

Thoughts about Allowing Comments on Your Firm Blog

Good afternoon all,

I currently have a blog on my firm's website (<http://felicellolaw.com/category/blog/>). I turned the comments field off because I was concerned about liability/establishing a client relationship/etc., but am I losing out by not letting readers comment? Do you expect to be able to comment when you read a blog post? For those who have blogs, do you let readers comment? How do you monitor the comments?

Thanks!

I let people comment on my blog. I don't think it will be reviewed as an attorney/client relationship but just in case I'm adding disclaimers to my site. I use Wordpress and it lets me monitor the comments - deleting an unwelcome comment is easily handled.

Kevin E. Trabaris, Illinois

I had comments on and all I got were spam type comments, ie unintelligible compliments at first that seemed to be feeling out the website and then they became unintelligible sales pitches. Since I had received one normal comment after several months, I turned the comments off.

Since then I have received a couple people contacting me about linking to my site or using content, but they were easily able to get to me by clicking to my main website and contacting me there.

Guess if you get any benefit from it, it might be worthwhile, but my experience is that people contact me through the website.

Keith E. Davis, Texas

I've been blogging at my Sui Generis blog since 2005 and stopped allowing comments a number of years ago for that same reason. Most comments consist of spam and it's just not worth it. And, with social media, most discussion occurs elsewhere anyway. So why not allow discussion to occur elsewhere where it's genuine rather than spam? At least, that's my thinking on it.

Niki

-- *Nicole Black, New York

I monitor them and allow what I choose to allow. For the spam, if you install a Captcha plug-in, that will eliminate the spam issue. I have been spam-free since I installed the plug-in.

Michelle Kainen, Vermont

I agree with Niki about not allowing commenting. The goal is not to turn your firm's website/blog into Facebook as a social hangout. This should be better left to ... well, Facebook.

Use blogging to show expertise, talk about areas of the law in which you practice, address FAQ's, and create an opening in the dialogue for clients to call you so that you can learn about their problems (and they can retain you). A blog does not have to be a 2-way conversation.

Regards,

Jeff

Jeff Lantz

Maybe it's because I just spent an hour listening to Gary Vaynerchuk at InfusionCon, but I think turning off comments is tragically wrong. Social media is about listening. Blog posts aren't about showing your expertise. They're about improving your SEO and starting conversations with your audience. It's kind of hard to have a conversation when the other side isn't allowed to speak.

Spam can be dealt with. Appearing disinterested in your audience can't.

Cheers,

David Allen Hiersekorn, California

Good point, but there are far more effective ways to engage with your audience than your blog. Personally, I find Twitter and Facebook to be much better forums for that and more than enough conversation occurs there.

We talk about this idea in my book, "Social Media for Lawyers" (which I co-author with Carolyn Elefant)--how social media is different for everyone. It all depends on your goals and your own unique set up. So, for some, engaging on their blog is the perfect place to do so. For others, it may make more sense to engage--and discuss blog posts--elsewhere.

Personally, I found over the years that blog comments dwindled to nothing, other than spam, but people would constantly discuss posts with me on Facebook and Twitter. So I eventually turned blog comments off because dealing with the spam was more of a nuisance than anything--and spam filters only caught so much. Of course, I have a very strong social media presence so that likely explains why there's so much discussion in places other than my blog. For those without as strong of a presence, it might make more sense to keep blog comments turned on.

And, as much as I love Gary V, how often do you see him actually engage with his followers in a legitimate way as opposed to a very surface way? I think you'll find it's pretty rare. And that's because once you get to a certain level of recognition, etc. it's difficult to truly engage as he suggests.

Bottom line--I think it's important that the conversation occurs--but where it occurs--not so important;)

Just my 2 cents.

Niki

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Nicole Black

Niki,

I agree. But, the sad truth is that most people don't have any way to engage. In fact, it's worse than that. Most people don't even WANT to engage. The average attorney's Twitter stream alternates between "I'm so great" and "buy my crap." The truly sophisticated folks will tweet a link to a blog post that says "I'm so great that you should buy crap."

Honestly, if that's your content stream, you don't need comments. Nobody even cares what you're saying.

So, suppose someone turns off commenting on their blog. They should probably include a blurb at the bottom of each post that says "join the conversation" and includes a link to the location where the blogger actually does interact with folks. Gary V. may not engage deeply, but he LISTENS. He spends 15 hours a day on social media. During his speech yesterday, he told a story of a customer who placed a large wine order. His sales team started following the customer on Twitter and noticed that he was a big Jay Cutler fan. They sent him a signed Jay Cutler jersey. Turns

out, that guy buys a LOT of wine. He and his referrals have bought \$79,000 of wine in the past nine months.

Lastly, I am a total hypocrite on this front. I have not implemented my social media strategy properly. I know what I should do. I'm just not to the point that I can implement. I have been working on a complete remake of my website. The new website will have all the social media features that I know I should have.

Cheers,

David Allen Hiersekorn

I have search columns in TweetDeck for terms such as "estate planning." It's amazing how sad and pathetic so many estate planning attorneys are. First, at least half of them aren't tweeting themselves, but have hired someone else to do it in their own name. Then the remaining 45% are on auto-tweet. When I see someone new tweet about estate planning, I'll reply and shoot them a hello. Most times I don't get a response, because they are using some program like Hootsuite to send their tweets to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, all at once, and don't engage or respond.

And the tweets are so banal too. "Baby Jesus will cry if you don't get your estate planning done!!"

Which brings me to another pet peeve - people who send their tweets to LinkedIn. I wish I knew why people did this. It's ruined LinkedIn.

David A. Shulman, Florida\
