



Groundbreakers

By Robert H. Thomas

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

Why should a lawyer publish a blog, participate in “social media” web sites 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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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.”

Jayne Navarre, *social.lawyers: Transforming Business Development* §1:1, at 1-2 (2010).

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.”

Our 25-lawyer firm uses blogs and Twitter. I started my blog on land use and property law (www.inversecondemnation.com) more than three years ago. Mark Murakami followed, focusing on mari-

time law (www.hawaiioceanlaw.com). Soon Tred Eyerly joined, writing about insurance issues at www.insurancelawhawaii.com.

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), community-benefits.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 Kanner'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 Della 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 (lawprofs 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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