

the**digitale**dge — 10 Questions, and Answers, to Get You Tweeting

By Brian P. Sharkey

It seems these days everyone has a blog, Twitter account, or Facebook page, from sports stars to celebrities to politicians. Many professionals are also using LinkedIn to make connections and stay in touch with current business contacts. Therefore, it is not surprising that the social media revolution is impacting law firms and attorneys. Here are some questions and answers to help you understand Twitter and how it could help your practice.

**1. What is Twitter?** Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service that allows its users to send short messages to their friends, contacts, and followers.

**2. What is a tweet?** A tweet is a short message. Tweets can be a maximum of 140 characters.

**3. What is a follower?** A follower is someone who also has a Twitter account and follows you on Twitter.com. Thus, when you tweet, that message is seen by all your followers.

**4. How do you follow someone?** If you know someone who has a Twitter account, be it an individual or a company, you can search through Twitter.com and find that person. Then all you have to do is click an icon to become one of their followers.

**5. How do you get followers?** Frequently the people you follow will in turn follow you. Also, once you start posting tweets, people who you do not know will find your messages and start to follow you. Twitter provides various search options that will enable you to find other Twitter users who share the same interests as you and who will be interested in what you are tweeting about.

**6. Do attorneys use Twitter?** Yes. Many attorneys and firms, ranging from some of the largest in the country to solo practitioners, have Twitter accounts.

**7. What do attorneys use Twitter for?** Many use Twitter as a marketing tool. Twitter allows attorneys to stay in touch with contacts. Attorneys can tweet about a recent case they won, an article they wrote, or a recent decision from the Supreme Court.

**8. Do attorneys get clients from Twitter?** Yes. Having a Twitter account does not guarantee you clients, but there are many stories of attorneys who have successfully used Twitter to find new clients. In addition, there have been several recent surveys of in-house counsel who have identified social media, including Twitter, as an increasingly important factor they consider in hiring outside counsel. Plaintiffs' firms use Twitter to post messages and get clients, especially in large litigations and mass torts.

**9. How much time will my tweeting take?** That depends. If you only use Twitter to post links to articles that someone from your firm wrote or re-tweet someone else's tweet that you found interesting, it should not take much time at all. If, however, you intend to use Twitter as a component of your marketing strategy, you should devote more time to your account so you have a regular supply of new tweets to interest your followers and attract new ones.

**10. Is there anything else I need to know?** Aside from deciding what you want to tweet about and what your Twitter goals are, you should find out if your firm has a social networking/social media policy. If not, you should talk to the managing partner, marketing department, or human resources department to ensure that you have permission to tweet and that whatever you do does not run afoul of any firm guidelines or policies.

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