MARKETING 101: CURING VISIOBIBLIOPHOBIA AND MAKING NETWORKING WORK FOR YOU

(Yes, “visiobibliophobia” is one of those new-fangled-made-up-on-the-internet-words meaning fear of social media and networking. Sadly, I cannot claim to have originated it.)

So, I have to be honest. Although I can be very outgoing at times, networking was always difficult for me. Standing around making small talk with strangers, awkwardly exchanging business cards with someone you may never see again, or listening to a boring speaker over lunch made me want to run in the other direction. However, everywhere I turned it seemed as though I got the same advice, which was to network in order to achieve greater name recognition and meet more contacts that could potentially turn into client referrals. Although perhaps unwelcome, that advice is true. When you are a small firm or solo practitioner without a large marketing budget or the benefit of having been around so long that marketing is unnecessary, networking can be key. The trick is to find a networking group or method that works for you. For example, if you love to squeeze in a workout during lunch, network in the morning or after work; if you live and work in North Knoxville, don’t commit to a regular meeting in Farragut. My personal networking niche fell into place when, with the help of some of my now closest friends, we recognized a vacuum in the market and started our own unique networking group. That group has grown tremendously and allowed me to see that this part of marketing my business can be both fun and fulfilling. Fortunately, it has also resulted in referrals.

Here is just a snapshot of a few networking opportunities in the area:

- **Chamber of Commerce.** The Knoxville Chamber regularly hosts events that are fun and unique and offer sponsorship opportunities. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of East Tennessee also has great events. Both organizations’ calendars are available online.1

- **Tight Ship.** A business coaching service that routinely offers low-cost networking events, including one that was recently hosted by Jewelry Television. They also have a website and online calendar.2

- **Business Network International – BNI.** Hosts groups of industry-specific meetings, which you can attend in the mornings before going into the office. There are several local chapters in Knox and surrounding counties.3

- **Phi Alpha Delta.** This organization is a law fraternity and has an alumni chapter here in Knoxville.4

As you meet new people through your networking efforts, incorporate those contacts with your social media endeavors. Marketing through blogging, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn combined with networking can be mutually beneficial. Once you have someone’s contact information, be sure to connect with them on these social platforms. That way, you are ensuring continued communication and interaction. Below, I will detail how I have used each platform and include a few tips that way, you are ensuring continued communication and interaction.

**Twitter.** At first blush, Twitter may seem irrelevant to marketing for law firms. However, using Twitter allows you to connect to an audience that you may otherwise never have reached. You can link to new blog posts, give helpful tips and information, and promote any announcements or news about your firm. Twitter is also another method of connecting with attorneys in other practice areas or geographic locations. Just as an example, many local attorneys and organizations are active on Twitter. Some of those include:

- Cohen Chuck-Smith @CohenChuckSmith
- Ted Kern @tedkernla
- Norman Mckellar @McKellarLawFirm
- Heidi Barcus @habarcus
- Brennan Lenihan @lawyermediator
- Howard Vogel @hhvogel
- Casey Carrigan @LawyerCasey
- Marsha Wilson @mwknoxbar
- Robert Kurtz @RobertKurtz
- UTK Law @UTKlaw
- Tennessee Courts @TNCourts
- US 6th Circuit @US6thCircuitCt
- SCOTUSblog @SCOTUSblog

Also, Twitter can be quite entertaining, so I can’t resist these suggestions, just for good measure: Smokey Mascot @UTSmokeyMascot; Curiosity Rover@MarsCuriosity; and Grumpy Cat @RealGrumpyCat. I would recommend taking a look at the Twitter for Small Business Guide available in PDF format online.5

**LinkedIn.** LinkedIn can also help you connect with other lawyers, business people and networking events. In addition to these personal connections, you can join Groups and post Updates. Groups are topic-specific forums for members to exchange information, ask and answer questions, and plan events. For example, I am a member of the following Groups: Divorce and Family Lawyer Referral Group; Knoxville Business Builders; Networking In Knoxville, TN; and iPad Attorney.

**Facebook.** Creating a Facebook Business Page for your firm is a great way to get started with social media. On your Page, you can post photographs and informational videos, promote your blog, make announcements and connect with past and future clients. The more you interact with others on Facebook, the more reach your page will have. Therefore, make sure to “Like” other pages, “Share” content (both your own and others’) and create running conversations with comments.

**Blogging.** Before starting a blog, figure out what purpose you want your blog to serve. Generally, blogs do two things-increase website visibility and provide information to potential clients. Therefore, a niche blog might be better for your practice than one that covers a wide range of topics. As my practice is primarily focused on divorce, I routinely blog about appellate decisions touching on family law and changes to our state family law statutes. Blogging can help build and expand your brand, bolster your credibility and knowledge base, and reach potential clients that may have specific questions. You can then promote your blog through Twitter and Facebook. There are several ways to get your blog up and running, but both Blogger and Word Press are great places to start.

Although it can be daunting to add these additional responsibilities when you are “goin’ it alone,” over time the effort is well worth the results. The key to both networking and social media is consistency. And, like me, you just might find that you have fun along the way.

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1 http://www.knoxvillevchamber.com/events-programs; http://www.hcct.org
2 http://tightship.us/wordpress1/events/
3 http://www.bni.com/index.html
4 https://www.facebook.com/groups/32624335348/?ref=tf&ref=ts
5 https://g.twimg.com/business/pdfs/Twitter_Smallbiz_Guide.pdf
6 https://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g; wordpress.com