

## Externships 7 Conference Concurrent Session Handout

Juliana Siconolfi, *Professorial Lecturer in Law*, The George Washington University Law School

*Thanks to all who attended “Tweets, Tags, 'n' Trolls: The Role of Social Media in Law Students’ Professional Development”. I enjoyed our thoughtful discussion and hope you found the session helpful. Below you will find a brief summary of major themes discussed, ideas about how to effectively incorporate social media into an externship program curriculum, and suggested resources on related topics. Of course, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [jsiconolfi@law.gwu.edu](mailto:jsiconolfi@law.gwu.edu). In the spirit of this presentation, I would be remiss if I failed to mention that my Twitter Handle is @JulesSiconolfi – I look forward to continuing our conversation online! Best, Juliana*

### I. Summary of Session’s Major Themes & Lesson Plan Ideas

- a. Students may join social media because they are encouraged to do so by any number of parties, including us (i.e., their externship program instructors). They may also be discouraged from joining social media by any number of parties, including us!
- b. Potential reasons to join or avoid social media are plentiful, and sometimes share striking similarities.
- c. As externship faculty, we have a responsibility to familiarize ourselves with social media and be able to teach from experience.
- d. Some of the main professional development-related reasons why students should consider joining social media include opportunities to:
  - Become more informed
  - Establish a voice in a given field
  - Discover career options/paths
  - Increase marketability
  - Job search/engage in professional-relationship building
  - Develop lawyering skill sets
  - Identify and exhibit professionalism values
  - Get involved in non-profit/advocacy activities
- e. There are different philosophies as to how one should approach social media, and there are a variety of arguments in favor of joining one kind of platform or another. Some of the most popular platforms that may make sense for our students to join include:
  - Web Publishing
  - LinkedIn
  - Twitter
  - Google+
  - Facebook
  - Pinterest
  - Instagram
- f. Reflective questions our students should consider as they build their respective online reputations include:
  - Who are you/do you want to be online?
  - Who are you communicating with?
  - Why are you online?

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- g. Building a social media presence requires many decisions. A few potential items to consider include:
- Whether to include a photograph with an online profile;
  - Whether to include a disclaimer;
  - How to write a succinct, interesting, organized and thoughtful profile;
  - What privacy settings to select;
  - When and what to edit from a given profile; and
  - How to organize online information (such as whether/how to use Twitter's lists option)
- Students should engage in periodic review of these and other matters.
- h. Students should put thought into who they wish to follow online, and their social media goals should factor into that decision-making process. They should also reflect periodically on who follows them and whether that information may be indicative of whether they are meeting their social media goals.
- i. Some considerations for students to reflect upon as they contemplate an online presence may include:
- Field placement social media policies and/or culture
  - Ethics
  - Permanency
  - Privacy
  - Potential for misinterpretation
  - Life balance
  - Where to start and where to stop
  - Risk of addiction/compulsive behavior
  - Heightened (perhaps impossible) expectations from others
  - Beware the "troll"... and definitely don't become one!
- j. Suggestions as to how our students may develop a positive online reputation:
- Be the "best version" of themselves (as per general networking advice)
  - Express individuality
  - Demonstrate professionalism
  - Think critically, logically, analytically
  - Effectively communicate and interact
  - Be creative and take initiative when appropriate
  - Embrace an appropriate level and type of vulnerability
  - Just say no to the "robot" approach
- k. A few lesson plan suggestions:
1. Assign your students to develop their own Twitter and/or LinkedIn account (live or simulated) and incorporate reflective questions into the assignment such as:
    - How did you determine what to say in your Twitter profile and/or LinkedIn summary?
    - What kind of image do you wish to project?
    - Did you incorporate ethical considerations and/or privacy concerns into your decisions?
    - How do you think a prospective employer might view your profile?

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2. Ask your students to write a reflective piece which discusses advantages and disadvantages of a legal office providing their attorneys with a social media education program versus administering a social media policy. Assign corresponding readings, such as:

- Kevin O'Keefe, Keeping it simple: 5 word law firm social media policy, Real Lawyers Have Blogs, Oct. 7, 2013, available at: <http://kevin.lexblog.com/2013/10/07/could-a-law-firm-have-a-social-media-policy-11-words-long/> (last visited Mar. 20, 2014)
- Simon Chester and Daniel Del Gobbo, How to Create a Law Firm Social Media Policy, ABA Law Practice Magazine Vol. 38 No. 1, Jan./Feb. 2012, available at: [http://www.americanbar.org/publications/law\\_practice\\_magazine/2012/january\\_february/how-to-create-a-law-firm-social-media-policy.html](http://www.americanbar.org/publications/law_practice_magazine/2012/january_february/how-to-create-a-law-firm-social-media-policy.html) (last visited Mar. 20, 2014)

3. Engage students in a classroom discussion concerning potential pitfalls & rewards of maintaining an online presence.

## II. Additional Resources

*There are many resources that you may find to be of interest as you consider whether and how to incorporate social media into your externship program curriculum. Here are just a few suggestions:*

### a. **Twitter Accounts You May Wish to Follow:**

ABA LTRC @abaltrc  
Nicole Black @nikiblack  
Susan Cartier Liebel @SoloPracticeU  
Grover Cleveland @babysharklaw  
Jared Correia @jaredcorreia  
Carolyn Elefant @carolynelefant  
Dennis Kennedy @denniskennedy  
LinkedIn @LinkedIn  
Alison Monahan @GirlsGuidetoLS  
Kevin O'Keefe @kevinokeefe

### b. **Books of Potential Interest:**

*Twitter in One Hour for Lawyers* by Jared Correia

*Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* by Richard Susskind

*Viral Hate: Containing Its Spread on the Internet* by Abraham H. Foxman & Christopher Wolf

*The Start-up of You: Adapt to the Future, Invest in Yourself, and Transform Your Career* by Reid Hoffman and Ben Casnocha

*What the Best Law Teachers Do* by Michael Hunter Schwartz, Gerald F. Hess, and Sophie M. Sparrow

*(Note: While this last book does not directly relate to this topic, it does speak to the spirit of the kind of teaching that I think is necessary when embarking on cutting-edge curriculum development.)*