

**LAW**

# Digest

The Nigerian Lawyers' Journal

Spring 2013

## Fight for Control of the Central Bank of Nigeria

Placement Of Oil And Gas  
Insurance Risk Locally –  
Is The Industry Ready?

Sanctions and Remedies  
Under Nigeria's Merger  
Control Regime

An Insight into Islamic  
Finance

### LAWYER IN THE NEWS-

**UNIMAID Alumni Makes Mark in America**  
Beatrice Basse Hamza – Partner -  
Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP. NY.

UK: £3.50

US: \$5.50

Nigeria: ₦1,000

[www.nglawdigest.com](http://www.nglawdigest.com)

# Social Media for Lawyers



Andrea Opoku  
GreenBean Marketing

“The emergence of social media channels has had a dramatic effect on the commercial environment in many countries and has provided a new opportunity to develop brand visibility”

Being able to advertise and market your business to gain new clients for the vast majority of businesses is a given. To those not in the legal profession, and quite possibly to some within the legal profession, the contents of Rule 33 of the **Rules of Professional Conduct** governing Nigerian lawyers restricting these activities would seem astounding.

Rule 33 is almost word for word the same as Canon 27 of the American Bar Associations (ABA) **Code of Professional Ethics** last amended in 1963 – This has now been replaced by the ABAs Model **Rules for Professional Conduct**, which does allow law firms to advertise in the US. But surprisingly in Nigeria, and a few other countries, this restriction still applies.

The emergence of social media channels has had a dramatic effect on the commercial environment in many countries and has provided a new opportunity to develop brand visibility.

Before Social Media and the Web 2.0 era, advertising and marketing messages put out by businesses were very one-sided – communicating what they wanted their audience to hear. Social media very much relies on user-generated content, allowing audiences to post their own opinions about products or services. This has shifted the balance of power from businesses to consumers.

This ‘loss of power’ paradoxically benefits many businesses that employ social media strategies well, allowing them to gain much more favour with audiences than before. Word of mouth referrals, positive comments and reviews posted online by consumer audiences are deemed so much more credible than paid for adverts.

For lawyers, social media offers the opportunity of access to huge audiences whilst, quite possibly, keeping within the Code. There are hundreds of social media channels with varying purposes, the 3 most popular being Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Overall social media offers law firms a number of benefits:

#### **Build Relationships and Trust**

Social media is not a sales tool, it should be seen more as a networking tool where you meet new people, establish relationships, and build trust which in turn could lead to business.

#### **Increase Brand & Service Visibility**

Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn have a combined total of 1.7 billion users.

Having a social media presence and being consistently active on these channels means your business has the potential to be seen by millions of people outside of your current network.

#### **Humanise Your Law Firm**

As the name indicates, social media is a social platform. Lawyers have a reputation of being removed from the public. It is not often you can call a lawyer just to chat about your morning coffee. Social media however allows people to interact more freely. Potential clients can read posts and get a feel for the character of the firm and put a face and personality to the firm or individual.

#### **Showcase your expertise – Become the go-to person**

One of the largest ways social media is affecting law firms is through content marketing. Writing and publishing articles, blogs, newsletters on topical legal issues and disseminating them via social media enables lawyers to demonstrate their expertise to a broader pool of potential clients.

#### **Speed of Response**

The immediacy of social media means that response to events can be within seconds. Having the ability to respond to events swiftly and with good advice can work wonders for a firm’s reputation.

One thing we would say is that despite social media being, as they say ‘the best thing since sliced bread’, when it comes to promoting yourself and your business, we would advise, as with all promotional activities, that firms look at it strategically with the bigger picture in mind. How does social media fit into the overall aims of your company?

#### **Starting out**

To anyone just starting out on their social media journey we would advise the following:

1. Have a long-term view: Don’t go into this expecting an immediate result. Social media is all about making contact and developing relationships. When people know you and trust you they are more likely to buy from you.
2. Be helpful: Post information your audience will find useful: a blog post on a topical legal matter, presentation slides from a recent

seminar etc, and respond to comments. In doing so, you show your expertise in your subject area and also that you're a nice, helpful person to do business with.

3. Be careful what you say and where you say it. Aside from the legal implications of what you post online, which is evolving day by day, you need to be aware of social media etiquette. Take the 3 most popular channels for example. It's possible to link all your twitter posts to your LinkedIn status updates as well as your Facebook Page, but this is not always advisable. LinkedIn is a very professional network, your response to a comment on Twitter or Facebook may not always be suitable as a LinkedIn status update.
4. Be consistent: Regular updates and interaction on your social media networks are key to achieving and maintaining visibility. If you disappear for too long, people forget that you were there. Set aside time everyday if you can (it need only be 15 mins or so to start with) to update your status and 'listen' to 'conversations'.
5. Choose the one(s) that work best for you. It can be confusing, daunting and time consuming to keep on top of all the networks, so choose the one(s) which your customers use the most and which work best for your business and focus your resources there.

#### Using LinkedIn as a platform

Out of all the social networks, LinkedIn is the most popular professional network with now over 200 million members. LinkedIn should be treated like a regular networking event or conference – somewhere you go to connect with people, exchange knowledge, ideas and opportunities.

Whatever your objective in using LinkedIn, whether that be looking for new career opportunities; increasing your own profile, expanding your network, getting more clients, these tips on setting up and maintaining your LinkedIn presence are invaluable.

#### Your Individual Profile

Make a good impression. Your personal profile on LinkedIn is essentially your shop window.

- Upload a good professional

headshot of yourself

- Add a compelling headline, how you would describe yourself at a networking event
- Complete the rest of you profile. A 100% complete profile increases the number of times you come up in a search on LinkedIn and other search engines such as Google.
- Use popular keywords in your profile summary that relate to what you do.

#### Leverage your existing network

Just connecting with those in your existing network will open the door to thousands of other potential connections.

- As you would at a business event connect with people who are of interest to you and your business. Increase your connections naturally. Connect LinkedIn to your email system and send invitations to existing contacts. Look for past and existing work/business colleagues; find classmates; use LinkedIn's connection suggestions.
- Too few connections on LinkedIn would mean you not getting found.

#### Recommendations are at the heart of LinkedIn

- People buy from people not faceless companies, so personal recommendations on your profile mean everything.
- Recommendations provide instant credibility.
- Recommend others and don't be afraid to request recommendations.
- According to some experts, not having a minimum of 3 recommendations is equal to not having a photo on your page!

#### Regular interaction.

Like regular networking, keeping in touch with your contacts is key to building relationships

- Consistently posting timely and relevant status updates will let your connections know you are still active and looking for opportunities.
- LinkedIn Groups cover many industries and professions. Joining relevant groups and regularly participating in discussions increases your visibility and can demonstrate your expertise.
- LinkedIn has many other features and applications you can use to

interact with people and showcase your expertise. Choose the ones that are relevant to you and work the best.

#### Company Pages

LinkedIn Company Pages can essentially act as your company's website, a place to showcase and promote your products and services.

#### Setting up and completing your company page

##### Write a Compelling Summary

The home page on a LinkedIn Company Page includes a cover photo, company updates, links to products and services, links to careers, and more. A brief description of the company is included near the bottom of the page.

If someone makes the effort to scroll down and find your description, they've already demonstrated that they're interested in your business. Don't disappoint them by not providing the information they want.

##### Add Products & Services

Include images and descriptions of products and service and links to how to purchase them. Make sure you list the most important product/service first as that will be featured on the home page. Also get contacts to recommend your products & services.

##### Post Status Updates Regularly

Meaningful and interesting updates about what happening in your business to your target audience would be useful. The special thing about LinkedIn Company Page status updates is that you can target specific audiences.

##### Encourage Employees to Follow the Page

Also following the company pages of competitors, industry peers, suppliers, partners, current and prospective clients, will increase followers as – many of them will reciprocate the gesture. **FD**

**\*Andrea Opoku** is an Independent Marketing Consultant and Director of GreenBean Marketing Ltd.  
www.greenbeanmarketing.co.uk