

Do you Twitter?



**PAUL BENNETT,
MANAGING PRINCIPAL,
BENNETT'S LEGAL**

"I use Twitter because as a profession we use language. Many of our clients, businesses and consumers use social networking sites, therefore my firm needed to adopt this new language to engage with them effectively. Why? Because we need to showcase our skills and emphasise the value we bring. Twitter is a forum to showcase this in 140 characters. The language is short, sharp and effective.

"I tend to raise an area of concern or comment on a newspaper piece and link to it. The key to winning and retaining clients through Twitter is engaging with them. Some object: "It is too trivial?" Lily Allen on cricket anyone? No thanks. But how about a positive comment on saving tax? What about getting a potential client to visit your website for more information? My opinion is we need to engage with clients, showcase our expertise and commitment to client care. These qualities can set us apart from other providers of legal services; from TescoLaw to will writers.

"Will it change your firm's fortunes overnight? No. Is it going to bring in a client or two? Almost certainly.

"The key is topical and interesting comment – to build a presence, an awareness, and interest in what you do. Many clients may not know really what you do in terms of services – hence a Twitter may lead to a cross department referral for an existing client. Twitter therefore forms part of my firm's strategy to win and retain clients and I struggle to see a downside for law firms." ■



**DAVID SMITH, PRACTICE
SUPPORT LAWYER,
PAINSMITH SOLICITORS**

"Twitter is rapidly becoming the new buzzword among more technology-savvy lawyers. This interest is driven by studies which show that a significant percentage of corporate counsel use Twitter regularly. Where Twitter excels is in providing brief up-to-the-minute comments to a group of like-minded individuals that do not need much background. This is why famous people do so well on Twitter: they lead interesting lives, people want to know what they are doing and, because they are famous, very little background is needed. For similar reasons, Twitter works well for people viewing live sporting events or fast-moving news situations, such as the budget.

"However, few law firms are exciting or popular. Lawyers need to provide detail and background and rarely deal with situations that cannot be dealt with by more detailed daily updates. More often than not law firm Twitter consists of a series of links to blog posts or press releases. These are neither interesting or up to the minute and add no value to Twitter users.

"If lawyers want to use Twitter effectively they should follow their clients, listen to their interests and desires and use that to develop interesting and relevant services. They should not fill the Tweatosphere with irrelevant material. To put it in 128 characters: more value is added to customers by following interesting groups and adding useful comments than by constant irrelevant chatter." ■



**BRIAN INKSTER, FOUNDER,
INKSTERS SOLICITORS**

"I tweet via @BrianInkster. My firm, Inksters (@inksters), were the first law firm in Scotland to tweet. The firm operates other Twitter accounts for niche areas (@ScotsFamilyLaw @CroftingLaw @scotsproperty and @shetlandhomes), providing tailored information streams that attract people interested in each. This establishes Inksters as experts in these areas.

"Twitter has raised our profile, drives traffic to our four websites and provides useful and easily accessible sources of information. It also gives us a network of new contacts for collaboration, suppliers and referrals. Engagement is the key to achieving this and that can only really be achieved through a personal account rather than a purely corporate one. You need to build friendship, credibility, and trust over time. Don't expect it to reap results overnight, you have to be prepared to be in it for the long term. You will then be pleasantly surprised by the opportunities that are presented to you via Twitter on a regular basis.

"I consider it is important for at least one fee earner in each department of a law firm to be on Twitter. This is because if someone refers a friend via Twitter for, say, a family law matter, I want to be able to refer them to the person who deals with family law via Twitter. I can do so by referring them on to the relevant person and the discussion can continue via Twitter, perhaps by direct message.

"Oh, and it can also be fun..." ■