

Technology on the Fly, Part 2

My Experience with Internet Networking and Marketing

By [Bradley B. Wrightsel, Esq.](#)

This is Part Two of an article that first appeared in last month's Bar NewsBytes, focusing on my personal experiences in learning to navigate the world of online marketing. The focus of this article is not on what might be described as more traditional, time-tested methods of marketing; rather, it covers an array of fairly recent technological methods via the internet. And, I am, by no means, an expert with any of these methods. I am simply an attorney in a boutique firm¹ that has experimented with these approaches, and I'd like to share my experiences.

One comment that I felt that I needed to add to the second part of this article is how interconnected these technologies can be. For example, I shared [Part One](#) of this article with my social network and the CBA group on LinkedIn. I received in the neighborhood of 65 comments via email (all of them valuable). At least three people posted a link to the article through Twitter. And check this out – one person located in Vancouver, BC included the article on [his blog](#). All the while, our [website](#) and [blog](#) hits were record high. On top of that, while I was originally prepared to conclude in this article that the benefits are intangible, we have received two case referrals from social networks.

III. Social Networks – This is a relatively new concept to me. These sites are website communities, where you join, set up a profile, and connect with other members. You likely have received in your email inbox an occasional invite to join someone's work network on LinkedIn or friend network on Facebook. If you are like me, you probably let those sit in your inbox for a period of time, trying to decide what to do with them. Eventually, my curiosity got the better of me. Not long ago, we discussed social networks at a [Columbus Bar Association \(CBA\)](#) retreat. James Phillips² led a discussion on the various websites. The conclusion, at that point, was that they were interesting, but it was unclear how one would benefit from joining in. Many CBA members have joined LinkedIn, a business-related social network, as an experiment.

A. Cost – There is no cost to join these social networks.

B. Features of Selected Sites – The following is a sampling of such sites:

1. [LinkedIn](#) – Is a good place to start. It is a career-related site and is meant to have a professional appearance.

a. [Features](#) – The site is based around your profile that you create. I tried to keep [my profile](#) basic and professional. I do recommend taking the time to fully complete your profile. The site is user-friendly. There are privacy settings that you can use. If you want, you can receive email updates regarding the people you are connected to and the groups you join. There are many worthwhile

¹ My law firm, Wrightsel & Wrightsel, consists of five employees, two of whom are attorneys.

² [James E. Phillips, Esq.](#)

groups that you can join. For example, the [CBA has a group](#) that is worth joining. I have joined groups related to my area of practice, i.e., estate planning and probate.

b. Profile – Needless to say, your profile should be professional. I think it should also include a photograph. You can have one professional photograph and use it for all of these social networks and your blog and website too. You should include your areas of practice, so people know what it is that you do.

c. Connections – One of the main points of these sites is networking. As I mentioned at the outset, it is often difficult to find the time to network. This is a convenient way to keep in touch with people in your network. It is also a good way to map out your network. You can break your network down into groups of professionals that you deal with on a regular basis, i.e., lawyers, bankers, realtors, accountants, bar association staff, etc. By breaking down your network, you may see areas where you might benefit by making an effort to meet other professionals. There are some people on LinkedIn that try to connect to as many people as possible, including complete strangers. I currently do not see the advantage to this approach. There may be advantages to adding numerous contacts, but I would not recommend starting out in that way.³ These sites will allow you to get started by uploading your email contacts and selecting the contacts whom you want to invite.

d. Recommendations – You can recommend colleagues on LinkedIn. I think this is a great feature. (We are not currently comfortable putting client testimonials on our website.) These recommendations are nice because they are written and posted by that person and not you.

e. Groups - There are many worthwhile groups that you can join. You can even start a group. For example, there is the [Columbus Bar Association](#) group that you can join. I have joined groups related to my area of practice and geographical location. [Linked Columbus](#) is a very active group regarding all things Columbus. Let me give you one example of how I used a Group to form a connection. An attorney in New York City had a question on international estate planning. I shared some practice materials with that attorney. That attorney was appreciative is now a connection and has indicated a willingness to refer any Ohio matters that may come to their firm.

2. [ABA Legally Minded](#) – Another social network site for people in the legal profession is the ABA's Legally Minded. It is a free site that I decided to join. It is easy to sign up. I have not been real active on this site. The ABA seems to be seeking feedback and is trying to make it a

³ As you build your network, you may see an advantage to adding connections from your various groups in other cities. These connections could be referral sources in the future.

useful site. My [profile](#) is very basic. The communications between members seems to be pretty minimal at this early stage.

3. [Facebook](#) – I was having a conversation with a friend on marketing, and he asked me why I was not on Facebook. I fought the idea of joining Facebook, because I perceived it as being too youth dominated. I now know that I was wrong and have re-connected with old friends, classmates, relatives, etc. One connection just emailed me and said that she had been looking for an attorney and had no idea that I was a lawyer. Frankly, many of my classmates did not know that I was an attorney. Again, these are people that you want to and should keep in touch with, but often feel that you do not have the time.

a. [Features](#) – I am newer to Facebook and I am still not familiar with all the features. There are some similarities between Facebook and LinkedIn, but the layout is different. It is meant to be informal, which I think means you need to be more careful as a professional. Before you become active on Facebook, learn how to use the [privacy settings](#). It has not happened often, but I have had to delete a few items posted by other people.

b. [Profile](#) – [My profile](#) is still a work in progress. My one comment is to keep it professional (sorry if I sound like a broken record). I also stay away from politics and other potentially sensitive topics.

c. [Connections](#) – The Facebook social network seems to be better suited to connecting with people you know fairly well. People you would say “hello” to on the street. It is a more casual network.

d. [Groups](#) - I have not currently joined any groups on Facebook, except the ABA.

4. [My Space](#) – I have not joined My Space. I have not been able to escape the impression that this is for a younger generation. I do not know that from experience. One of my foreign contacts on Facebook told me that My Space is widely used in Europe. From articles that I have read, I know that some attorneys are active on My Space.

C. Ongoing Maintenance and Updating – As stated previously, the social network websites are free, but there is a time cost. People tend to spend a lot of time on these sites, checking messages, connecting with people, and reading and posting content. Although it may be easier said than done, I would try to set aside specific times to visit these sites. I also set up a matter on our billing system to keep track of my non-billable time. I have also set up my Outlook email settings so that these emails go into a separate personal folder.

D. Our Current Status – As I mentioned, I am new to the social networks, but I see many benefits.

IV. [Twitter](#) – If you look at the social media map provided in Part One of this article, you will see that it categorizes Twitter under micro-blogging. This is because Twitter is meant to limit your entry to 140 characters or less. These are meant to be very short posts, sometimes containing links, that answer the question “what are you doing?” While

I had heard of Twitter, I had no idea what Twitter was until Anne Leonard-Palmer⁴ at the CBA provided me with an article. I decided to experiment, in the same way as I did with these other technologies, by signing up.

A. Cost – There is no cost to join Twitter.

B. Basic Features – You start by signing up and creating a profile (sound familiar?). I have a very basic [profile](#). You are then free to start posting.

C. Following Members – Here is the thing, anyone can follow you on Twitter and you can follow anyone on Twitter. For example, I follow Tina Fey just for the entertainment factor. If you want, you can follow President Obama or Arnold Schwarzenegger. Generally, other members follow your “tweets” if they are interested in you or your topics. You do not necessarily need to follow the same people who follow you. There is a Twitter culture and there is Twitter etiquette, but you should still decide whether you will be interested in what that person has to say. You can also follow companies posts, e.g., Apple and the ABA. Many members are excellent sources of information. You will receive email notices that people are following you.

D. Status - I am not very active on Twitter presently. It seems like a good method of staying in contact if you frequently post by a mobile device. I have an iPhone and there are free applications for Twitter (as well as LinkedIn and Facebook). You will also want to download free software called TweetDeck. I have not messed with it enough to understand the settings. The one thing that is appealing to me is that you can post a link to internet content, including your own and other’s blog posts.⁵ You can add a link to Twitter on your blog and website.

V. LISTSERV Forums – LISTSERV is an automated email service, where you do not have to enter all of the email addresses of your recipients.

A. Cost – There is no cost to join most LISTSERV forums if you are a member of the group or association. For example, the CBA uses LISTSERV to communicate with committee members.

B. Basic Features – If you sign up for the group, you will receive emails from the group and can send emails to the group. It is an easy way to share information or ask group members a question.

VI. RSS Feed/RSS Reader – RSS is short for “Really Simple Syndication”. It is a web feed format that allows you to subscribe to websites that are frequently updated.

A. Cost – There is no cost to subscribe.

B. Basic Features – You can select the website content that you want delivered to your computer.

I think that it is important for solo practitioners and law firms to be familiar with these various internet methods of marketing and networking. As long as you are cognizant of the amount of time you dedicate to these endeavors, the benefit should be far outweighed by the cost. Additionally, these methods are all mobile friendly, meaning

⁴ [Anne Leonard-Palmer](#), Project Director, [ColumbusLawyerFinder.com](#)

⁵ Although there may be some interest in random posts, I likely will not be the person who posts things like “I’m taking a shower now” or “I just had great Kung Poa Chicken for lunch”.

that you can network from anywhere. Our firm experience and my own personal experiences have been positive, and we will continue to develop a presence on the internet.⁶

⁶ Am I missing something in this article? If so, please let me know at bbwrightsel@rohio.com.