

2016 Social Media/Digital Marketing Survey Reveals Lack of Integration, Future Use on the Rise

□ lawmarketing.com/lawyers-say-firm-website-more-effective-than-social-media/

Overwhelming Majority Enjoy Support From Their Firms

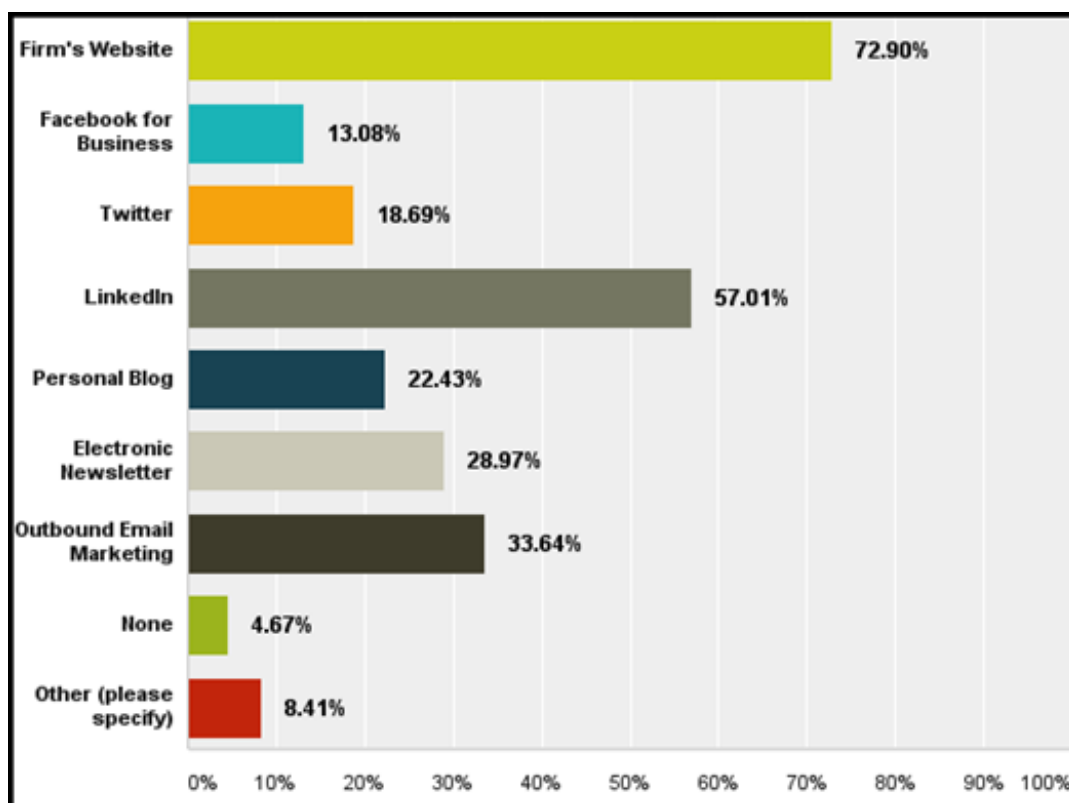
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A 2016 qualitative and quantitative survey conducted among attorneys nationwide revealed that their use of social media and digital marketing tools is not integrated, with one tool typically dominating all others depending upon an attorney's experience and comfort level with social and digital.

Survey findings were analyzed by age – ranging from 21 years to 60+ years – and by geographic location. While no strong variances in use exist by location, age is a factor in only one case: younger attorneys who report using Twitter more than any other age group.

Most effective

Social and digital tools examined in the survey included LinkedIn (396 million users worldwide), Facebook for Business (1.55 billion monthly active users), Twitter (320 million monthly active users), personal blogs, law firm websites, electronic newsletters and outbound email marketing. When asked to choose what tools were the most effective for business development, respondents indicated the following:



John Keyes, a patent attorney at Chicago's Blanchard & Associates, describes the collective use of social

media platforms as his firm's "shop window of the 21st century."

Surprisingly, the attorneys surveyed believe that "passive" tools – like a firm's website – are more effective than electronic newsletters and outbound email marketing, which are typically considered "active" tools. Nearly three-quarters of the survey's respondents said that their firm's website is an effective communication tool among clients and prospects, while only a third of respondents indicate that outbound marketing tools are equally effective.

Lack of integrated use

The most striking finding of the survey was an overall lack of integrated use of social media tools.

Those attorneys who favor personal blogs as a social media tool use LinkedIn less than all other attorneys; only 32 percent of bloggers are using LinkedIn. In fact, those in smaller firms use blogs two times more than others.

If an attorney is predominantly using LinkedIn as a business development tool, then he or she is significantly less likely to use Facebook for Business or Twitter to generate business. Among those who find LinkedIn to be the most effective tool for business development (78% of all respondents), only 11% find Facebook for Business to be effective and 24% find blogs and Twitter to be effective.

"I know in-house counsel are looking at my LinkedIn profile as part of their due diligence," says Mark Williams, a litigation and trial partner at Sherman & Howard's Denver office. "I actively use LinkedIn to endorse clients, prospects and referrals sources because helping them succeed strengthens the relationship, which is what social media is all about."

Jeff Lange, a solo practitioner in Chicago, says he uses LinkedIn for lead generation and partnering. "It's a great way to research potential clients," Lange says, "and I also use it to connect with potential partners who can help me build my business." Some attorneys, like Jacob Zahniser of Jordan Ramis PC in Vancouver, WA, are less interested in using LinkedIn for sales purposes: "I think it helps me establish myself as a thought leader, someone who is educated and knowledgeable about specific areas of the law."

Twitter v. Facebook

Attorneys who favor Twitter as an effective communications tool are less likely to use Facebook for Business. "Tweeting has been a very enjoyable way to track and share developments in the highly regulated area of employee benefits and executive compensation," according to Sarah Roe Sise, a partner at Armstrong Teasdale in St. Louis. "It also has been an effective method to share ideas with other practitioners from around the country. Further, it has provided additional exposure and traffic to articles I've written on blogs."

Conversely, Bryan Jones of Meldon Law in Gainesville, FL, predominantly uses Facebook for Business because he believes it promotes a "more human connection. I can provide links (to our website), post photos of other attorneys and staff, and really get a dialogue going with my Facebook followers."

The ever-growing array of social media tools provides opportunities to reach diverse client bases beyond the most well-known tools. "Using Google+ has been an effective tool to share information directly with clients," says David M. Serafin, a Denver-based bankruptcy attorney. "Several clients have also used Google+ to post reviews about my practice."

Firms support digital marketing

An overwhelming majority of the survey's respondents state that their firms provide support for digital and social media marketing efforts: 85 percent say that "support" comes in the form of dedicated marketing staff, while 40 percent are provided with "financial resources/budget." Other, less predominant support includes the services of an outside public relations or marketing firm, an executive assistant, or "other support staff."

In examining the use of social and digital marketing tools by firm size, there exists few dramatic findings except among respondents in firms with 26-100 attorneys, 81 percent of whom favored LinkedIn over all other social and digital tools. Other similar findings revealed:

- Bloggers are more prevalent (55.6 percent) in firms with 6-25 attorneys, compared to 17.4 percent in firms with more than 100 attorneys.
- Facebook for Business is used by 42.5 percent of attorneys in firms with 1-5 attorneys versus 11 percent of those in firms with more than 100 attorneys.
- LinkedIn is most favored by attorneys in firms with 26-100 attorneys (81 percent), while only 17.4 of respondents in firms of 1-5 attorneys report using LinkedIn.
- Surprisingly, Twitter showed almost no variance by firm size.

When asked about their personal use of social media tools in the future, 63.5 percent of respondents say that it will increase, 34.5 percent say that it will "stay the same," and only two percent say that it will decrease.

Chicago's Jeff Lange elaborates, saying, "I intend to up my game in 2016, both creating original content and curating existing content. I need to do more than just connect with others and collect 'Likes.' So, I plan to be more disciplined about setting aside time every week to get engaged with others on LinkedIn."

Like most things in life, it appears that with social and digital marketing, the more time and effort you invest the greater the return.

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