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Attorney 2.Oh! Leverage The Web To Land Your Next Attorney Job

The rise of social recruiting is changing the rules for job seekers. Do you know what your digital footprint looks like?

By Tracy Thrower Conyers

There is no question that Web 2.0, with its inexpensive tools and exponential reach has changed much of the way business is conducted these days. Recruiting is no exception.

Today's graduating law students may not even remember Web 1.0, but in early web days, web information was a one-way flow of information that website owners published, and then sat back and hoped visitors would find.

The next iteration of the web – “Web 2.0” – was much more interactive, and invited conversation and development of community. Early sites like MySpace (known as a gathering place for entertainment-minded people) and Facebook (known as a gathering place for friends and family to have digital conversations and share photos) contributed to the social revolution.

Flash forward to today and “social media” is ubiquitous. Recruiting is a natural context for encouraging inexpensive social conversation –

hiring entities can showcase their companies and advertise their jobs. Employee candidates can shop opportunities in great detail.

Lawyers and law firms, with their heavy emphasis on historic precedent and conservative natures, have been slower to adopt social recruiting to the same extent as their corporate cousins, but they are increasingly coming to the social media party.

What does this mean for attorney job seekers? It means that you ***must, must, must*** (did I mention “must?”) pay attention to your digital footprint and take affirmative steps to grow and manage that footprint. Employers are either looking for you, or where they already know you, they are checking you out with a “social media background check” prior to extending an offer.

Taking Aim

Some of us already have a footprint that we're either unaware of or ignoring. Take the case of Justin P. (not his real name), a late 20-something patent agent that I presented to an AmLaw 30 firm.

I hadn't yet started digitally vetting candidates at the time, but when I put his name and email address into my Google contacts list, Google diligently fetched a matching profile picture for me from the web. I'd never seen the system do this, and I nearly fell out of my chair when the contact record auto-populated with a photo of a shirtless young man waiving a beer. Amusing picture, but surely not one that my stuffy AmLaw 30 client was going to like.

When I mentioned the photo, Justin immediately knew the one and sheepishly told me he'd “for-

gotten” of its existence. That photo would likely have surfaced during a later social media background check.

Jobs are hard enough to come by these days without putting yourself through the whole process on a particular job, and then finding yourself rejected because a past indiscretion surfaces on the web.

What if you know for a fact that you spent the first 25 years of your life in the library and there can't possibly be a digital skeleton in your closet? Do you need to pay attention to the advice in this article? Let's just say this – if the job comes down to two equal candidates, and one has demonstrated marketing savvy by building a positive digital footprint, the job goes to the marketer.

Why? At the end of the day, law is still a business and lawyers are starting to recognize the importance of web marketing savvy in client acquisition and retention. If two candidates are equal or “equal-ish,” online marketing savvy and experience are premium tools for you to bring to the party.

Is digital reputation building expensive or time consuming? It is definitely not expensive and it's scalable, meaning that you can start small, and grow your reputation over time by adding more tools and strategies. Junior attorneys already have written resumes and that's half the battle in starting the process.

Where to start with building your digital reputation? I advocate the “AIM Model” for digital reputations – Assess, Influence & Monitor.

Assessing Your Digital Reputation

The first assessment step is defining your endgame. Who is your audience and what do you want them to know? In the case of junior attorneys looking for jobs, the audience is who you see yourself working for, whether that's a small firm, large firm, in-house law department, non-profit entity, governmental agency or the like.

What do you want your audience to know? You want them to know that you're a new, ambitious, hardworking attorney with x, y and z special talents. As you work to define your audience, what that audience is looking for (based on research, not wishful thinking), and what you offer that is attractive to your audience, you are developing your “marketing statement.”

The idea of “marketing” might be a foreign concept to junior lawyers, but trust me as a longtime attorney and legal recruiter when I tell you that marketing and mindful self-promotion are skills critical to your ultimate success as an attorney. At some point, law schools will wake up and start teaching you these concepts.

In the perfect world, you'll be able to articulate your marketing message in one or two sentences, commonly referred to as an “elevator pitch.” If you haven't heard this expression before, it refers to having the length of time it takes to ride an elevator to introduce yourself to somebody important to you, including your value proposition (*i.e.*, what makes you valuable to your audience).

Here is an example: “My name is Jane Doe, and I'm a recent UCLA law school grad interested in using my background as a software engineer to join a small, busy IP practice.”

What does this say about Jane and her value proposition? It says that she is disciplined enough to get into and obtain a law degree from a highly respected law school, and that she has special skills that IP attorneys desire in associates.

Her “key” words are “Jane Doe” (because Jane is marketing herself as the “product”), “UCLA law school grad” (descriptive of Jane and particularly important if she is addressing a fellow member of that community or another audience that values UCLA's law school), “software engineer” (because this is a valuable skill set to IP practitioners) and “small, busy IP practice” (members of this audience are Jane's primary targets for her message).

Write your own pitch down and circle words that are “key” to your pitch. If what you articulate doesn’t seem quite right, don’t worry about it. “Sit” with it for a few days and try again. Try to keep your finished product very simple and, whatever you do, don’t let striving for perfection prevent you from moving forward.

The reason for articulating a marketing message and identifying key words or “keywords” will become clearer when we discuss the Influence aspect of the AIM Model, but this part of the process is critical for focused marketing. The less focused your marketing, the more effort you have to put out to obtain a similar result. “Focused and efficient” should be your marketing mantra.

The second step in assessing your digital reputation is to get a snapshot of your “today” footprint. Do this by putting different variations of your name *in quotation marks* into one or two of the search engines. At a minimum, use Google. To be extra conservative, try Bing and Yahoo! as well.

What do you see? Nothing? That’s easy to address. Unflattering photos? That’s usually easy to fix. Somebody with a similar name? That might require a more aggressive strategy to distinguish yourself from that person, but it can be done without too much heavy lifting. The goal is to influence and develop whatever you see into something that supports your focused marketing message.

Influencing Your Digital Reputation

You will never own your own digital reputation! You can only influence it.

Read those last two sentences three more times. They are that important.

What do I mean by “own” a reputation? Just as with offline life, outsiders can come along and hurt (or help) your digital reputation. A spiteful ex-girlfriend or any other random person can digitally post negative information about you (or

somebody with a name like you) and it can turn up under a search for your name in the search engines.

So how do we control what we **can** control (*aka* “influence”)? By acquiring as much digital real estate as possible where we can put up our desired (focused) message.

Each little acre of digital real estate on a different platform that you acquire gives you the ability to snag one spot in the list of results that come up when somebody searches your name in the search engines (SERPs or “Search Engine Results Pages”).

To see an example of this, google my name “Tracy Thrower Conyers” (don’t forget the quotation marks) and watch what comes up. You’ll see my name in connection with tons of different little digital “houses” – some that I control and many that I don’t.

One critical side point should be made here related to our “focused and efficient” mantra. Pick **one** version of your name and stick with it professionally. If your name is Richard, for example, don’t start developing your reputation under the nickname of “Rick” just because that’s the name you go by now. Take a minute right now and think about the name you expect your clients and colleagues to use. To start with one name and switch it later will result in unnecessary dilution of your efforts.

Getting back to our influencing strategy, what digital real estate do I recommend for lawyers just starting their professional careers?

At a minimum, I highly recommend that you register a domain name related to your professional marketing name. If you do nothing with this domain name, at least you’ll have it locked up for later expansion of your digital empire. You should also set up an email address attached to this domain name for your professional marketing.

For more information on how to register domain names and set up email accounts, go to www.PluggedInLawyer.com/domain-name-branding-for-lawyers.

Next, set up a couple of profile pages on prominent social networking sites. You don't "own" this digital real estate (unlike having your own website where you "own" the site), but you do control the message you contribute.

For creating profiles that rank well in the SERPs, I recommend Google Profiles at <http://profiles.google.com>, Google Plus at <http://plus.google.com>, LinkedIn at www.Linkedin.com and About.me at www.about.me.

As an aside, About.me, is one of my new favorites. Not only is it a place where I can aggregate links to my other digital real estate, About.me also partners with a printing company called Moo.com. With just a few clicks, you can get free business cards (you pay shipping) with your contact information and a printed QR Code so that smartphones with bar reader apps can read your code and take their owners directly to your About.me profile page.

If you're wondering what a QR Code looks like, look at my bio at the end of this article. And yes, you definitely need business cards as a job seeker. Hand them out everywhere.

When setting up your profiles, make liberal use of your "keywords" discussed above. Equally important, don't add any information to your profiles that doesn't support (or worse, contradicts) your concise (focused) marketing statement.

Let's say, for example, that Jane Doe is a marathon runner. Should she include that in her profiles? If her target audience (the firms she wants to work for) can appreciate the discipline and dedication that go into marathon running, then she should add it. On the other hand, if her target audience is more apt to interpret this activity as something that will prevent her from

working 80 hours a week – and work weeks like that are prized by the firm – she better keep that activity to herself. Analyze every piece of information you add to your profiles in a similar manner (*i.e.*, with your target audience in mind).

Why do I recommend the particular profile sites above? All of them rank well in the search engines and will help push your name to the top of the SERPs when somebody searches your name. LinkedIn has the added importance of being the platform where the most social recruiting takes place.

If you want to put your digital reputation on steroids, I advise using the domain name you registered to create a social media resume. For more information on how to do this, go to www.PluggedInLawyer.com/social-media-resumes-for-lawyers.

What about all your hard work building and influencing your digital reputation after you land the job you're seeking? Your efforts now are a smart investment in your future. Your keywords might change as you evolve your focus to demonstrating thought leadership and start marketing to potential clients, but the formula is still the same – laser focus on your name and mindfully chosen keywords for a well-defined audience.

Summarizing Influence

If you've followed my advice to this point, you've defined your digital reputation goals, you've assessed your "today" picture and you've started to influence your existing reputation. It won't take long before you can google your name and start to see the seeds of your chosen digital reputation taking root. And because you've been so diligent in your use of keywords, you'll see a consistent message presented.

As time goes by, you'll want to add more and more digital content to the web aligned with your evolving marketing statement and audience. You'll start writing articles, blogging, micro-

blogging, joining social conversations and otherwise developing your role as a thought leader in your niche.

This might sound like a lot of work, but this is occurring over the course of your entire career.

Besides, it's kind of fun to be master of your own message.

Don't Forget To Monitor & Maintain

If you do nothing else but read this article, please pay attention to this next piece of advice. Even if you do everything described above, please likewise take heed.

Set up Google Alerts for your name!

Go to www.google.com/alerts and set up email notifications that will let you know if your name is referenced on the web in the future. Personally, I have these set up for myself, my husband and my young daughter, as well as my employer and everybody else whose web fortunes can impact my personal reputation.

If anybody is so much as whispering about you on the web, you want to know about it. If something nice is being said, go say "thank you." If something less flattering is being said, take appropriate curative steps.

Set these alerts up for all possible variations of your name, including maiden names. Have the alerts sent to an email address that you check regularly.

Besides setting up the alerts to monitor your name, there are also maintenance steps to consider in building your rep. Calendar a quarterly reminder to tour your online digital assets to assess whether they still accurately reflect your marketing message and target audience, and make changes accordingly.

Good Luck & Get Started

Following the steps outlined in this article will get you off to a great start in affirmatively building your digital reputation, and put you miles ahead of many of your fellow new lawyers. There are big changes afoot in the legal industry and digital marketing savvy has never been more important. Jump in now with both feet!

"See" you on the web!

For more information on building keyword-rich social networking profiles, go to www.PluggedInLawyer.com/take-out-social.



After 15 years as a complex business litigator, Tracy Thrower Conyers took an accidental detour as an entrepreneur into the shiny and new world of online marketing for real estate professionals in 2002. Later she rejoined the legal profession as a legal recruiter specializing in the placement of tech-related attorneys, partners and groups.

In 2009, Tracy launched PluggedIn Lawyer.com, an online community where lawyers can learn about social media marketing and digital reputation building in the legal industry. Tracy welcomes questions and comments about this article at tracy@pluggedinlawyer.com.



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