Why should a lawyer publish a blog, participate in “social media” websites like Facebook and LinkedIn, write or read 140-character messages on the micro-blogging service Twitter, post law review articles on the Social Science Research Network, or place briefs and newsletter articles on JD Supra? And why would we do this for free — after all, isn’t this giving away our work product and don’t clients pay us to do this kind of stuff? As the old saying goes, “give and you shall receive.” Law firm marketing expert Jayne Navarre recently recounted this story:

“Robert H. Thomas has been practicing law in the State of Hawaii for 30 years. During that time he has published articles, given presentations, been active in the American Bar Association, and hit the local cocktail circuit as often as possible. Marketing was steady but slow growing. Then in 2006 he published his blog, inversecondemnation.com, and everything changed. Inquiries accelerated and his workload intensified. Today he traces almost all of his new business and all of his contact with journalists, including national and global media interests, back to his law blog.

He landed two Fortune 100 companies as clients — no small task — as a direct result of his blogging. They did not contact him to submit a proposal; they contacted him to do the work. They found his blog on a Google search, and after reading his posts they knew he was the lawyer they needed. Why? Because reading a lawyer’s blog is sort of like getting to hear them think out loud.”

Contrary to his prior networking experiences at Bar association events, after his blog gained traction people began approaching him as if they already

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**Groundbreakers**

By Robert H. Thomas

**The Social Lawyer: New Media Strategies For Marketing Your Eminent Domain Practice**

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Robert H. Thomas is a land use and appellate lawyer, and focuses on regulatory takings, eminent domain, water rights, and voting rights cases. He has tried cases and appeals in Hawaii, California, and the federal courts. He is the Hawaii member of Owners’ Counsel of America, a national network of the most experienced eminent domain and property rights lawyers. Membership in OCA is by invitation only, and is limited to a single attorney from each state. Robert is also the Managing Attorney for the Pacific Legal Foundation Hawaii Center, a non-profit legal foundation dedicated to protecting property rights and individual liberties. He is listed in Best Lawyers in Eminent Domain and Condemnation Law, and Land Use & Zoning Law, and in Super Lawyers in Eminent Domain, Land Use/Zoning, and Government/Cities/ Municipalities. He can be reached at rht@hawaiilawyer.com.
knew him. They read his blog, knew his voice, knew his work, making him much more approachable. His networking effectiveness increased noticeably."

"Journalists started calling him. He now knows most every important contact in the local media as well as many national and international journalists because he blogs, Tweets, and participates in LinkedIn, the popular business social network. At first he fed them background on cases that were not his, but as he nurtured the relationships he became a trusted resource. Now when Fox News is looking around Hawaii for a story, they contact him and ask for his stories.

"Not everyone’s story will mirror Robert’s experience. Success in any marketing or business development initiative will vary, as it is generally proportionate to the hard work and time an attorney is willing to invest. Still, in Robert’s case, that one change — moving from static tools to dynamic tools available on the social Web — made a transformational difference in his ability to develop new contacts and ultimately new business. Robert’s story makes a strong argument for change."


In a short piece entitled Leveraging Social Media published in a local business magazine last year, I explained why lawyers in our firm blog, and how it can level the playing field to allow a single lawyer to reach a wide audience: “Take note, small and medium business owners: blogs, Twitter, and other ‘social media’ aren’t for kids — they’re tools for taking on the big guys. Learn how to use them, and you can leverage your lack of bureaucracy to communicate directly with potential clients, the media, and your community.”


We analyze court decisions and track new developments. Blogs are more timely than static websites, and also allows us to interact directly with our readers. Blogging has helped garner local and national media attention for cases, and improves the quality of the reporting by giving the journalists an insider’s view on the story.

Twitter limits you to 140-character messages, broadcasts instantly, allowing you to enter an ongoing conversation with the “thought leaders” in your areas. Many CEOs blog, and it seems that half of the journalists and politicians in town have joined Twitter. Some tips:

• First, every culture has rules; social media is no different. Listen in and ask questions, then seek out others of like interests — locally, nationally, or worldwide;
• Second, don’t just write about business. Transparency is expected; people want to know about you, not just what you do. It is “social” media after all;
• Third — and most importantly — share your passion.

Come, join us.

Favorite Law Blogs

- Atlantic Yards Report (Brooklyn eminent domain abuse and related topics), atlanticyardsreport.blogspot.com/
- California Eminent Domain Report (focusing on all things about takings in California), www.californiaeminentdomainreport.com
- Community Benefits Agreements (everything you wanted to know about CBAs), communitybenefits.blogspot.com
• Drug and Device Law (mass torts from a defense perspective; nothing eminent domain related here, but a good example of how to do a useful and widely read law blog), http://druganddevicelaw.blogspot.com

• Gideon’s Trumpet (listen in on Professor Kananner’s thoughts on eminent domain, regulatory takings, and other topics), www.gideonstrumpet.info

• National Eminent Domain Blog (Alan Ackerman’s blog on the latest takings, large and small), www.nationaleminentdomain.com

• New Jersey Condemnation Law (Anthony Del la Pelle on takings in New Jersey and beyond), www.njcondemnationlaw.com

• The Eminent Domain Law Blog (Owners’ Counsel of America blogs condemnation and takings issues), www.ownerscounsel.blogspot.com

• The Volokh Conspiracy (lawprof’s blogging on a wide variety of topics, including Public Use), www.volokh.com

• Hawaii Ocean Law (Mark Murakami’s blog on maritime and environmental law), www.hawaiioceanlaw.com

• Insurance Law Hawaii (Tred Eyerly on coverage issues), www.insurancelawhawaii.com

• Record on Appeal (Rebecca Copeland blogs about the science and art of appellate law), www.recordonappeal.com

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