

WHITE PAPER

Econsultancy/Practical Marketing Consultancy

The use of social media in relationship development in the professions (Lawyers, accountants and surveyors)

DECEMBER 2010

Background

The social media revolution, like digital marketing and the inbound marketing developments before it, is having a profound impact on the way we develop relationships in the business world. From the perspective of this paper, Econsultancy's (Peter Abraham) focus is on the fast changing use of social media in marketing and sales, and at Practical Marketing Consultancy (Kim Tasso) the challenge is how the professions – lawyers, accountants, surveyors and consultants – can enhance their business development and sales effectiveness.

We were delighted to be asked by the Professional Marketing Forum to run workshops at its Annual Conference in September 2010 to explore the use of social media in relationship development in the professions. Whilst there are numerous excellent examples of the use of social media in marketing within the professions, there appeared to be a dearth of information on how it can be integrated into new business development – i.e. the sales models, processes, behaviours and systems.

This White Paper summarises the key findings of our work – and provides sign posts to the road ahead on this continuing journey. We are grateful to those who worked with us at the workshop – both for responding to the questionnaire beforehand and for their insights and ideas at the session. This material has been produced for you and we hope that you will continue the dialogue to develop the ideas further. Please email or tweet us with your comments and thoughts.

Note: Please forgive us for using the horrid “fee-earner” word – we certainly don’t condone it’s use - but it makes slightly easier reading than repeating lawyer/accountant/surveyor/consultant.

Peter Abraham - Econsultancy
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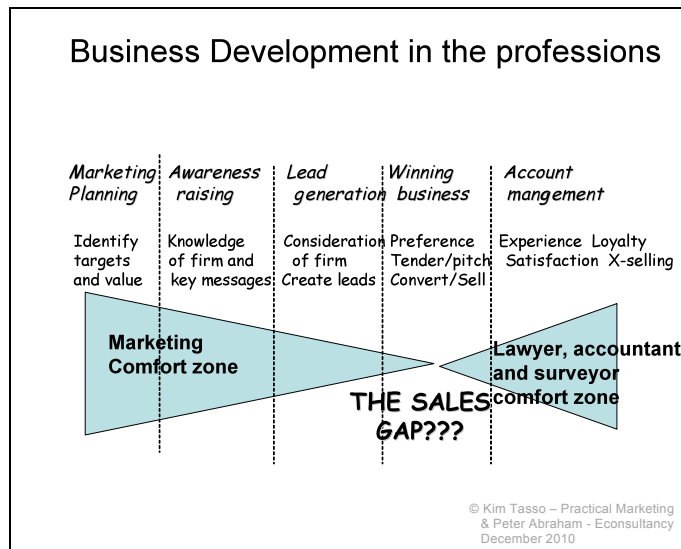
Contents

	Page
1. Starting point – Assessing selling skills and social media knowledge	3
Key findings – Social media	4
Key findings – Selling	5
2. Best practice – Defining and aligning social media best practice in professional firms	7
3. Key themes emerging	12
Social media as a change agent for selling (and marketing)	12
Social media requirements resulting from change	15
4. Towards a model that integrates social media and selling in the professions	18
5. 11 Key Lessons	19
6. And next – what's trending?	20
7. About the authors	21
8. Further reading	22
Professional Bodies	22
Useful Guides	23
Books (Selling, Social Media, Digital Marketing)	24

1. Starting point – Assessing selling skills and social media knowledge

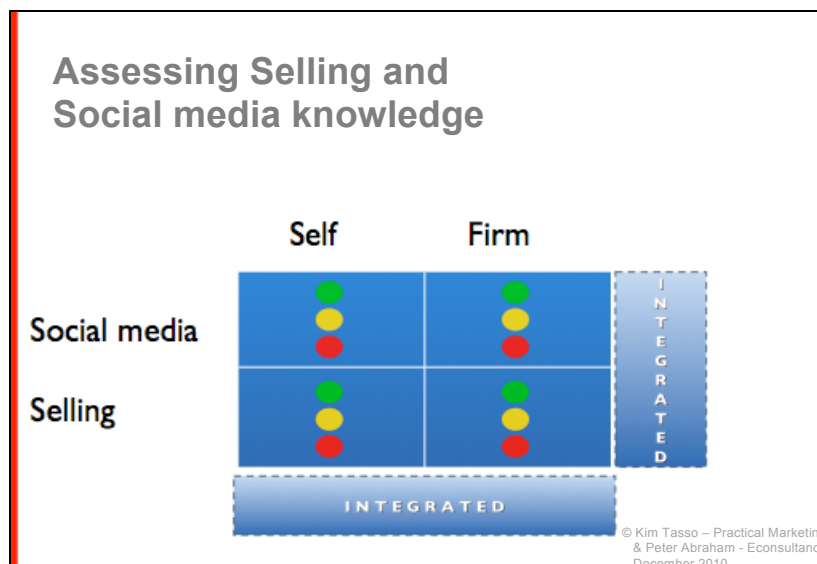
Social media is new to all industries – so the professions face a similar challenge to everyone else. However, the professions face the additional challenge of having only recently accepted that their marketing and business development professionals have a significant contribution to make or even the right to have involvement in selling. For selling – if it is acknowledged as an essential business function at all - is often the preserve of the lawyers, accountants and surveyors on the front line of day to day business development.

Quite often, the marketers are restricted to the two ends of the business development spectrum – the marketing end and the existing relationship management end as the following diagram shows:



So starting with a blank sheet of paper in the absence of established sales models we were faced with a conundrum. There was likely to be a huge variation amongst our workshop group – and the wider audience of marketing and business development professionals in law, accountancy and property firms - in terms of their familiarity with and experience of two areas – social media tools and selling.

So we created a questionnaire for delegates to the workshops to explore their level of knowledge in these two areas – for themselves and their firms - and the extent to which they were integrated.

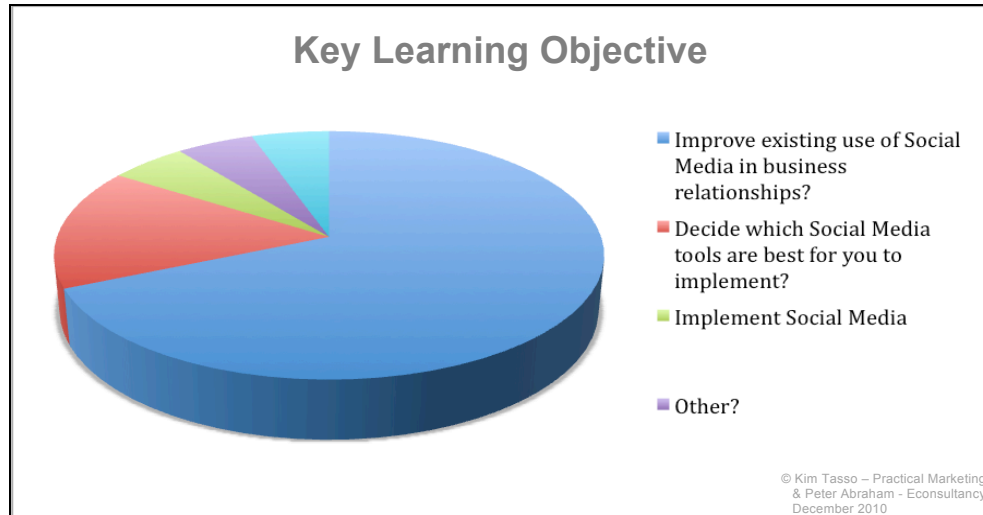


1a. Key findings – Social media

From the pre-conference research we learned the following:

i) What marketers/business developers most wanted to learn about:

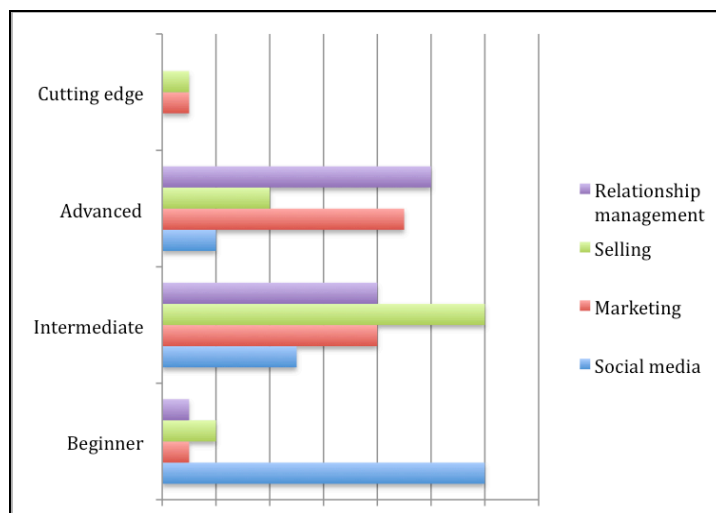
We asked: *What's your key objective in attending the 'Using Social Media in relationship development' session?*



Perhaps as the result of an oversight on our part in the design of the questionnaire, the responses reflected interest in social media per se rather than a more strategic desire to improve competitive advantage, sales effectiveness, client satisfaction and/or communications.

ii) How would you rate your firm in terms of its current use of social media:

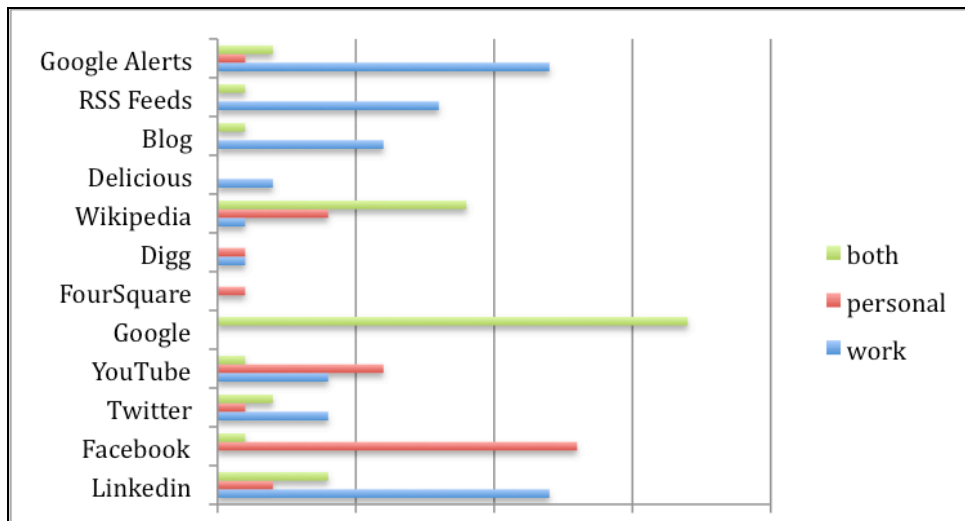
We asked: *How would you rate your firm in terms of its sophistication in the following?*



These results presented us with an issue, whilst – as we anticipated – most people felt that they were beginners in the area of social media, the majority felt that their knowledge of selling (i.e. creating new client relationships) was only at the intermediate stage whereas there was much more confidence in their use of relationship management (i.e. existing client management). Other results, and further discussion, revealed that this may be because many marketers and business development staff were often not involved in day-to-day sales activities in their firms. This means that the ability of marketers and business developers to manage a significant range and number of touch points during the selling process would be limited – whether using traditional or social media techniques.

iii) What is the extent of use of social media tools both for personal and work use?

We asked: *Which of the following Social Media tools do you currently use (for work and personal use)?*



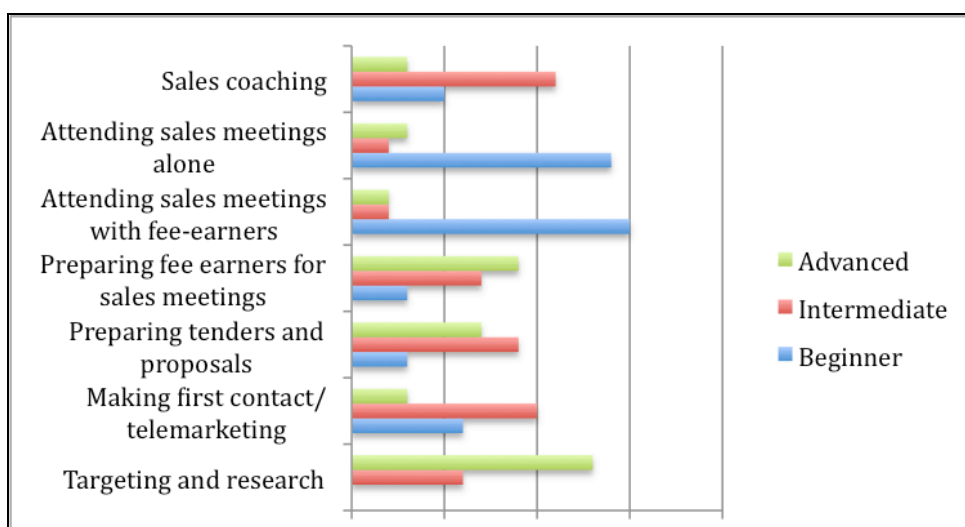
As we suspected, Facebook was very much the preserve of personal use rather than at work. We were encouraged to see a high degree of use of Google, blogs and RSS feeds. Social bookmarking sites were less popular – reflecting the broader market trend (see the Econsultancy.com and the “Value of Social Media Report”) of moving away from these tools. Again, supporting our views, the most popular work based social media tool appeared to be LinkedIn.

Other questions indicated that little use was made of these tools for driving traffic to web sites and lead generation – most common use was of Google Alerts for referrer and intermediary management. Again, and not surprisingly, when we asked about the extent to which they and their organisations were engaged with social media for selling, the vast majority indicated “beginner”.

1b. Key findings - selling

iv) The extent of marketer/business development staff with selling?

We asked: *To what extent does your present role involve?*

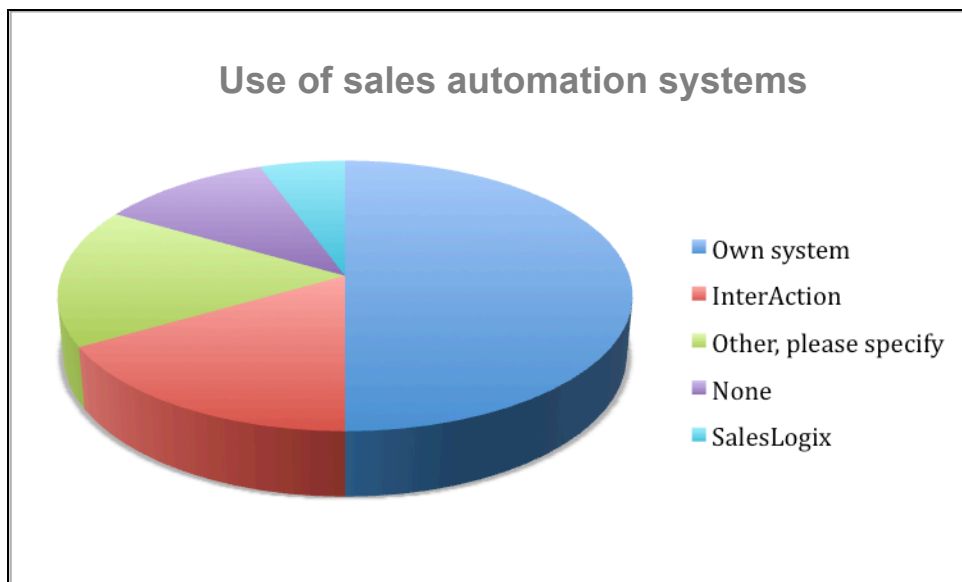


This confirms the view that many marketers and business development staff have a supporting and “at a distance” role when it comes to selling. The challenge therefore is how marketers can drive the effective use of social media in selling when they have – by and large – a low level of involvement in

selling. The results did indicate, however, that marketers were far more involved in managing and developing existing client and referrer relationships.

v) Existing sales automation systems?

Most respondents indicated that they used their own systems for sales automation – further discussion revealed this to be client and contact management systems associated with accounting software. A significant number of those responding to the questionnaire indicated that they had no sales automation systems in their firms – which is not surprising when the general lack of sales process is taken into account and the tendency of the professions not to share data. For those that indicated a proprietary system – the predominant responses were InterAction (a leading system in law firms) and ACT – with some using SalesLogix and Vuture. Subsequent research showed some interest in the forthcoming system from Connectegrity. From our perspective, there is a potential challenge ahead in terms of integrating information from central and personal CRM-like databases and social media channels – although some mainstream systems (e.g. SugarCRM) appear to have addressed this issue.



2. Best practice – defining and aligning social media best practice in professional selling

As experience of social media and selling amongst the group was mixed, we wanted to draw out opinion on what best practice looked like when using social media in the professions and more specifically in selling in different environments before we offered our insights. So we split the workshop groups into three areas and integrated their thoughts into our models in the hope of providing something for everyone regardless of their level of sophistication:

1. Social media for beginner, intermediate and “star” (advanced) fee-earners
2. Social media in existing relationship management
3. Social media in selling to new clients

2a. Social Media for beginner, intermediate and “star” (advanced) fee-earners

One of the groups tackled the task of trying to set out some best practice guidelines for how beginner, intermediate and advanced fee earners might use social media in their general marketing, promotion, selling and relationship management activities. These are categorised into different areas and we stress the need to answer the questions ‘What’s my strategy?’ and ‘What tools exist to support the strategy and what needs to be considered when using these tools?’. We have added their thoughts to our own:

	The absolute minimum that a fee-earner should know and do with social media to generate new or support existing relationships	What the average fee-earner should know and do	What a real star performer fee-earner (rainmaker) should know and do
	Develop knowledge	Develop presence	Develop contacts
Learn	Understand the tools available and their core uses from an organisational and personal perspective	Act as a champion for the use of social media within the department	Act as a champion for the use of social media within the firm
	Be familiar with the firm’s policies and guidelines on social media use	Demonstrate adherence to the firm’s policies and guidelines on social media use	Suggest ways in which the firm’s policies and guidelines on social media use should be adapted
	Be familiar with main social media tools	Use at least one social media tool – with assistance	Use many social media tools – without assistance
	Know how to adjust the security settings so that personal and business use is managed	Use security settings in a sophisticated way to leverage personal use in business situations	Monitor brand terms, personal names and keywords against security settings, ensure alerts are delivered to the right people in the business and act on them accordingly
Plan	Modify personal marketing and sales plan to reflect potential integrated use of social media – set goals	Modify departmental marketing and sales plan to reflect potential integrated use of social media – set objectives	Modify firm wide marketing and sales plans and systems to reflect integrated use of social media – set objectives and monitor return on investment
Position	Look at current ‘self’ and ‘business’ profiles, how are they positioned? How can they be maximised?	Separate professional and personal use of social networks if combined	Carefully integrate professional and personal use of social networks

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	Look for competitor video activity, is there opportunity to take market lead	Build 'light' Video profile which offers client value (not brochure-ware)	If appropriate build YouTube clips with links and other B2B platforms like Brighttalk etc
	Set up a basic LinkedIn profile – linked to the firm - with a photo	Add relevant detail to your LinkedIn profile and update status line once a month	Provide and seek recommendations
Listen	Use Google Alerts to remain familiar with the firm's activities	Use Google Alerts to remain familiar with activities of key clients and referrers	Use Google Alerts to track activities of potential/target clients and make contact as appropriate
	Look at Twitter lists for sector and competitor activity and follow those of key importance to the business	Create private Twitter lists to monitor common groups such as clients, key targets etc	Create public Twitter lists that add value to others
	Look at bookmarking tools and assess possible usage/effectiveness to the business	Be familiar with social bookmarking tools and have at least one account	An active user of social bookmarking tools to promote the material by others in your market/practice area and gain ratings for your own
Connect	LinkedIn connections within the firm and most critical clients and referrers	Generate at least 100 LinkedIn connections. Actively seek new connections in prospective and target client and referrer organisations	Have an extensive network of LinkedIn connections (at least 300) and promote these to others in the firm and external contacts where appropriate
	Gain an understanding of location based social media tools (e.g. Foursquare or Gowalla)	Start to use location based tools to check in to suitable business venues (take care with confidentiality)	Link to key clients, contacts and targets on location based social media to gain an understanding of where they go and their interests
Contribute	Update profiles once a quarter	Update profiles and status once a month	Update profiles and status at least once a week
	Posts as part of firm	Posts as part of practice group	Posts as individual expert
	Get involved in contributing to key shared spaces – think in a 'value add' not selling mindset	Position self as an important contributor to key shared spaces	Position yourself as an expert/leader in key shared spaces
	Join LinkedIn Groups set up by the firm and become active in	Create LinkedIn groups and initiate and moderate polls and discussions	Maximise LinkedIn groups throughout the firm (individuals and business groups) and initiate and moderate polls and discussions
	Watch the firm's Twitter streams and those of key clients and contacts. Provide occasional material to tweet through the firm's streams	Have your own Twitter account – linked to the firm – and provide regular Tweets on business matters and engage in dialogues with existing and new contacts	Have your own Twitter account – linked to the firm – and provide regular Tweets on business matters and engage in dialogues with existing and new contacts
	Become familiar with the firm's blogs and the critical ones in your markets/practice areas	Use RSS to subscribe to key blogs and provide occasional entries to the firm and others' blogs	Manage your own blog and place entries at least once a month

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2b. Social media in existing relationship management

Another workshop group addressed how fee-earners might integrate social media into their activities for managing and developing existing client and referrer relationships. This proved a challenge as each firm has its own processes and systems – most involving different phases of relationship development and mixes of clients and activities. There was also marked difference between managing key client relationships and key referrer/intermediary relationships. However, a framework emerged which we have tried to refine:

<i>The activity or stage in the process of existing client relationship management</i>	<i>How social media might be used to enhance/support this activity/process</i>
Listen and watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify topics of personal/business interest – use bookmarking and other tools (e.g. Google Alerts) to monitor developments on these topics • Monitor the topics of interest of the relevant clients and referrers • Look at who clients and referrers are linked to and who they interact with
Keep in touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect to and watch feeds clients and referrers - Monitor their status and new connections in LinkedIn - Subscribe to their RSS/feeds and/or monitor their blogs - Monitor their tweets • Interacting - Send emails to comment on relevant posts - Send them links to relevant blogs that may be of interest to them - Retweet their tweets - Rate and/or comment on their posts - Recommend/forward their posts to contacts that they will value • Use LinkedIn updates to pose comment/question
Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post status updates about changes and news that may be of interest to them • Generate lists of providers generating material that may be of interest to them – and monitor content • Email and use relevant social media to send them relevant links to information about the firm • Do the same on more public networks to trusted third parties
Extend exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alert them to others in your firm who may be of interest – by, for example, retweeting their material or forwarding relevant links • Offer information that may be relevant to others in their organisation • Seek ways to connect to relevant others in their organisation
Help/Add value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask them whether you have any links in whom they are interested in connecting to • Introduce them to others – either formally or informally • Send links to relevant information • Respond to their questions • Involve them in relevant discussions • Direct others to them where they are perceived as experts
Generate referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer relevant contacts to them where they may be able to partner or generate business • Ask who they know and who they want to know • Request introductions from them when appropriate

Promote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce them to others • Promote their organisation and content to a broader audience • Offer to collaborate to promote both organisations through appropriate content or platforms
Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build knowledge, content and networks together

2c. Social media in selling to new clients

This workshop group faced the most difficult task – primarily because many firms do not involve their marketers/business development personnel in the sales process and – where they do – the sales processes are somewhat different depending on the sophistication of the firm, the nature of the market and clients, the nature of the specific services being offered, the decision making process and the sales cycle. However, we worked with their ideas to develop the following generic framework that can hopefully be tailored to different firms' practices.

The activity or stage in the process of new client development	How social media might be used to enhance/support this activity/process
Pre-relationship	
Listen and understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Marketing focus at market level, sales focus at organisational level) • Scan relevant blogs • Identify relevant groups and online communities • Subscribe to RSS feeds of key blogs • Post comments to relevant blogs
Participate and position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join relevant groups • Provide responses to questions • Propose new questions and polls in LinkedIn • Post links through Twitter to relevant content • Develop authoritative and up to date content in your own blog
Find and Qualify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify relevant individuals • Research their organisation, department, role and social media preferences • Research position in the decision making process • Establish Google Alerts to track developments by them and on relevant topics
Show and share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate your expertise on all platforms • Post regular comments and content in places they are likely or known to visit • Share relevant, useful content • Provide examples of relevant similar clients/jobs • Send direct links to material likely to be of particular interest
Influence and impress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and share valuable content • Connect with recognised experts and key influencers in their sphere • Encourage credible and respected third party figures to endorse or comment upon your material
Relationship creation	

Contact and Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with them through group discussions Respond to their requests for assistance Comment on their posts Grade and rate their posts Offer ideas and sources Contact them through relevant third parties (or seek introductions) Contact them direct when you have something of interest or value to them or to request they collaborate
Nurture and Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn – directly and indirectly – about their professional and personal needs and seek ways to help them Explore their requirements by scrutinizing their relevant posts and questions (and the responses) Pose key questions Scrutinise existing contacts (within and outside their organisation) Clarify expectations during pitch preparations Recognise buying signals and know when to shift to telephone/face to face Research their latest posts before all contact Note where they have expressed a preference (or dislike) of particular ideas and approaches and styles
Promote and Introduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight and rate their material Promote and retweet their links and details where appropriate Embed mentions of their organisation where relevant (always be sensitive to confidentiality) Include them/their organisation in your posts (with permission as necessary) Introduce them to contacts they will value
Presence and presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure posts are relevant to their needs Confirm their areas of interest/refine proposition Follow up on telephone/face to face contact with social media where appropriate Post regularly to show you are alert to their interests Post presentation materials where they can access them (but take care with exclusivity – see below)
Relationship development	
Remind and reassure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make regular appearances on key networks where they can see your contribution Make regular relevant contact through a variety of channels Maintain your work on being seen as an expert in relevant areas Post occasional acknowledgement and/or thanks where appropriate
Extend and Embed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constantly connect with others in their organisation when and where relevant Promote them and their staff to key people in your organisation and to third parties that they will value Connect them to others in your organisation or to other organisations
Review and recommend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor their own and their organisation's activities and posts – provide help where appropriate Demonstrate that you remain interested in their world Recommend them/their organisation to others Request introductions to others they might know

3. Key themes emerging

During the course of our research before and after the discussions at the workshops, a number of key issues and themes arose which we felt merited a mention in this White Paper.

We're showing these under two categories:

1. **Social media as a change agent for sales (and marketing):** These are likely to cause change and disruption in your business:
 - a. Integration of Marketing and Selling
 - b. Personal brands vs. Corporate brands
 - c. The Decision Making Unit and sales cycle
2. **Social media requirements resulting from change:** The resulting requirements of the changes caused by social media:
 - a. Setting clear objectives
 - b. Exclusivity vs. Givers gain
 - c. Layers of information
 - d. Sector and client type differences
 - e. Developing trust
 - f. Fee earner or firm networks (Risk Management)

3.1 Social media as a change agent for sales

The following are what could be considered to be agents of change. Changes in the way clients interact with your business that you need to be aware of, or need to take action to respond to.

a. Integration of marketing and selling

Business development in the professions has tended to polarise into two distinct areas:

- i) the marketing communications activities to position and promote the firm and generate leads (Awareness and Communications)
- ii) the selling processes that pursue the leads to create relationships or develop those relationships to generate business (Relationship Development)

What is clear is that social media in the professions provides a key opportunity to integrate these two activities so that the distinction between firm wide and personal marketing (see below) and between marketing and selling becomes blurred.

This is extremely good news both for those who are in marketing and business development positions as it means that their full range of skills and expertise can now be deployed through the entire marketing-selling-relationship development cycle and it is good news for the fee-earners who will no longer need to tread the lonely road of selling alone. It is good news too for the firms who should see the greater integration result in more effective campaigns, reduced sales cycle and more efficient business development. The firm's reputation should also be more protected as well – if all those communicating in its name are following agreed policies and procedures, using similar tools and understand the overall aims and key messages.

Communication with clients, referrers, targets and prospects, whether inbound or outbound, is now powered by conversation and social media provides the platform for these conversations and marketing and sales staff will work together to ensure that effective conversations are maintained.

b. Personal brands versus corporate/firm brands?

The professions are familiar with the concept of personal brands – or individual fee-earner reputation management. In fact, this was the dominant – although sometimes accidental - method of promoting professional firms before deregulation allowed firms to promote themselves.

There has always been a dynamic tension between the profile and reputation of the individual lawyer versus that of the firm. But in the social media space – and when it comes to selling – the issue is more dramatic.

The professions need to be clear about their positioning and policies when it comes to personal brands versus the corporate brand image. There are many benefits to allowing individuals to develop their own 'brand image' – particularly where the firm is entering a new market or promoting a new service. This is commonly known as the “expert” or “rock star” approach to promotion. But there are also risks when a potentially maverick personal brand is too strongly linked to the firm brand. And some fee-earners may be concerned that too much value is invested in another fee-earner's personal brand which may mean client loyalty is to the individual rather than to the firm. So it is imperative that a social media strategy exists and social media policies are communicated.

The issue distils into the question “How do we encourage our fee-earners to engage with tools such as Twitter and to promote their own opinions and personalities whilst also wanting them to operate within the umbrella of the firm's brand?”. Yet social media also means that the cumulative effect of many separate personal brands can be channelled and leveraged to raise and increase the value of the firm's brand overall. Social media also means that personal brands can be allowed to adapt to the needs of different markets and clients (and fee-earner personalities) within the overall guidelines of the firm's brand.

The use of tools such as <http://knowem.com/> can provide a good way of ensuring a profession captures it's key brand terms on the more established social networks to prevent them being abused by others, either individuals or businesses.

The following guidance should be helpful to fee earners who are attempting to create a personal brand – and will ensure that they integrate into existing marketing and sales strategies at a departmental or firm-wide level:

SoMe - personal branding as a route to selling

1. Have a clear and measurable objective
2. Develop a plan
3. Make a commitment
4. Be where your clients are
5. Start Listening
6. Test some questions and posts
7. Give up control
8. Be natural
9. Learn to deal with negativity
10. So what's happening - increase in response? Share of voice? Ranking? Any leads?

S = start
O = observe
M = maximise
e = engage

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c. Decision making unit and sales cycles

As various different sales models that are deployed within the professions (e.g. Chartered Institute of Marketing, client relationship hierarchy, PACE Pipeline model, SPIN™ Selling, Strategic Selling (Miller Heiman) and the property and construction sector seven stage model (Basil Sawczuk)) it suggests that social media will need to be integrated into sales processes in different ways – what is acknowledged is the opportunity for engaging with the entire Decision Making Unit (DMU) with social media.

Reaching the Decision Making Unit with social media



Often, because selling in the professions has been limited by the use of expensive senior fee-earner time either in face to face communication or on the telephone, some elements of the DMU have been neglected. With social media it is possible to reach out, tailor conversations and communicate with the different people in the DMU in social media platforms, on online communities and with messages that are tailored to their needs in an efficient and effective way. Managing the sales process across the various people in the DMU with a co-ordinated social media and traditional communication methods should speed up the conversion time.

But one key concern is the extent to which real decision makers are online. This remains to be seen.

d. Developing trust

A key concept in selling in the professions is that of trust. David Maister and Charles Green developed a formula for calculating your trust quotient and it is possible to calculate this using their online tool.

The TRUST equation *(Maister, Green and Galford)*

$$T = \frac{C + R + I}{S}$$

Trustworthiness

Credibility

Reliability

Intimacy

Self-orientation



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A critical issue from a social media perspective is that of the need to minimise the self-orientation – i.e. whilst fee-earners need to be able to express their views and share insights about their day-to-day working lives in order to develop their personal brand and character they must remain alert to the dangers of “over sharing” and bombarding their clients and contacts with irrelevant (and sometimes irritating) trivia relating to themselves. Education and good case studies and models will support fee-earners in this area.

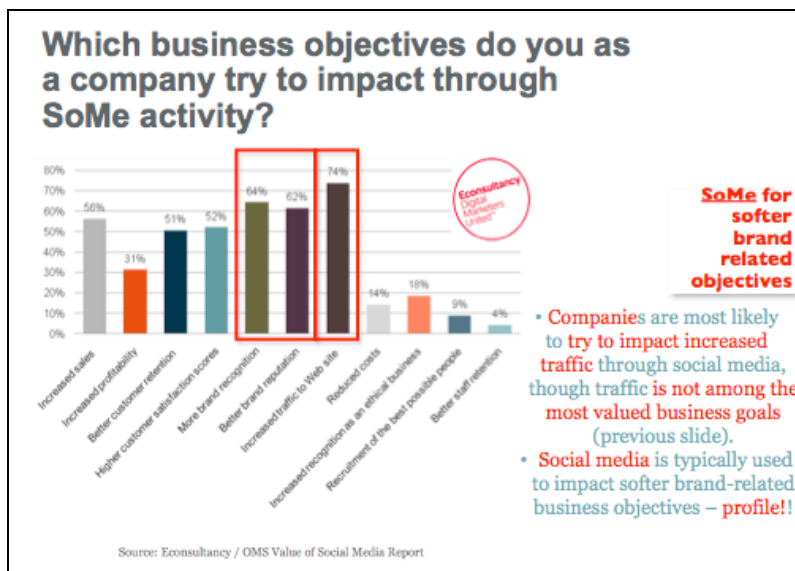
3.2 Social media requirements resulting from the changes

Social media has created a number of dramatic changes to the way in which marketing, selling and relationship management takes place within a professional firm and it also paradoxically means that firms must constantly adapt the ways in which they deploy social media.

a. Set clear objectives

Getting fee-earners, their departments and the firm to develop and commit to SMART objectives has always been a challenge in the professions – and partly because with traditional methods of communication and business development (and the lengthy sales cycles) it was difficult to measure. Social media does make it easier to measure progress and results but it is imperative that clear objectives are set to avoid marketers, business developers and fee-earners investing large amounts of time in social media without being able to measure the return on investment.

Commercial organisations vary significantly in what they are trying to achieve through the use of social media, as Econsultancy's research shows ([Value of Social Media Report](#)):



It is not surprising that with new tools such as social media, there is much experimentation while learning the power and pitfalls and much enthusiasm to “jump on the bandwagon”. What becomes clear therefore is the need in selling – as is the practice in marketing – to set clear objectives for what you wish to achieve and thus set some parameters for how you will measure success.

With the use of social media in selling being in its infancy in the professions, there is only anecdotal evidence to show that it works. For example:

- “I approached your firm because when I searched for a specialist in my market I found your blogs on the subject”
- “I was impressed that your firm was actively using social media tools and already had my company on its radar”
- “As an international lawyer it is hard to know who to approach in a foreign territory, but you can gauge the potential value of a person on LinkedIn by the comprehensiveness and sophistication of the profile, the range of contacts and the recommendations from relevant organisations”

In the early stages of social media use, there are tools available (see “Inbound Marketing” by Halligan and Shah) that enable you to measure the reach and worth of an individual’s online and social media networks. HubSpot has a range of tools to measure the effectiveness of web sites, blogs and Twitter accounts.

However, pipeline, opportunity and sales management systems will need to be modified in order to account for the interactions, introductions and relationships that can be attributed to social media effectiveness.

b. Exclusivity vs Giver's Gain?

Most recognise the value in providing information to people – as well as positioning you as an expert and as someone willing to help, it can be vital in establishing contact and the early stages of relationship formation. The idea of “Givers Gain” is well known within the professions. Many sales approaches advocate ensuring that some value is delivered to the prospect at every interaction.

And social media supports and encourages users to share their knowledge (e.g. SlideShare on LinkedIn), provide links to good quality content on web sites and/or blogs and even answer questions for free.

Firms will be keen to ensure that their fee-earners observe copyright restrictions and also that they are not exposed to risks of professional negligence for advice given “for free” through social media channels.

Yet Laurie Young's model of a strategy for developing a personal franchise for high margin work warns against “selling the family silver”. Most firms would agree that there must be a balance in terms of what information is made available for all, what is made available for loyal/valued clients and what is the preserve of just a few, carefully selected key clients or prospects.

Whilst in the past it was standard practice to provide a beautifully bound hard copy of the firm's most precious knowledge to a cherished key client, the social media revolution means that firms will have to develop robust policies and guidance to fee-earners on what content may be freely shared and which needs to have its distribution carefully managed and monitored.

c. Layers of information

One of the interesting observations from our research and the workshop discussions was that different social media platforms provide insights into different aspects of an individual's preferences and interests. For example, often the LinkedIn profile will focus on current professional interests. Facebook – if public access is allowed (and it must be said that the majority of people we spoke to saw Facebook as the preserve of personal interactions and excluded from the business sphere) - will concentrate on more personal interests. Personal Twitter accounts sometimes give an insight into people's home, family and private lives – and the nature of the lists that they maintain confirm their particular areas of operations. Foursquare and Gowalla show where people are most likely to go – not only providing insight into their interests and life style but potentially giving hints as to where face-to-face interactions might best be pitched – or, for the bold – where face to face contact can be engineered to occur “spontaneously”.

There will be national and cultural perspectives – as well as firm and personal values – that will have a view on the appropriateness of which elements of this wealth of information might be monitored and used for professional purposes. There are also critical Data Protection and Privacy issues which those in the professions are much better placed to comment upon than us.

d. Sector and client type differences

Obviously, the take up of social media amongst different sectors (e.g. corporate finance, real estate, technology and media) will have an impact of the use of social media by fee-earners. There are also concerns about the nature of different client organisations (e.g. public and private sector, large and small firms) and the seniority, job function and role in the Decision Making Unit of the individuals at client and prospect organisations that would have an impact on the appropriate use of social media.

When you add in the generational factors (i.e. Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants) you start to develop a complex matrix of where social media is most and least likely to have an impact on new business relationships. Further research and studies in this area are required but in the meantime, firms should attempt to learn about the preferences and best practice in their markets and develop policies and training accordingly.

e. Fee-earner or firm networks? Risk management

Every young fee-earner, as they start their professional career, understands that as well as honing their professional knowledge and skills they must create and cultivate their own contact base. In the

past they had business cards and more recently they used the contact management or CRM (Client Relationship Management) systems of their firms. Many firms encourage fee-earners to use Outlook to store their professional and personal contacts (with appropriate “hide” options) so that the relevant relationships for the firm can be stored and managed from a central database.

As the professions became more mobile, fee-earners could walk out the door taking their list of clients and contacts with them (within reason and subject to restrictive covenants). The failsafe mechanism for the firm was that the information was in the central system and, if they had good relationship management programmes, there would always be another fee-earner within the firm who could maintain the individual client and contact relationships even though the originator of that relationship had left.

With social media fee-earners can have several networks of clients and contacts – Facebook friends, Twitter followers, LinkedIn contacts and so on. And these contacts are unlikely to be integrated into the firm’s central databases. So when the individual fee-earner leaves, they take their clients and contacts with them. So how do firms ensure that they keep track of those relationships that are mission critical to their business? There are promising signs that new CRM solutions will tackle the issue but in the meantime the firms must have clear policies and training programmes.

More sophisticated fee-earners may take things a step further and create groups, promote discussions, share knowledge and ideas and develop a leading on-line community for their area of practice or market. With effort, such communities can become more valuable to the members than anything that the firm itself might develop or operate. So what happens when these fee-earners depart? Who “owns” the group? Again, intellectual property and employment experts are best placed to address these types of emerging issues.

f. Metrics and measures

If you are to set objectives then it is natural that you will need metrics and measures in order to monitor progress against them. So whilst it’s important to measure what you’re doing you shouldn’t allow fee-earners to get hung up on the sales conversion metrics of social media, that’s the job of marketing.

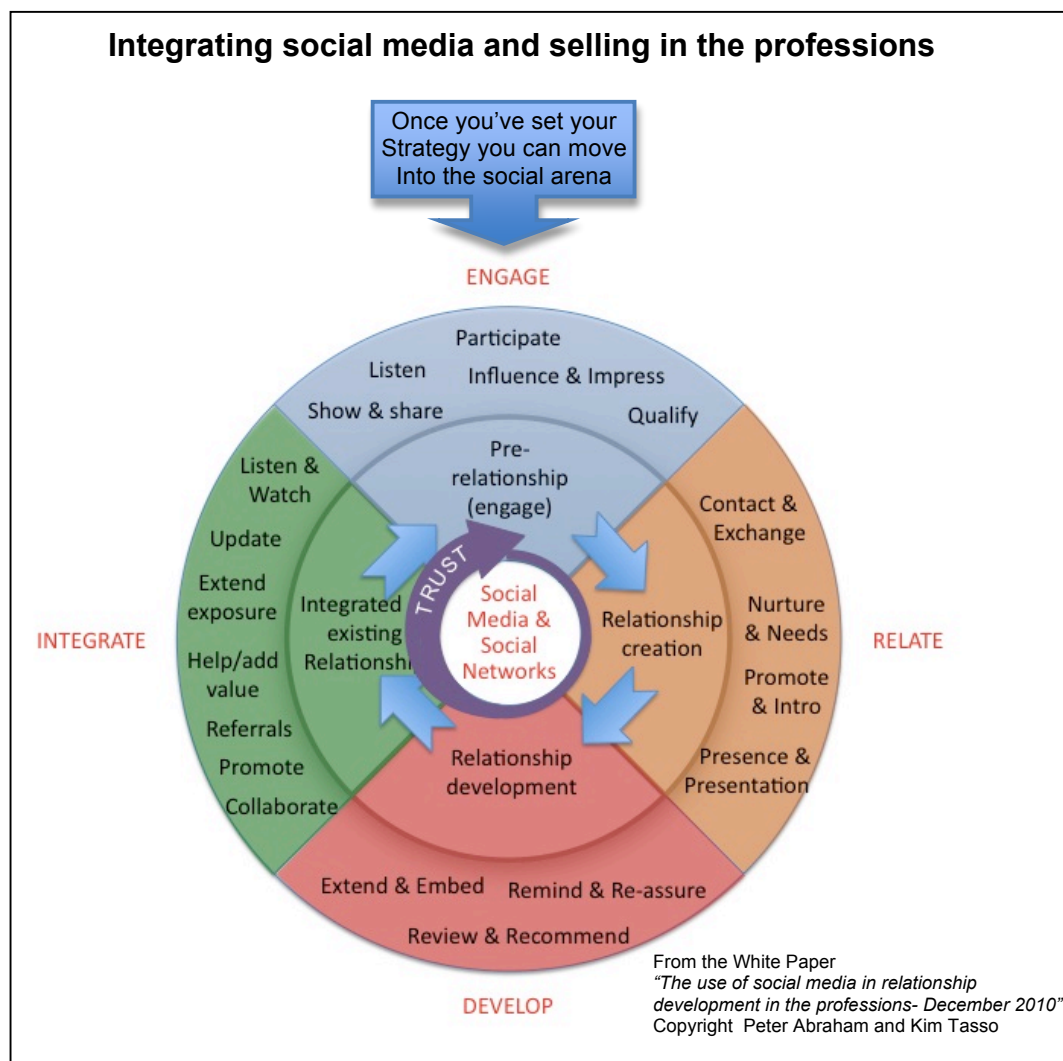
In this context you’ll want to measure specific metrics aligned to where you fall on the model shown below in the wheel diagram. Metrics and measures have to be thought more from an engagement perspective and “whole client relationship” perspective than individual interactions. The metrics used by marketing will be the same ones you’ll use for social media. By measuring what effect you’re having you should begin to understand which networks are most effective for you. This is important to understand as involving yourself in social media can be a massive drain on time if you have no strategy and no focus.

But like with any campaign – be it marketing or selling – ensure that the measures focus on progress against overall objectives and these should be aligned to the entire business development process – (the overall pipeline of lead generation, enquiry management, relationship development and sales conversion) not the use of a particular tool.

4. Towards a model that integrates social media and selling in the professions

It was our intention – at the outset of the exercise – to develop a model to provide guidance to marketers, business developers, sales people and fee-earners in the profession to integrate effectively social media into their selling processes.

For many reasons, it has not been possible to finalise our work in the short time available. However, our thinking so far can be summarised in the following model:



As you will observe, much of this model focuses on interaction and exchange rather than "marketing/sales pushing messages". It's also about delivering content to multiple touch-points as your clients will not always come to your website so go where they are/will be.

Our model, we believe, is supported by the latest thinking in marketing – as summarised by the latest work from Kotler, Kartajay and Setiawan in Marketing 3.0 which sees the change summarised as follows:

From Product management (Four Ps - product, price, place, promotion) to Co-creation
From Customer management (Segmentation, targeting and positioning) to Communitization
From Brand management (Brand building) to character building

We're interested in your thoughts and the models you currently use (if any), please join the discussion, contact us for further information.

5. Eleven Key Lessons

So, drawing together all of the ideas and thoughts we have touched on, the key lessons for professional firms would appear to be:

1. The first priority is for the **marketing and business development personnel** within a professional service firm to develop their own knowledge of both selling and social media and before getting started to have **objectives and a clear strategy for social media** in the organisation.
2. If your firm has only just begun to engage with social media, adopt or develop some **standard policies and procedures** to reassure senior partners who may be sceptical and to guide the behaviour of fee-earners. In particular, agree a policy on what information may be made available to all and what must be treated with more exclusivity.
3. Understand the **present sales behaviours** in your organisation – whether they follow established processes and models or are unique to your fee-earners. Mapping out the sales process – and the sales pipeline – is the starting point for looking at how best to integrate (or not) social media.
4. If your analysis indicates that there is a lack of knowledge or efficiency in your sales processes then it is probably best to start a **programme of sales training** so that all of your fee-earners have the necessary knowledge, techniques and confidence to establish a common sales strategy and approach.
5. Where a professional firm has a good grasp of selling principles and exhibits good sales and relationship management behaviours, provide **introductory training on social media tools** to selected groups of “early adopter” or champion fee-earners who can be coached and monitored as a pioneer group.
6. Where a firm has a **framework of selling competencies** work with human resources professionals, the social media champions and the key rainmakers to see how social media competencies can be built into the framework.
7. Where there are established and embedded sales processes – perhaps integrated into CRM and opportunity management systems – look at **how social media impacts those processes** and ensure that the systems guiding fee-earner behaviour and collecting/managing client and contact information are modified to accommodate social media use.
8. Recognise that the use of social media and the relevant sales processes in place will need to vary depending on whether the extent to which **sales professionals are involved** in the process i.e.:
 - Driven solely by fee-earners
 - Managed by a team of fee-earners and sales professionals
 - Driven solely by sales professionals
9. Work with the early adopter champions in your firm – ideally those pursuing strategies in well defined niches – to monitor results and identify best practice and **promote their successes internally**
10. For particularly cautious firms, test technologies internally e.g. **the use of Yammer** (an internal version of Twitter), to help them develop their skills and to understand the potential threats and weaknesses of social media
11. As users become more experienced and technologies evolve, prepare to modify your processes and systems to **encompass the latest best practice** and to allow a creating degree of freedom to “trusted” social media users. There are significant indicators that social media will increasingly be used to deliver enhanced client service. So be prepared to constantly review new technologies and developments so that policies, guidance, training and best practice can be modified accordingly.

6. And next...what's trending?

Econsultancy has produced and continues to generate much material on trends in digital marketing and the social media space. Please contact Peter for more details. In terms of those emerging trends that are most likely to have an impact on social media and selling for professional firms, the following list can be used as a guide:

- **Mobile web** – users will increasingly want information on the move and local to their current position. The explosion of smart phones and advances in mobile infrastructure is making this a fundamental consideration for some businesses.
- **Local** – more and more content and devices are location oriented. Mobile apps like Foursquare, social networks like Facebook and search engines like Google already offer localized information services honing in on your current position through GPS. Many of these solutions will offer or partner up-sell and cross-sell opportunities.
- **It's about me** (and possibly me as a brand) – How you define yourself online and whether you have two profiles or one for business/personal is an important consideration in social media. But approached in the right way you can build lifetime value in your profile building 'you' as brand as well as serving your company in the process. Read this book- *Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success* – (Dan Schawbel)
- **Apps and Micropayments** (note there are a number of professional firm Apps – MoFo, BusinessAdviserToGo, Knight Frank etc) – mobile apps that offer help, updates and experiences that are really useful and not extensions of their website are growing alongside the smartphone revolution. Many companies are partnering with information services to provide experiences or assistance supported by the brand.
- **Collaboration and distributed content** – Your site is only one place where your clients will get exposed to your services and you as a brand. Professions need to think about distributing content so that they have more of a presence and chance that a prospective client will 'find' them and their associated services.
- **Engaging and sharing** – givers' gain. Two heads better than one. Think of social media and networks as the natural extension of how you've traditionally done business, except now using the right approach and tools you have access to a large number of people who can assist you in growing your presence, either as an individual or a business. Intellectual property that you own and that you feel can be shared without damaging your business will gain more business and profile for you.
- **Layered content and APIs** (Augmented reality) – Augmented reality offers professionals the opportunity to provide data about themselves or companies available as a translucent layer over other information such as maps, games or images, many of these are also location based. Imagine office tours pushed by property agents to a user with layered information as they navigate a property.
- **Crowd sourcing** Increasingly, both consumers and business users place more trust in the comments, reviews and recommendations of their peers rather than the organizations promoting their own brands and products/services. Monitoring and managing the reputation of the firm – and its fee-earners – through a myriad of platforms – only some of which will be social media – will become an increasing challenge.

7. About the authors

As we said at the outset, the use of social media in relationship management in the professions is in its infancy. Our knowledge and ideas are evolving all the time. We will continue our exploration of this fascinating area. Please connect with us – in the traditional way or preferably through social media – and we can continue the dialogue and learning together.

Peter Abraham, Director - Econsultancy.com

Peter's a director at Econsultancy.com which provides best practice in Digital Marketing and assists companies in building effective digital marketing teams.

He has an MSc in Digital Marketing, runs various LinkedIn groups and Twitter profiles, and has presented on how to use social media with established digital marketing channels and has also looked at 'What's trending in Digital Marketing'. He is currently particularly interested/involved in mobile and social/business networks and how the 'mobile web' will transform a world which was wired and static into one which is fluid, mobile and accessible to all.

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Kim Tasso, Managing Director, Practical Marketing Consultancy

Kim is an independent strategic marketing consultant, specialising in the professional services sector, with over 30 years' experience. Qualified in psychology, management, marketing, coach/mentoring and NLP, Kim started her career in sales and marketing positions in the technology sector and her first book ("Dynamic practice development - Selling skills and techniques in the professions") was published in 2000. She has worked in-house in senior business development roles at Deloitte and Nabarro and as a consultant for hundreds of legal, accounting and surveying firms.

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8. Further reading

We have tried to provide a comprehensive resource – without producing a real tome – of the books, papers and references that we feel will be of most value to those reviewing the role of social media within selling in the professions. Please let us know if you believe there are other resources that should be included and we will maintain a list and make it available to you.

Professional bodies

a. The client perspective - Legal

As in all good marketing, we would expect to explore the client perspective in terms of their views of the value of social media. The **US 2010 report “Corporate Counsel New Media Engagement Survey” (Greentarget, Legal Intelligence, Zeughauser Group)** interviewed 64 members of the in-house community. The main findings of interest for us from the perspective of the use of social media for selling are as follows:

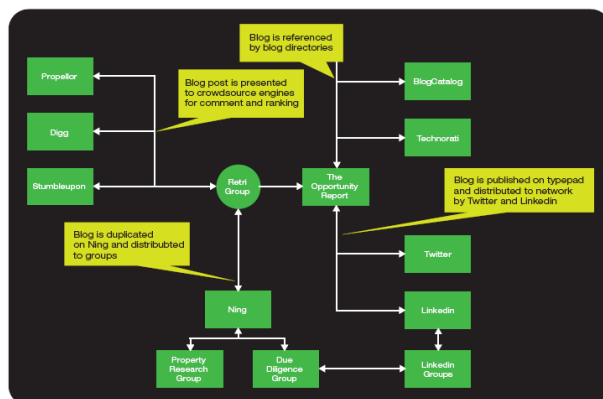
- Referrals from trusted sources and credentialing activity (i.e. demonstrations of thought leadership) remain the two most important factors considered by corporate general counsel when they seek to hire outside lawyers
- While the more traditional articles in trade journals, speaking at industry conferences and being quoted in the press – in house attorneys are now using new media platforms to deepen their professional networks; to obtain their legal, business and industry news and information and to enrich their social and personal lives.
- At March 2010, 96 of the AmLaw (American Lawyer) 200 are blogging. Every AmLaw 200 firm has a company profile on LinkedIn. Of the 50 million users currently on LinkedIn nearly 1.5m are lawyers. 31 of the AmLaw 100 have “fan pages” on Facebook. 76 of the AmLaw 100 have a presence on Twitter and just under half of those firms haven’t posted a single tweet.
- Almost half of the respondents use LinkedIn, 68% use Facebook, although for the time being the latter primarily for personal instead of professional reasons.
- The social networking and new media tools that inhouse counsel most frequently use for professional reasons are LinkedIn, blogs and Wikipedia. For personal reasons it is Facebook, Wikipedia and YouTube.
- In-house counsel ranked the following activities as “most important” for helping them to research outside counsel for potential hire:
 - 73% Recommendations from sources you trust
 - 38% Articles and speeches the lawyer has authored
 - 30% Biographies on the firm’s web site
 - **27% Blogs published by lawyers on relevant topics**
 - 25% Rankings and directories
 - **22% Twitter feeds from lawyers**
 - **18% Endorsements and connections on LinkedIn**
 - 15% Quotes by lawyers in relevant media outlets
- The three largest words in the cloud in response to “What three words or phrases best describe your general attitude toward and/or impression of social media tools” were time, information and credibility
- 63% of in-house counsel are very familiar or somewhat familiar with Twitter.
- Blogs ranked 4th ahead of general business web sites, web sites covering your industry, broadcast media and social media web sites.

The main finding appears to be that: “Law firms recognise that Twitter, Facebook and other social media channels are just one more way of delivering content to clients and other interested parties. But to maximise the use of these tools, law firms will have to create information worthy of their audience’s time and attention, and acknowledge that social media communication is a community-driven and participatory activity, not a forum for ‘product push’.

We couldn’t find any papers on social media published by The Law Society – apologies if we missed it.

b. The market perspective – property surveying

The RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) published a paper called ***“The role of social media and commercial property”*** by **Andrew Waller and Bob Thomson** in November 2009. It contains a number of case studies of property businesses using Twitter and Facebook and has interesting reviews of things such as Realestatewiki and CREOpaint. It also offers a useful example of a media map for a simple blog about the real estate sector – showing the interaction between firm and individual channels.



c. The Accountants’ perspective

There are various articles on the ICAEW site relating to social media including:

ICAEW - Get staff using social media to your benefit

http://www.icaew.com/index.cfm/route/173400/icaew_ga/en/Technical_and_Business_Topics/Guides_and_publications/Small_Business_Update/Articles_Marketing

ICAEW - Action List: How to create an effective social media profile

http://www.icaew.com/index.cfm/route/170436/icaew_ga/en/Technical_and_Business_Topics/Guides_and_publications/Small_Business_Update/Articles_Marketing

ICAEW - The Seven Deadly Sins of Social Media

by [Elaine Clark](#)

<http://www.ion.icaew.com/Talkaccountancyblog/20646>

d. Useful guides

LinkedIn

LinkedIn has various on-line guides (one that is tailored for US attorneys). The following are the 10 LinkedIn Strategic Steps to Success:

1. Take control of your Image and Likeness
2. Master the Connection Process
3. Get by Giving
4. Master Group Development
5. Contribute “Real Value”
6. Reach out to your Targeted Audience
7. Research using LinkedIn
8. Be the Media
9. Become a Master Networker
10. Build Your Credibility

[The Revolution of Social Selling for B2B Companies](#) By Umberto Milletti

The key points are:

1. From mass marketing to targeted/customized consumer messaging
2. From requiring “ready-to-buy” prospects to establishing and developing relationships
3. From “stranded” sales reps to unified and collaborative communities

Read more: <http://socialmediab2b.com/2010/08/b2b-social-selling-traditional-selling/#ixzz11JJQwrl9>

[How Social Media Can Improve Your Sales Process \(A Real Business Case Study\)](#) by Ellie Mirman (Hubspot)

The key points are:

- 1.) **Listen.** Social media gives you visibility into the sales funnel where before you were in the dark.
- 2.) **Respond authentically.**
- 3.) **Learn and improve.** Take this feedback and use it to improve your processes. Never before was it so easy to get candid feedback -- now utilize it.

Read more: <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/4973/How-Social-Media-Can-Improve-Your-Sales-Process-A-Real-Business-Case-Study.aspx#ixzz11JKa487Q>

Check out Econsultancy.com for best practice and regular blogs on the subject too

[Social Media and Online PR – Digital Marketing Template Files](#)

Social Media & PR Strategy Guidelines, Sample Social Media & PR Strategy Guidelines, Corporate Social Media Policy Guidelines, Network and Media Monitoring Templates

[Social Media and Online Brand Monitoring Trends Briefing June 2010](#)

Contains the latest market trends, best practice and statistics relating to online PR, brand monitoring and social media. This document contains an overview of market trends, tips for best practice, new statistics and useful resources.

e. Books

During the workshop session, we were asked to provide some references (both books and online resources) to materials that would assist the marketers and business development team to get up to speed on both selling and social media. There is a vast array out there but we have offered thoughts on those that we believe might be of most value.

i) Selling (generally and in the professions)

The new strategic selling - the unique sales system proven successful by the world's best companies (Stephen E Heiman, Diane Sanchez)

SPIN-selling (Neil Rackman)

Creating New Clients, Growing your client base and Managing Key Clients (Kevin Walker, Cliff Ferguson, Paul Denvir)

Marketing and selling professional services in architecture and construction (Basil Sawczuk)

Let's get real or let's not play – The demise of dysfunctional selling and the advent of helping clients succeed (Mahan Khalsa)

Dynamic Practice Development – Selling skills and techniques for the professions (Kim Tasso)

Connective Selling (John Timperley)

Smarter selling – Next generation sales strategies to meet your buyer's needs – every time
(Keith Dugdale and David Lambert)

Hope is not a strategy – The six ways to winning the complex sale (Rick Page)

ii) Social media

Crush It! – How to approach the use of social media through your own passion. (Gary Vaynerchuck)

Engage: The Complete Guide for Brands and Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure Success in the New Web – will help you establish an organizational structure that will offer support to any social media initiative. (Brian Solis)

Trust Agents: Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation, and Earn Trust – Looking at trust networks and build networks of influence through social media tools. (Chris Brogan and Julien Smith)

Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success – Build 'you' as a brand for lifetime value and career success. (Dan Schawbel)

Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies – written by a team of researchers from Forrester Research, although in parts getting dated, there are still some good pointers here, good for those just starting or the CEO who doesn't see why he needs to sit up and take note of social media. (Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff)

Wild West 2.0: How to Protect and Restore Your Reputation on the Untamed Social Frontier
A good starter for those wanting to know the why and how of reputation management in social. (Michael Fertik and David Thompson)

Tribes – How to build and lead your own tribes. As Godin says himself Tribes are... “a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea”. Godin is a Marketing Guru. (Seth Godin)

iii) Digital Marketing

Emarketing strategies for the complex sale (Ardath Albee)

Inbound marketing – Get found using Google, social media and blogs (Brain Halligan and Dharmesh Shah)

E-Marketing Excellence Book by David Chaffey

Check out Econsultancy.com for best practice digital marketing and regular blogs on the subject too.