



BY HEATHER SUTTIE

# Social Media Mugwumpery

Still on the fence about whether your law firm should be on social media? Maybe you're a mugwump



**ARE YOU A MUGWUMP?** Someone so neutral that you're determined to sit on the fence with your mug on one side and your wump on the other? Or worse: are you so neutral to social media that you've become numb to the point of inertia?

If so, your days of mugwumpery might need to come to a close. While you sit there turning a blind eye and deaf ear to the chattering classes and nattering masses of the online neighbourhood, it appears that law firms around the world are slowly but surely joining the social media community in a variety of ways.

Released at the end of 2011, a LexisNexis Martindale-Hubble survey of 110 law firms in 22 cities worldwide, including five located in Canada, found that use of social media tools used by and for the legal sector is gathering steam.

Globally, LinkedIn leads with 85 firms registered, but while many of these firms have created profiles, few are participating in LinkedIn groups or Answers. Twitter is accessed by 35 of the firms surveyed, but it's being used as a broadcast tool rather than

a way to converse with the firm's followers. Facebook is used by 32 of the firms. Twelve firms use YouTube, the most aggressive of which are based in Amsterdam. (Three of five firms surveyed there use it for recruitment and marketing.) Blogs remain the least used social media tool, with only nine firms using this form of communication.

**WHO'S DOING WHAT?** Western and Eastern European firms lead the pack. Their use of LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube thumps the other three regions studied: North and Latin America; Middle East and Africa; and Asia-Pacific. That said, use varies by city, with the UK and Amsterdam showing high activity, Brussels sitting in the middle, and lower activity in firms surveyed in Zurich, Paris, Frankfurt and Moscow.

North and Latin America are in second place, with a preference for LinkedIn, followed by Twitter, then Facebook. YouTube and blogs lag behind. Firms surveyed in Toronto and New York are more active than their counterparts in São Paulo or Mexico City, with Latin American firms using social media more for registering profiles than engaging with clients.

In the Middle East and Africa, there's a three-to-one preference for LinkedIn compared to Twitter and Facebook, and Johannesburg-based firms are the most active.

Asia-Pacific firms use social media least. However, their use of LinkedIn equals North and Latin American firms, and all five Sydney-based firms surveyed appear on both LinkedIn and Twitter.

**TO WHAT END?** The audit found that irregular use of social media was commonplace. There is also a high incidence of "parking," especially on Twitter but also on Facebook. This is when a firm regis-

ters itself and then does nothing with the space, either to stop unauthorized use of their name, or because they just don't feel like it. Only a handful of firms studied have evolved their social media from one-way broadcasting to two-way interaction.

All five of the Canadian firms surveyed have detailed LinkedIn pages and Twitter accounts. And all have Facebook pages although some are more dynamic than others. Each also has some sort of presence on YouTube, but none more colourful than Blakes, one of the firms surveyed. It caused a sensation in December 2010 for posting a video of a 48-member group from the Toronto office who staged a flash mob dance to the song "I've Got a Feeling" by the Black Eyed Peas. Sadly, lawyers for the Peas got a feeling that copyright was infringed and the video was removed a few days later.

Still, you've got to give them points for moxie. "Social media is about connecting, building relationships and sharing knowledge," says Alison Jeffrey, Chief Client Relations and Marketing Officer at Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP. "In addition to establishing social media guidelines, another important piece of advice is to avoid being boring and only talking about yourself — instead, ask questions and share practical information and knowledge, which is one thing that lawyers and firms are not short on." Another factor is that social media is not new and coming; it's here and permanent. As Jeffrey says, "The bottom line is that nobody really knows where social media will go next, but it is clear that it is not going away, so why not leverage it?"

Something to think about. And maybe a nudge to get you off the fence and cease being a social media mugwump. ☺

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