

Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project

General Tips and B

Helping nonprofit legal aid programs improve client services through innovative use of technology.

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General Tips and Best Practices - Intro to Social Media

Have a Plan

Before you get started figure out what you are want to accomplish. Without doing this you have no way of measuring success and it's harder to improve your presence. One goal might be to get at least one new client a month through social media, another might be to get 500 people to watch and educational video you created.

Collect data

There are lots of great ways to collect data, some combination of Google Analytics and the analytics built into the social media platform is a good place to start. Once you have the data look at your goals and see whether what you are doing is moving you towards those goals.

Find where your audience is and go to them

Do a little bit of research and find where your audience is and go there. If they love Twitter and LinkedIn go there. The corollary is don't try to be on every platform. If your audience don't use a platform like Facebook save yourself the time and hassle and don't try to publish there. Instead create a Facebook page with enough information that anyone who hits it will get directed to one of your supported platforms. Social media outlets need a minimum flow of content, if you spread yourself too thin you can end up with 7 accounts none of which are producing enough content rather than 2 with a following.

Make regular updates

A consistent flow content is key to keeping your audience engaged. Memory is fleeting and if you don't consistently post you are making it easy for people to forget you. Part of the advantage of limiting your platforms is it makes it easier to keep up with posting.

As a rule of thumb post something to twitter a minimum of once per day and to Facebook a minimum of once per week.

Over posting is like over exercising, theoretically possible but not something many people have to worry about. For facebook I might consider five posts per day the upper limit, I don't think there is one for the other platforms. In the case of Facebook if it wasn't time sensitive material I'd try to spread out the posts over a few days. A more realistic problem is if you post too much the quality of your posts might drop, if this happens you can just end up spamming people and get unfollowed.

Provide consistent value

In addition to regular updates you need to make sure they consistently are providing value to your audience. If you are constantly putting out quality content when it comes time to ask your audience for something they will be sure to see your request and are more likely to respond favorably.

Shockingly blue socks with sandals.

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Be less formal

Social media is a less formal way of communicating. For things like Twitter it's because of the character limitations, for Facebook it's because your post is probably appearing between baby pictures. Something particular things to look out for is the overuse of legal jargon and acronyms. Try to replace any jargon with something similar from conversational english, instead of constituency use voters, instead of referring to someone as a partner(in the business sense) call them by name or as a friend. The only acronyms that are safe to use are the ones that are constantly in the news, you can reasonably expect people to know what the FBI or NAACP is. For pretty much everything else just spell it out, even if it is something that seems obvious like the FTC or the NYT.

Papa/Jimmy John Twitter Exchange

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Use two way communication

Another part of it being less formal and the ease of response is the expectation of a two way conversation to happen. Being able to engage with people this way is how you go from being someone who they a company they might do business with to a person they can relate to.

One company that has this down is Taco Bell, in the past few years they have had a team that is doing everything right. They are responsive, funny and promote and support their fans and charities

Be more personal

When you are posting or tweeting be sure to be human and make things personal. People are more likely to respond to someone they can relate to. Don't go overboard but a good place to start is posting picture from a company picnic or a staff member's birthday cake.

Fast is better than perfect

Value != Polish. People understand that if you are regularly posting things they may be a bit rough and one or two errors may creep in. It depends on exactly what sort of content you are producing but generally speaking after you reach the point where you are looking at the 80% of the work for the last 20% quality you should instead just publish instead. Three solid posts are better than a single perfectly crafted one.

Share success stories

People love success stories and value anecdotes highly. Stories help people see how you can help them, and it gives them something nice they can share.

A NWJustice success story

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Share relevant materials

You do not need to create all the content you post. Linking to good content that others have created does two great things. First of all making good content is time consuming and hard, if someone else has done the work and you share it they get more eyeballs and you get more content, win/win. Secondly when you link to other people you can start to form relationships with them, and it's always nice to be connected with other good people in your field.

Use pictures

People are better at processing pictures than they are at text, and using pictures can cut down the amount of text people have to read to get a message. Before using images it is well worth

you time to familiarize yourself with the Creative Commons licenses, There is a wealth of images online that are available to use under different licenses. A good place to start looking is with the Creative Commons search engine

Be Innovative

Even more than with conventional marketing people respond well to clever and innovative ideas. There isn't a limit to how far something can spread, If people like something enough it can go as viral as the ice bucket challenge. The best part is If you take a risk and it doesn't pan out odds are all that happened is no one saw it. PS Risk does not mean break LSC rules it means getting outside your fear of social media and trying new ideas.

Don't wait to do it

Building a community around social media takes time and there isn't a great substitute for that. Remember better fast than perfect, and better to get a basic presence up now and polish it up later than try to make it perfect before going public.

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