



CAREER SERVICES OFFICE

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The legal profession has jumped into the social media stream in a big way, and law students and alums should know how to navigate these increasingly treacherous waters. The Career Services Office encourages you to participate in social media, if for no other reason than to teach yourself skills that will benefit you as an attorney. Social media can be a lot of fun, of course, but it also may help you increase your profile in a competitive job market. Used effectively, social media can tag you as someone who is knowledgeable about a particular practice area, as a technologically savvy future lawyer ready to help an employer reach out to clients on the web, and as someone who has the professionalism and discipline to be of help to the very employers for which you wish to work.

As a preliminary task, you might want to Google yourself (and use peekyou.com and snitch.name) using specific search terms that identify you (your name, high school or college, home town, sports team, etc.). How does the world see you now? Your online presence might be clean as a whistle or, perhaps, not so much. Do what you can to clean things up. State Character & Fitness committees are not known for being particularly technologically advanced, but you never know. It is better to start sanitizing things now, well before your Character & Fitness interview.

Before we talk about the three big social media sites – LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter – there is a general rule that applies to all social media. You may know that, in general, LinkedIn is geared to professional networking, Facebook to personal networking, and Twitter to a combination of the two. Whenever possible, try to keep the personal separate from the professional. For example, if you use Twitter to communicate with friends and family, set up a different account to communicate with attorneys and other professionals. Understand, however, that even this may not be sufficient to keep professionals from seeing your personal tweets. Things can get tricky, but effectively navigating social media is one part of a job search strategy that can lead to success.

LinkedIn: (<http://www.linkedin.com>). This professional networking site is very popular with lawyers and the legal profession. Create your online resume (your profile), become linked with friends and attorneys, join professional groups which interest you, contribute to legal discussions, and answer questions posted by others to show off your legal talent. LinkedIn allows you to create a simple web address for your profile, so that you may list it on your resume (very tech savvy!) next to your telephone number and email address.

When you are a lawyer, your classmates will be one of the largest sources of business for you. Create connections with them now to ensure a solid continuity of contact information. Connect with alumni in practice areas interesting to you. If one of your links is linked to someone who you want to get to know, your link can make an introduction for you. Join the LinkedIn group for the Touro Law Center community, your college alumni group, and practice area groups (use the search function to find them). You may also search for legal job postings on LinkedIn through the drop down menu toward the top of the screen. LinkedIn provides a great way to establish your professional presence online. Just remember, if

you are not yet admitted, do not even remotely imply that you are a lawyer, through deeds, words, or a cute name for an email account (no “futurelawyer@gmail.com”). For more information about how law students can use LinkedIn effectively, go here: <http://lawyerist.com/how-law-students-should-use-linkedin>.

Facebook: (<http://www.facebook.com>). Facebook and MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>) are the two most popular social networking sites. They are very useful and a lot of fun, but you should be concerned with two things: privacy and pictures. Learn how to use the privacy settings to limit what the public can see about you. You can create lists of different kinds of people (friends, professors, attorneys, etc.) and limit the kind of information each group may see on your profile. In addition, be very careful about allowing other individuals to “tag” you in photographs. There is a security setting which allows you to restrict the ability of others to tag you in photos. Use it! You may be very diligent in managing your own profile; don’t let a friend ruin your hard work by placing an off-color picture on their profile with you tagged in it.

Also, be aware that there are employers, including government employers and, more specifically, district attorney offices, who ask you, as part of their permanent job application process, to provide them with your ID and password for all of your social networking sites, so that they might see how and what you post as you see it. It is an incredible invasion of privacy, but more and more employers are using social media as an investigatory tool to obtain a complete picture on an applicant. Several Touro Law Center offices, including the Career Services Office, the Library, and Student Services, have Facebook pages. Become fans and stay up-to-date on important information.

Twitter: (<http://www.twitter.com>). For those who do not know, Twitter is a site which permits you to post status updates of 140 characters or less (updates are called “tweets”). As Tim O’Reilly, founder of O’Reilly Media, says, “Facebook is for the people you already know. Twitter is for discovering the people you want to know.” Tweets are forever, can be found through Google searches, and are available for anyone to view (unless you lock them down and only permit the designated few to view them), so be careful what you tweet. You may use Twitter to stay in touch with friends, of course, but you may also create a professional persona to establish yourself as knowledgeable in a particular subject. Tweet about recent cases and news in, for example, real estate law. Search for others who tweet on real estate law and follow them. They just might follow you and then their followers might follow you. You can see where this is headed and how useful Twitter can be for you to obtain some exposure with lawyers in a legal practice area and to learn what lawyers in your practice area are talking about. In addition, there are job listings on Twitter and you can search for jobs in particular practice areas and cities. Touro Law Center has four Twitter feeds: Touro Law Center, the Career Services Office, the Touro Law Library, and the Student Services Office. Follow them to stay informed of what is going on at law school.

LexTweet: (<http://www.lextweet.com>). LexTweet is a Twitter service for legal professionals and includes attorneys and others (e.g., the Justice Department) who tweet about the law. It is a great resource to help you find lawyers and employers who Twitter about a subject matter in which you are interested. Of course, if you tweet about an area of law, others may find you, as well.

If you have any questions about social media and its effective use, please drop by and see us.

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