we're planning a major firm or practice implementation, or even a product selection related to marketing or business development, it's a joint venture," said Kim. Employing an emerging trend, Hunton & Williams has a marketing technology team that focuses on helping attorneys leverage technology to communicate with key audiences. "Our team is focused on CRM, Web, electronic communications, webinar technologies and communications," she said, "They serve as the coordinators working with the business development team and liaise with IT for more involved projects. This results in really great working relationships all around."

Persuading attorneys to invest time in generating content, recording podcasts or chairing video conferences can be challenging. "We do some hand-holding, but a number of our lawyers are very tech savvy," said Kim. "For example, one of Hunton's largest and best-known practices is our privacy and data security practice. That group is really at the forefront of using technology, because if we're advising clients regarding best practices, we have to 'walk the walk.'"

Developing performance metrics can improve Web communications, allowing firms to fine-tune their message and increase the return on investment propositions, something traditional law firm marketing techniques often fail to deliver. Kim said she has found that reporting on electronic marketing initiatives creates an appetite for the newer technologies. "We started working with one group and they asked, 'What else can we do?' We gave them ideas and it built from there. The metrics provide a tangible measure of how successful their efforts are. Our lawyers are seeing that it makes a difference to understand the impact of the technology and to be prepared to leverage it in an effective way."

Hunton & Williams' groups that have niche websites or blogs receive monthly reports about their unique visitors, popular search terms and click-through rates. "For the e-communications we send out, we do a report back immediately to the group that includes information regarding bouncebacks, unsubscribe rates, unique visits, forwards and click-throughs," said Kim.

The firm is already dovetailing blogging with other social media. "One of our privacy lawyers is on Twitter. He has followers, and his tweets drive visitors to the blog," Kim said. Kim cautions that existing technologies should not be abandoned in favor of social media, but rather, viewed as part of the ongoing trend to expand outreach. Said Kim, "Webinars, webcasts and podcasts are a really great way to get to a much larger audience in a time-effective, resource-conscious way."

In conclusion, legal CIOs and CMOs underscore the importance of a close working relationship between marketing and technology if the full benefits of ERM and corporate intranets are to be realized. And in the future, these firms will also incorporate technologies such as social media to augment their marketing efforts. **ILTA**

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR HARNESSING MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

1. **Provide teams with metrics on your e-marketing activities. Nothing drives adoption like measurable signs of success.**
2. **Keep track of your attorneys' Twitter followers, clients and prospective clients. Cross-reference with ERM to find and leverage firm relationships to those individuals.**
3. **Encourage the use of LinkedIn and Facebook groups. Use them to promote events and drive traffic to blogs and corporate websites.**
4. **Get attorneys to tweet about new blog posts on Twitter. This can drive traffic to your site and help to promote podcasts, videos, events, webinars and groups.**
5. **Don't ignore the power of newsletters, print and "old media." Aim for two-way traffic between old and new. Remember: social media power users "re-tweet" blog links and make news go viral.**

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