

Moving from Social Networking to Handshakes

by Thomas C. Ksobiech

Kristen, one of our 3Ls, was very clear in what she was saying. “I don’t know why I’d spend time on Twitter,” she declared. “I don’t care what John Mayer ate for breakfast, and it’s not like there are any jobs for students on there anyway.”

I conceded that those were very legitimate points. In fact, there were a number of articles written in the last 12 months that described in detail that job hunters were not going to “get a job” on Twitter. But, I asked, do you think that there is any value in going to a cocktail party, or a ribbon-cutting ceremony, or a bar meeting where lawyers will be present?

“Of course,” she answered. “That’s networking with potential employers.” Kristen is smart enough to know where I was going next. I asked her who else, aside from John Mayer, was using Twitter. “You’re going to tell me lawyers, aren’t you?” she said. Some, I replied. There are also a growing number of legal recruiters, firm recruiting coordinators, and other professionals who are using the medium.

I told Kristen that she was right. It was very unlikely she would be hired on Twitter. But, she was also very unlikely to be hired at that cocktail party or ribbon cutting. That didn’t mean that participating in those events wasn’t worthwhile. It’s the same with Twitter. The lawyers, recruiting professionals, and even other students who are on Twitter are participating in the world’s largest cocktail party. They are talking about movies, football games, and their kids. They may also be talking about legal developments and opportunities at their firms. The same conversations that take place at those cocktail parties also take place on Twitter. I explained to Kristen that just as she would be

foolish to avoid networking in person, she would be foolish to avoid networking online.

“That’s great,” she said, “but how do I get from online to in-person contacts? If no one actually hires on Twitter, there must be more to do.” I told Kristen that she was right, and I laid out these steps:

Get started now. Join Twitter, create a professional-sounding user name and start searching for legal terms that interest you. In short order, you’ll find people in the legal field who are writing about things that matter to you. Adding locations to your searches can also help narrow it down.

Don’t neglect your social interests. Just as you don’t want to be the person at the party who can only talk about work, you don’t want to be the person on Twitter who is solely focused on your job search. Go ahead and follow celebrities, media outlets, and fellow fans. Interact with others on these topics. It’s not only acceptable, it’s beneficial.

Open dialogues with others. Here’s where you have the opportunity to actually begin discussions with individuals. Whether in open tweeting or through direct messages, Twitter provides you with a way of initiating contact and conversation. Maybe it’s easier to start your conversations about non-job related topics. That’s fine. The important part is that you start interacting with professionals who can provide you with information and advice.

Take it outside of the medium. After you have interacted with an individual on Twitter, it is perfectly appropriate to ask if it would be possible to take the conversation to a non-computer based medium. If it’s someone in close geographic proxim-

ity, set up a meeting for coffee. If it's someone more distant, ask if there is a time that the two of you could talk by phone.

Kristen stopped me there. "Isn't that weird — having a meeting with someone whom you've just tweeted with online?" she asked. I told her that I saw no difference in doing that than in having a meeting with someone that you just met at a cocktail party. If you're uncomfortable meeting in person right away, talk on the phone. When push comes to shove, networking is still about building relationships. In the past two centuries, technology has continued to provide us with newer and better ways of networking, but technology has not changed the basic concept. Namely, people like helping people. And if you develop relationships with enough people, you'll eventually find yourself talking to someone who not only wants to help you, but also can help you.

I left Kristen with this thought. You don't have to use Twitter or other social media, in order to find a job. You also don't have to go to ribbon cuttings and bar meetings to find a job. But if you knew that by doing those things, you would have a greater likelihood of success, wouldn't you want to do them? I would — even if it meant that I found out that John Mayer likes his eggs with Tabasco.

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