

Social Media for Lawyers: The Next Frontier

By Carolyn Elefant and Nicole Black, published by the American Bar Association Law Practice Management Section (2010), softcover, 221 pages, \$79.95
<http://www.ababooks.org>

Reviewed by Samantha Meinke

No one can learn how to effectively use social media by sitting alone and reading a book. Actually, doing so completely misses the point.

Social media refers to web platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which were designed to become new ways to interact and share information with other people. They have revolutionized the Internet, which has gone from being a place where information flows in one direction, from website to viewers (Web 1.0), to a place where information flows in two directions, from website to viewers and back again (Web 2.0). Now, people can just as easily create videos on their cell phones and upload them to YouTube as they can Google information on the Supreme Court.

The writers and editors of *Social Media for Lawyers* have done a very thorough job of covering their subject matter in a step-by-step, stereo-instruction way. If you purchase this book with the goal of using it as a tool to supplement your foray into social media—to help point you in the right direction when you hit a stumbling block—it will serve its purpose quite well.

It explains what social media is, and tracks it from its inception through its evolution. It has a detailed chapter on the different platforms, complete with screen snaps (the equivalent of photos). It also explains how to set up profiles on many of the platforms. Your profile is how other people view you on these sites, and the basis for your interactions with them.

But at nearly \$80, it's awfully expensive, especially since the subject matter changes

so rapidly that by the time an explanation of it has been printed, it's already outdated.

Another fundamental problem of this book is that it aims to tell lawyers everything they need to know to strategically market their businesses and themselves online. But it is also aimed at novices to social media. And people who don't know anything about these platforms have no business setting out, right off the bat, to conduct business on them.

The basic, fundamental principle of social media is that it personalizes everything. That makes it very hard to generalize how to take advantage of it for yourself, because nobody knows you better than you do.

The people who are most successful at promoting themselves on these platforms are the people who think outside the box and innovate. Following the example of what someone else did two years ago before writing about it, printing it, and shipping it to you in a book is not going to accomplish this.

It would be much easier (not to mention cheaper) to ask a friend, family member, neighbor, or even a local librarian for an introduction to social media and help setting up a profile. Or just try it on your own. These platforms are designed to be simple,

easy, and fun to use. If you get stumped, go to Google and type in "how to set up a Facebook account." There are thousands of tutorials that are as up to date as the social media sites are, including free step-by-step video webinars on YouTube.

Finally, the biggest problem with using this book as an introduction to social media is that it can very easily turn using it into a chore. If that's how you approach these platforms, you will never be successful in using them for any reason.

But if you decide to wade into social media by setting up a Facebook page for fun, you might just find that you enjoy using it. Maybe you'll track down a law school classmate you haven't heard from in years or see photos of a friend's trip across Asia.

If you appreciate and enjoy your interactions on these sites, you're far more likely to figure out how to successfully use them to your advantage. ■

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