

The Internet is for All Lawyers

By Roberta M. Gubbins

Ask people on the street what a lawyer does, and the answers may vary from “argues in court” to “writes wills or contracts.”

Hollywood portrays lawyers as advocates standing in a courtroom zealously seeking justice for their clients—think of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *My Cousin Vinny*, or *Miracle on 34th Street*.

It's true that many lawyers—trained to analyze facts, frame issues, and advocate in written and oral formats—argue in court or draft documents. But courtrooms, while the most dramatic of legal battlegrounds, aren't the only venues for lawyers.

Lawyers may use their skills in the following arenas:

- Federal, state, and local government, including the judiciary and elected office
- Military
- Public interest
- Corporations
- Legal publishing
- Academia

Some stray even further from the traditional practice of law and become consultants, musicians, human-resource administrators, journalists, nonprofit managers, and entrepreneurs.

Do these lawyers need a profile on a legal directory or website? The simple answer is yes. An online presence is as necessary for them as it is for lawyers working in solo practice or a law firm.

Consumers aren't the only ones who search for lawyers on the web; other lawyers also read online profiles. You can establish relationships and connections that would otherwise be impossible because of distance and time. These are lawyers you



can meet only through e-mail or text or perhaps a short telephone call. The associations can be as strong and as important to your career as face-to-face interactions.

A lawyer working for a government agency today could establish a connection and soon be practicing for a law firm in its governmental relations department. Lawyers can use the knowledge gained in other fields to make a career change. Legal publishing experience, for example, could lead to consulting on copyright issues and drafting contracts with agents and publishers. Managing an international nonprofit would be helpful if you wanted to practice international law. Entrepreneurs such as Yale Law grads Nina and Tim Zagat, who co-founded the Zagat restaurant ratings, could

sell their successful business and move on to a business-oriented law firm.

Moving from traditional to nontraditional legal careers and back again will only be successful if the world knows you're out there, and the easiest and most cost-effective way to do that is through an online presence. Using social media, LinkedIn, or the SBM Member Directory can allow you to network within the legal field and market your practice to potential clients.

A legal career, whether traditional or nontraditional, can span years and take many twists and turns along the way. Using the Internet to establish relationships with other lawyers and potential clients will help make the journey manageable, profitable, and more pleasurable. ■



Roberta M. Gubbins, Esq. practiced law before serving as the editor of the Ingham County Legal News. Since leaving the paper, she provides services as a ghostwriter, editing and writing articles, blogs, and eblasts for lawyers and law firms. She is the editor of Briefs, the Ingham County Bar Association newsletter; and The Mentor, the SBM Master Lawyers Section newsletter.

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