A Social Media Guide to Business and Committee Development for TIPS Members

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With the advent of the internet and the proliferation of social media, many organizations—be they Fortune 500 Companies or solo service providers—have moved some or all of their business development and marketing efforts to cyberspace. This article introduces social media and gives some examples of how lawyers are using social media to generate business and to support their professional associations.

Defining Social Media

By “Social Media,” I mean internet or application-based platforms that allow users to share information, pictures and other content either directly with each other or through groups or chats or blogs or posts. Facebook is a prime example of social media. A Facebook user can post all sorts of information about the user on the user’s “wall” or can create group or a page to promote the user’s interests or activities. LinkedIn is another example of social media. LinkedIn is primarily for business, rather than personal social interaction, but also allows for posting of information or collective communication through groups. Users connect with each other to see relevant posts. YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and many other platforms also are available for users to post content.

Today, a substantial amount of social media use takes place through applications (“apps”) on smartphones rather than on computers. Every social media platform has a downloadable app for smartphones. These apps are optimized for the smaller screen of the phone, which allows users to keep up with their social media content wherever they are without having to worry about a computer. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram all have mobile apps.

Although we use the term social media, these platforms have become business platforms. Nearly every business webpage has a space where you can link to them via social media. When you go to a website and see that means you can reach that business via Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter (in the order presented) just by clicking on those icons.

In fact, many businesses scan social media posts to find people they want to work with and ask them to become influencers for them. For example, if you have a cute baby and you post pictures of your baby wearing a manufacturer’s product, if you tag that manufacturer in your post it is possible that the manufacturer’s social media team will reach out and ask you to work with them to promote their brand. Social media influencers can make or break start-up companies trying to reach the millennial and younger audience.

So how important and active is social media? Well, the chart below from 2018 by Gary Hayes gives you some examples of the activity that takes place on social media within just a few seconds. And the numbers have only increased since this survey.
Social Media Platforms for Business

There are many social media platforms out there, but only a handful are relevant to business development for lawyers. Others may disagree with this assessment and new platforms arrive with frequency. Who your audience is has a lot to do with the social media platform that makes sense for you to use. In the context of TIPS, the audience is lawyers, law firms, insured businesses, insurance companies, reinsurance companies, brokers, third-party administrators, and others within the insurance, tort, trial and legal community. What that means is that some of the social media platforms being used by your children or grandchildren are not relevant to legal marketing (e.g., Snapchat, Reddit, WhatsApp).

The most useful social media platforms with widespread use and acceptability for business are the following:

- LinkedIn -- www.linkedin.com
- Twitter -- https://twitter.com
- Instagram -- https://www.instagram.com
- Facebook -- www.facebook.com
- YouTube -- www.youtube.com
This list does not include the various blogging platforms that exist, which are also useful for business development through thought leadership. These include WordPress, Blogger, and Tumblr. There are also subscription services like Lexology, which allow organizations to build blogs. What’s good about blogging is that blog posts are often picked up by others and reposted and recirculated to a wider audience. Many of the posts leveraged on TIPS and TIPS committee pages come from lawyer, law firm or company blogs.

There are also content aggregators that organizations subscribe to that repost and recirculate on the aggregator’s platform the organization’s blog or other web-based content to a much broader subscription-based audience. Examples of these include JD Supra and The National Law Review.

LinkedIn

Out of the social media platforms listed above, the most useful professional social media platform for our purposes is LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a business social media platform that requires a user to join in order to use its services. Members of LinkedIn can post content, write articles, apply for jobs and form groups. Set forth below are some screenshots that give you an example of what a professional profile looks like on LinkedIn.

If you are not a member of LinkedIn already, the image above is what you will see when you go to the LinkedIn site. https://www.linkedin.com/ Just click on “Join now” at the top to start your membership (there is no cost for the basic membership). Once you are a LinkedIn member, you will need to create your profile and you will generate a home page will look like the image below (also known as your LinkedIn feed).
On this page you will see posts from people or businesses that you follow, groups that you have joined, hashtags that you follow, your profile information in short form, and various menus and options to search, create a post, check a group and many other things. The more people you connect with, the more groups you join and the more posts you make, the more information will appear on your feed.

For a professional, it is key to have a good headshot (taken by a professional, not your spouse) and a headline about you or your business (as you can see above, my headline is “How Can I Help You Resolve Your Insurance and Reinsurance Issues and Disputes?”). These items are part of your profile. The image below is an example of what the headline line looks like in a post:
What adding the headline does is give every reader a quick snapshot of who you are and why they may want to get to know you. For a professional, this is a simple way of telling a wide audience that you are available to serve on o.

Filling out the profile in a professional way that highlights your skills and experience is imperative. It is critical not to neglect the profile, especially the headline, the “about” section where you can expand upon your headline and summarize your experience, and, of course, your work history and accomplishments. The image below is part of my profile page with the drop down menu to show the categories of items you can add to your profile.
The “about” section is often neglected, but it gives you an opportunity to summarize your skills and experience. Think of it as an elevator speech. The image below is my “about” section.

![About Section Image]

After joining LinkedIn, it is important to start connecting with other users (but be careful about who you connect with to minimize conflict and ethical issues) and to join Groups that are relevant to your interests and practice.

The ABA and TIPS have quite a few relevant groups with different levels of activity and information. There are around 24 ABA/TIPS groups on LinkedIn. Here are some examples:

- **American Bar Association Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section** Group • 11,680 members
  This is the main TIPS Group on LinkedIn.

- **ABA-TIPS Cybersecurity & Data Privacy Committee** Group • 102 members
  This is the LinkedIn group for the Cybersecurity and Data Privacy Committee.

There are also lots of tort, trial and insurance groups out there created by organizations, individuals and associations. For example, a search for “insurance” as a group on LinkedIn yields 860,853 results. You can even create your own group. I did. **Reinsurance Disputes**.

Joining a Group and connecting with other LinkedIn members is nice, but if you want to develop business and promote your committee, you have to do more. You can post articles, comments, links to blog posts and other materials relevant to your practice and your committee.

LinkedIn also has something called the “Social Selling Index.” It is a tool that allows a member to look at that member’s LinkedIn presence ranks compared to other members. Here’s how LinkedIn describes it:

By checking out your SSI, you’ll see how you stack up against your industry peers and your network on LinkedIn. Further, you can see how you are performing on each of the four elements of social selling -- establishing your professional brand, finding the right people, engaging with insights, and building relationships -- and track your progress over time to help you understand how you’re improving. Each color on the dashboard represents a different element of social selling, so you can see where you are strong and where you might need improvement.
If you type “social selling index” into any search engine, like Google, it will take you to the LinkedIn page that allows you to access your SSI dashboard. The image below is my SSI dashboard. It provides very interesting insights into how well you are doing in marketing your “brand” on LinkedIn.

![LinkedIn Social Selling Dashboard](image)

Twitter

Whether you want to participate professionally on other social media channels is a personal choice. Twitter provides the opportunity to interact with others using 280 character messages. Nearly all businesses and law firms have Twitter “handles” or user names. Nearly all government officials have Twitter accounts. Twitter is a good way to circulate articles and blog posts beyond LinkedIn or a personal email list. The image below is a snapshot of my Twitter profile page showing how I leverage my blog posts.

![Twitter Profile](image)
Other Social Media Platforms

While many consumer businesses, including most law firms, are using Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, the utility of these platforms for commercial lawyers is limited unless you plan to post with frequency. For example, if you want to market yourself by posting short videos discussing legal subjects, YouTube would be the place to do so.

Conclusion

Social media is another tool in the business development toolbox. It is also a great way to recruit members to your TIPS committee. The more tech savvy the company and the law firm, the more likely they will expect you and your committee to be present on social media. Think it through and do what is comfortable for you, but don’t discount the potential economic value of using social media to help enhance your practice and your TIPS committee.