Web 2.0 T i p s & T r i c k s *for improved Public Relations*

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Below are the pieces of Web 2.0 organized from most to least useful, plus ways to measure your effectiveness and actions you can take to get started.

The Pieces:

Blogs – Short for weblog, these are small websites that can be used to post and syndicate timely content. They're great for reaching niche audiences and can also be used internally in a firm to promote understanding between service areas and foster cross-selling. Two of the most popular blog platforms are WordPress (www.wordpress.org) which requires you to find your own web hosting but allows you more design flexibility and TypePad (www.typepad.com) which will host your blog for a montly fee. You can also use Blogger (www.blogger.com) which is a free blog tool from Google but looks slightly less polished than the other two. Most blogs are designed to be public but they can be password protected.

Social Networks – Facebook and LinkedIn are the two top networks (www.facebook.com and www.linkedin.com). Facebook has a younger audience and is good for recruitement. LinkedIn is a professional network. You can use LinkedIn to recommend people in your network and you can ask people in your network to recommend you. Although Facebook is less formal, make sure firm members with a page that links to your firm are following your brand guidelines.

Social Networks for Lawyers – Legal OnRamp (www.legalonramp.com) has been getting good attention in the past two years. It's a site for lawyers to connect with each other and share information. LawLink (www.lawlink.com) is another growing network.

LinkedIn Website – Make sure on your firm members' profile pages they not only enter your firm as their current place of employment but also include a link to it by the Websites category.

LinkedIn Answers – To start answering questions in your field on LinkedIn, create a profile and then look at the top nav menu where you'll see an Answers link. Top answers are given more priority on the page and make your profile stand out more.

Vidcasts/Podcasts – The most common site for web videos is YouTube. You can upload your video there (particularly if it's a recruitment video) but be aware that it's a format where anyone can comment. For starters it's best to host your video or audio content on your own website and link to it from other sites like blogs and online magazines.

Social Bookmarking – If you have a blog or site that you want included on the social bookmarking sites (like digg.com or de.licio.us) you can either go to those sites for a button to add to your web or blog pages – or just go to www.addthis.com where they've created a single widget with the social bookmarks on it. (Don't sweat about this unless you're already creating great content in a blog or similar format.)

Microsites – These are small websites used for niche marketing. They're preferable over blogs if you have lead nurturing software hooked up with them to capture lead information from people viewing the site. These are not popular in accounting marketing yet, but if you're curious Genoo (www.genoo.com) is a company that offers microsite creation with lead nurturing.

Twitter – This is a platform that allows people to send messages of 140 characters (yes, characters) or less via the web or mobile devices (like phones). It's great for chatting at a conference or following up-to-the-minute briefs about your favorite news. We don't see any ROI for law marketing in Twitter yet.

Measurement:

Don't try to do all of these! I've listed all of these so you have a menu to choose from. Pick the couple that are most relevant to the goals of your PR efforts.

Xinu – This is a very fun site (www.xinureturns.com) that shows 30 possible metrics for your web presence including page ranks, links back to your site, subscribers and much more. Just for kicks go out to this site and type in your site address.

Calculating ROI – When you're measuring the ROI of a Web 2.0 PR effort remember to include the cost of all time spent on it by members of your firm. This is often a hidden cost of Web 2.0 projects. It can be hard to measure the "return" portion of ROI: be alert for prospects and customers talking about the information they found on your site or blog. As with the relationships measure below, consider a survey to find out who's using your Web 2.0 efforts and if they're resulting in sales.

Conversation Index – This is a measure of the number of comments you get per blog post (whether on your blog or as a guest on someone else's). An average of one comment per post is good. Less than that and you're at the dangerous low ebb of relevance, more than that and you're probably rising in the blog rankings.

Rankings – Speaking of blog rankings, you can look on blog ranking sites like Technorati (technorati.com) or Google a phrase like "top accounting blogs" to find sites that rank the top blogs in your industry or niche.

Statistics – You can use services like Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics/index.html) to determine who's visiting your site, where they're coming from and where they're spending the most time. This is very valuable for determining what you're doing right so you can do more of it.

Relationships – Web 2.0 can be used to build stronger relationships with existing clients. You can measure this with the conversation index mentioned above, but it's also a good idea to offer your clients and website or blog users a survey to find out more of their experience with your efforts.

Reputation & Quality – This measure looks at what people say when they talk about you. Rather than counting how often you're mentioned in blogs and industry conversations, this measure counts how often the mention is on message for your firm's key messages.

Influential Ideas – If one of your partners says a catchy law phrase in a blog interview and a few days later you see it repeated in other locations in the industry conversation, you've just won at this measure.

Your Next Steps:

LinkedIn Q&A – Find one person in your firm who is an expert and a good writer but doesn't like the networking kind of business development. Invite him/her to create a profile on LinkedIn and then answer a question in their field about once a week. Also have them email you their answer so you can re-use it in other locations.

Leverage existing print media – Make sure all your print articles are linked or summarized on your website. Look for ways to reuse this content, whether you summarize it for a blog article or use it as a reason to send out an email blast inviting clients to check out your updated News page.

Leverage existing events – Record speeches in audio or video format and make parts of them available on your website.

Leverage technology – Set up a blog reader like Google Reader (www.google.com/reader) to deliver blog stories to your computer as they're published. If you have a few industry blogs that you follow, you'll familiarize yourself with how to place articles and interviews in popular blogs.

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