



THE VERDICT

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT IN THE
LEGAL SECTOR

FTI CONSULTING'S ANALYSIS AND BENCHMARKING OF THE UK TOP 30 LAW FIRMS

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Methodology

We collected and analysed data on the UK Top 30 law firms* over a six-month period**. Twitter and LinkedIn were the focus of our research, given both platforms' established use as B2B communications channels.

To measure social media effectiveness, FTI Consulting analysed each firm against three measures: Presence, or static digital footprint of a firm; Impact, based on best-performing content as judged by engagements; and Quality of the content, taking into account the look and feel of the channels, the use of visual content and the effectiveness in utilising the features of each platform, such as hashtags on Twitter.



Presence

Total following on
LinkedIn and Twitter
Number of tweets
Number of LinkedIn posts



Impact

Levels of engagement achieved
from the top 10 performing
tweets and LinkedIn posts
% of tweets liked or retweeted
% of replies to tweet



Quality

Frequency of visual content use
Frequency of hashtag/
handle use on Twitter
Embedding of videos onto Twitter
Use of video or
moving content (GIFs)

*The Lawyer UK Top 100 2016

**November 2015 to April 2017

Welcome to The Verdict, the latest report from FTI Consulting into the way that corporate law firms engage on social media. Building on our inaugural report in 2016, we have again used our proprietary model to analyse the social media performance of the UK's Top 30 firms*, looking at Presence, Impact and Quality.

The potential opportunities resulting from effective social media engagement are vast – from lead generation to talent acquisition, employee engagement to media relations. While this year's report shows that law firms are continuing to make strides in their use of social media, there is certainly more to be done to fully unlock these benefits.

On the one hand, many firms have stepped up their game since our last report. Combined follower count across both LinkedIn and Twitter for the Top 30 has increased by 33% and now totals almost 1.4 million, averaging over 44,000 followers per firm. These top line follower numbers are mirrored by overall increases in engagement levels and driven by a general improvement in quality of content.

On the other hand, the pace of change outside the sector has continued to accelerate – with new channels, formats and techniques already becoming commonplace with companies looking to effectively reach their target audiences. Our analysis highlights a widening gap between the firms sitting at the top of our overall leaderboard, (Baker McKenzie and Norton Rose Fulbright – take a bow) who are keeping pace with leaders outside the sector – and the rest, who will need to redouble their efforts if they're to see tangible business benefits.

In this report, we take a look at who's leading the way across our three metrics of success, and take a more in depth look at two of the areas where firms will need to increase their focus in the year ahead: paid promotion and social video.

We hope you enjoy reading this year's Verdict report. Please get in touch with any thoughts, comments or if you would like to pick up on any of the themes.

* The Lawyer UK Top 100 2016

“ This year's report shows that law firms are continuing to make strides in their use of social media, but there is certainly more to be done”

Our leaderboard

The top 15 firms

We analysed the same Top 30 law firms as in 2016 while adding two firms – Mishcon de Reya and Dentons, both new to the UK Top 30 according to The Lawyer's analysis.

On our Top 15 Leader Board, Baker McKenzie and DLA Piper retained their places in first and third place respectively, but there has been marked change in the remaining 13 firms on the leader board ranking.

We have five new entrants – Norton Rose Fulbright, Slater and Gordon, Dentons, Taylor Wessing and CMS, with the first two shooting up the rankings directly into the top five.

Rank Firm

1 **Baker McKenzie.**

2 * **NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT**

3 **DLA PIPER**

4 * **+ Slater Gordon**
Lawyers

5 **IM irwinmitchell**
solicitors

6 **WHITE & CASE**

7 **ALLEN & OVERY**

* new entry

Rank Firm

8 * **DENTONS**

9 * **TaylorWessing**

10 **EVERSHEDS SUTHERLAND**

11 **Linklaters**

12 **ashurst**

13 **Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer**

14 **CLIFFORD CHANCE**

15 * **C/M'S**
Law. Tax

Top 15 ranking firms: Presence

Our Presence measure ranks the digital footprint and activity of law firms, taking into account the total size of following on LinkedIn and Twitter, number of tweets and number of LinkedIn posts.

While there is a strong correlation between the size of a firm and its online following, in particular on LinkedIn, we also reviewed the percentage increases in the size of the total following over the past year.

Rank	Firm				
1	Allen & Overy	6	Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer	11	Taylor Wessing
2	Baker McKenzie	7	Eversheds Sutherland	12	Linklaters
3	Norton Rose Fulbright	8	Irwin Mitchell	13	Latham & Watkins
4	Clifford Chance	9	DLA Piper	14	Herbert Smith Freehills
5	White & Case	10	Slater and Gordon	15	Slaughter and May



46,664

Average **LinkedIn** following
of top 15 firms


35%

Average increase in
LinkedIn followers
since 2016

21,039

Average  following
of top 15 firms

31%

Average increase in 
followers since 2016

**The average LinkedIn following of the Top 15 firms is over double the average Twitter following.
Law firms naturally attract professionals and LinkedIn is a key platform for engaging target audiences.**

**Mark Walters,
Global Head of Communications, Dentons**

Mark highlights the strategy to increase the firm's footprint on social media following a period of global growth and consolidation:

“ We have set KPIs to increase the reach of our channels, benchmarked against our competitors and in line with our audit of influential followers. At the same time we moved ahead with developing a global social media strategy which aligned behind a single handle on Twitter as well as updating and strengthening the guidelines for setting up social media accounts. We are continuing to build our audience and reach of our channels, and now are also looking into investing in paid promotion.

Top 15 ranking firms: Impact

Our impact measure ranks the impact of firms' social media engagement by assessing the levels of engagement achieved from the top performing tweets and LinkedIn posts.

Which posts attracted the most engagement?

Across all the posts analysed, those receiving the most engagement cover a wide range of different topics. However, it is possible to draw some firm conclusions on content and formats that drive maximum impact.

Genuinely insightful content and thought leadership were a key driver of engagement across the board – particularly on Twitter. Similarly, posts containing multimedia content (images, videos, infographics etc.) attracted much higher levels of engagement than average.

Senior leadership taking an active, public role in championing a firm can pay significant dividends in both building a brand and engaging employees – a great case of leading by example.

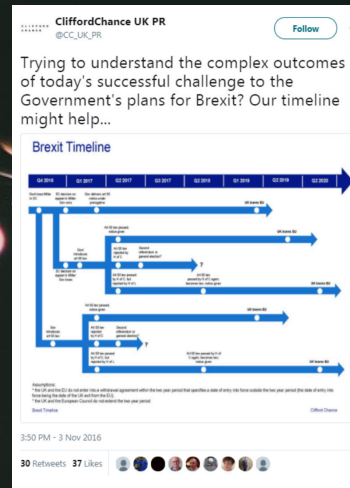
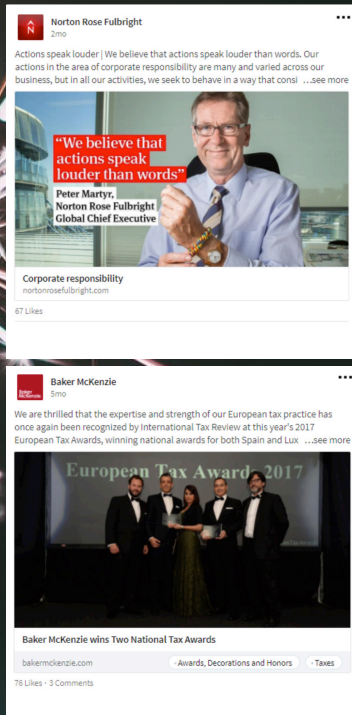
On LinkedIn, posts about firm news and awards received the highest levels of engagement, in particular from employees. Posts which captured individual employee successes or shared general insights into the culture of the firm also performed very well.

At the other end of the scale, posts about jobs attracted the least engagement, even on LinkedIn, which began its life as a recruitment focused platform. Engagement around events has increased since our 2016 report – in particular on Twitter, with many more firms promoting events in advance but also sharing live updates from events.

Rank	Firm
1	Norton Rose Fulbright
2	Baker McKenzie
3	Clifford Chance
4	Dentons
5	Irwin Mitchell
6	Slater and Gordon
7	Charles Russell Speechlys
8	White & Case
9	Herbert Smith Freehills
10	DLA Piper
11	Simmons & Simmons
12	DWF
13	Gowling UK
14	Ashurst
15	Latham & Watkins

LinkedIn

Twitter



Erin Nixon, Senior Manager, Digital Strategy Manager, Baker McKenzie

“The different functions within the communications and marketing team are integrated and we are taking much more of a campaign, rather than channel approach. By focusing on a number of core campaigns, we stop the rush into production and think about the best way to demonstrate our thinking across all the channels. We also use this planning mentality to ensure that our content isn't static or used once and then put on the shelf.”

Mark Walters, Global Head of Communications, Dentons

“The big step for us is to create original social media content. This ties into a broader strategy to think more holistically about marketing and communications so it becomes content first and channel second.”

Top 15 ranking firms: Quality

Our Quality measure ranks the quality of firms' social media channel branding (e.g. overall presentation but also use of branded posts) and the effectiveness in deploying each platform's features, such as hashtags on Twitter.

What is good quality content?

With our newsfeeds saturated with content, quality is increasingly important for attracting engagement. Most firms are applying best practices in the use of multimedia, such as regularly including hashtags and mentioning other users.

However, direct engagement with third parties is still limited. Firms with a higher percentage of retweets tended to retweet their own lawyers or the Twitter accounts of other practice groups within the firm. Very few firms replied to tweets or commented on tweets of users outside of their own firm. However, there is an upward trend in engagement through "liking" external tweets.

The rate of direct replies is slightly higher on LinkedIn but only in relation to clear calls to action or direct questions regarding the posted content or any vacancies.

The use of multimedia content has almost doubled in the last year, in particular through the use of images. Many firms have created branded quote card or fact card templates which are reused regularly. However, we did feel there was an opportunity for law firms to invest in more inspiring visuals. With visual content so important in attracting engagement, it was a shame to see that stock imagery continues to dominate.

There has been a notable increase in the number of videos being shared; however these are still predominantly links to long YouTube videos rather than short native social clips. All social media platforms have recognised the engaging power of videos and are actively encouraging their users to upload videos directly to the platform. On Twitter, videos are six times more likely to be retweeted than photos and so increasing the volume of video content should be a part of any content strategy, but quantity should not be at the expense of quality.

GIFs are still very rare but simple graphics are increasingly being used to illustrate key figures or promote reports.

LinkedIn

Twitter

Rank Firm

- 1 Baker McKenzie
- 2 Norton Rose Fulbright
- 3 DLA Piper
- 4 Slater and Gordon
- 5 CMS
- 6 Dentons
- 7 Irwin Mitchell
- 8 White & Case
- 9 Simmons & Simmons
- 10 Charles Russell Speechlys
- 11 Linklaters
- 12 Taylor Wessing
- 13 Allen & Overy
- 14 Ashurst
- 15 Latham & Watkins

Slater and Gordon Lawyers (UK)
2mo

If you're being asked to dress in a way you're not comfortable with, have a look at the dresscode policy and speak to HR, advises Josephine Van Lierop.
<https://ow.ly/3l6w50e1Ubg>

Work Dress Code - Your Legal Rights in Th...

workplace really depends on the working context and the occupational requirements
Josephine Van Lierop
Slater and Gordon
Work Dress Code - Your Legal Rights in The UK
youtube.com
5 Likes

CMS UK
firm

Today, CMS, Nabarro and Olswang come together to create a new future facing law firm. With 70 offices worldwide, our new firm will do business as CMS. We look forward to showing you what we stand for: <http://bit.ly/2p9JQDU>

CMS - We look forward to showing you what we sta...

From 1st May, three sector leaders came together to create a new future-facing law firm.

Creative / Modern / Specialists /

With 70 offices worldwide, our new firm will do business as CMS. We look forward to showing you what we stand for.

CMS OLSWANG

We look forward to showing you what we stand for
youtube.com
141 Likes

Irwin Mitchell
5mo

Only 14% of businesses surveyed in our YouGov report felt that the new #GDPR rules will have a positive impact on their business. We feel it's time to change that. By addressing GDPR early you can get ahead of the competition and bu...see more

Only **14%** said the new rules will have a positive impact on their business

YouGov
GDPR 2018

12 Likes

Baker McKenzie
@bakermckenzie

Our report with @ecn.africa - A growth engine: Trends and outcomes of private equity in Africa is now live: bmcknz.ie/2opXRla

Baker McKenzie A GROWTH ENGINE | Trends & outcomes of private equity in Africa

TOP 5 SECTORS BY INVESTMENT 2010-2016

TELECOMS MEDIA \$5.3bn
BUSINESS SERVICES \$3.7bn
FINANCIAL SERVICES \$2.2bn
CONSUMER GOODS \$2.0bn
COMMODITIES \$1.6bn

REGIONAL INVESTMENT 2010-2016

NORTH AFRICA
WEST AFRICA
CENTRAL AFRICA
SOUTHERN AFRICA
EAST AFRICA

VALUE OF PRIVATE EQUITY FUNDRAISING 2010-2016

TOTAL DEAL MIX BY VALUE 2010-2016

2:25 PM - 10 Apr 2017

Simmons & Simmons
@simmonsLLP

Gary Chu @UBS talks #IP and partnering with #FinTechs in our #hyperfinance report. Read: ow.ly/havh30aCDw4

Simmons & Simmons

HYPERFINANCE

Partnering mismatch?

To what extent do the following factors create challenges for your organisation's collaboration with FinTechs?

54% Current client portfolio generating the required return on investment (ROI)

54% Existing client relationship not able to generate the return on investment (ROI)

53% Lack of understanding of the capabilities of FinTechs

50% Complexity of our business models

#hyperfinance

5:30 PM - 11 Apr 2017

Latham & Watkins LLP
@lathamwatkins

Keep #MnA deals on track with our #GlobalMergerRegimes #app on the @AppStore apple.co/2ksqfBb & @GooglePlay bit.ly/2JdwBJO

Reality
In Argentina, Canada, India and South Africa regulators require consideration of revenues generated from exports from these countries.

Myth
When considering a merger filing assessment, parties only need to consider revenues generated from sales in or from imports into a jurisdiction.

@lathamwatkins #globalmergerregimes

2:06 PM - 6 Apr 2017

What's changed since 2016?

1 Consolidation, integration and streamlining

Consolidation of channels continues to be a theme with law firms. As the leading firms seek a greater global presence and move to showcase highly specialised sector and legal expertise, getting the right level of command and control over social media continues to be a debating point.

In our interviews with law firms, we heard many are continuing the trend of consolidating behind a single channel, while considering carefully the requests for additional channels on a case-by-case basis.



Erin Nixon, Digital Strategy Manager, Baker McKenzie

“Our focus for the past year has been on the consolidation of our digital content. We are in the fortunate position where we have lots of energy and enthusiasm within the firm for producing thought leadership. Focusing on digital 'hubs' has been helpful in consolidating and rationalising access to content so it fits with our strategy of providing global insight for clients, without stifling the internal innovation and creativity. This approach has been particularly effective in bringing together for instance our Brexit content and demonstrating our knowledge and expertise across industry sectors.”

Marc DonFrancesco, Head of Public Relations, Eversheds Sutherland

On managing social media through a merger

“It's important to periodically review where you are with protocols and handles, and combining with another firm certainly forces you to do this. Not least because the two firms have both inherited the other's following. It was essential to get this right.

There was a need to de-clutter and look closely at our specialities as a firm and whether those are best served on social media. We used this to go back to the basic principles for our handles. Is there the audience? Is there a content plan? Will they value our content? How will the account be used as an engagement tool, and how will this be managed and sustained?”

2 Step change in multimedia content creation

Many of the firms that have moved up in this year's ranking are being recognised for the investment made into multimedia content creation. More and more firms are not only repurposing existing content for social media but also creating new content specifically for digital channels.

From basic quote cards to graphics or short video clips – law firms are catching up with best practices in content optimization, but unfortunately stock images are still the de facto choice for too many firms.

In the next 12 months, we hope to see more firms “seizing the moment” and sharing timely content but equally investing in more “evergreen” content such as video explainers which can be reused over time. Content management platforms can help with the planning and posting of content but to ensure maximum impact, it's equally important to regularly take stock of the best performing social content, or the website content attracting most traffic.

Mark Walters,
Global Head of Communications, Dentons



We are moving away from single channel marketing – e.g. just direct mail, an event or media coverage and working to make sure our activities are promoted in different ways – including on social media. We will look at what we are doing and work out how we can present our content / insights in an engaging way on social media. This should cut across marketing/business development.

Video is on our radar and we are interested in using it more. We see this first as tool for internal engagement around the world before we look to target our external audience.”

3 Focus on (digital) employee engagement and advocacy

The traditional corporate structure and traditional employee engagement tactics can rarely be applied in a law firm environment. Yet cultural integration is crucial in delivering successful post-merger integration and consolidation.

Firms are increasingly recognising the potential of digital engagement in keeping employees informed, interested and invested in a firm. Many of the more progressive law firm leaders cite social media as an important tool in staying in touch with global networks. We've seen a notable increase in law firms using LinkedIn to share company updates that speak directly to employees but equally provide content that they would be happy to share with their networks.

Several firms we spoke with are investing in employee advocacy programmes, and are also supporting leadership and experts to develop their own individual social media footprint.

Will White,
Director of Global Communications,
Baker McKenzie

“ We focus on ambassador advocacy as well as employee advocacy. In the past 12 months, our new Chairman has embraced Twitter which has helped him to engage with internal and wider audiences. We have many global leaders on Twitter and will continue to support and enable them to be active.

Across the firm, we encourage all lawyers to be active on LinkedIn. We have invested in a range of different software to enable people to share content and engage with their contacts. There are a number of markets which lead in using LinkedIn to build and enhance business relationships.

Mark Walters,
Global Head of Communications, Dentons

“ We believe employee advocacy starts from the top – our leaders' social profile is intertwined with the firm's social profile. To be authentic, we need them to maintain authority with their own accounts, but we can help guide and suggest avenues for output.

Marc DonFrancesco,
Head of Public Relations, Eversheds Sutherland

“ We've done some work on employee advocacy, for example across our international network, but this remains a goal for us in the coming year. We are more focused on supporting and enabling, rather than ordering people to do things. If we can provide relevant content, the right training and timely interaction then those who are keen will see the benefit. We don't push people to do things they're not accustomed to or control people having their own public personal networks. Our CEO is now on Twitter and he likes meeting people around the group and sharing photos in general, so you can sometimes see a bit of his life outside of law, which is great.

Top tips for paid promotion



Build interest and influence by joining the conversation

A key difference between traditional and social advertising is that whatever you do on social media is a two way process. Social media allows people to talk back, and we know they do. While users are growing accustomed to seeing ads in their social media feeds, they can still be unwelcome if not presented or targeted properly. Correct targeting is critical. But so is timing. Linking content to social and wider news trends is one way of building real influence with interested audiences.



Target audiences with relevant content

A key part of the appeal of social advertising is the ability to target very specific audiences. Each social network is different so it's important to understand who to target where. The most cost effective campaigns target audiences by interest or location with specific content which would resonate with each audience. Launching a promotion without first defining your audience is like running a print ad, but not specifying the publication.



Monitor, review, optimize, learn, repeat

Launching a paid promotion campaign is relatively easy. Platforms will happily guide you through the process – and advise on how to spend more. The most time-consuming but important task is managing the optimization of the campaign to ensure cost-effective impact. If set up correctly, paid promotion can engage relevant new audiences, generate leads and, provide invaluable insights.



Resist the urge to measure everything

KPIs and benchmarks play an important role in measuring the success of a campaign but should always be aligned with the campaign's objectives. Just because social media platforms track everything, it doesn't mean it's all relevant. Often less is more. "Vanity metrics" are figures not set against any key objectives so provide little useful insight and are best avoided.

Decide in advance which metrics matter most – and how they will help inform future campaigns.

Looking ahead: Paid social

With peak levels of new content saturating social media feeds and lowering audience attention spans, it's becoming increasingly difficult to attract genuine engagement from relevant users. Furthermore, the algorithms of certain platforms are increasingly limiting organic reach so even a substantial following is no longer enough to ensure reach.

More than £1.7 billion was spent on paid social campaigns last in the UK alone.

Paid promotion is fast becoming the go-to method for reaching target audiences and more organisations are shifting advertising and marketing budgets into paid social media advertising.

Law firms are on the brink of embracing this revolution and it is worth taking time to get the approach right. As with social media in general, paid social must be seen less as a final tactical step and more as a key element of a broader strategy assessed against clear objectives and KPIs.



Industry case study: Baker McKenzie

Baker
McKenzie.

Context

For eight years running, we have topped the Acritas brand index, recognised as the world's strongest global law brand. However, this research shows that we are known more for geographic reach, rather than our expertise and client work.

Through this campaign, our aim was to broaden the view of our capabilities, and to reinforce our recent rebrand. Specifically:

Increase consideration of Baker McKenzie by potential clients

Increase awareness of Baker McKenzie as the 'New Lawyer' by clients and potential recruits

Strategy and Rationale

For our clients, these are unsettling times, with the complexities of globalisation, economic and political uncertainty, cyber insecurity and multiplying layers of regulation. Clients want their lawyers to bring a new approach to help them navigate a constantly changing and challenging world.

Baker McKenzie represents the new lawyer - one who works unusually well with colleagues across borders and inside specific markets and industries to give clients confidence in today's unpredictable world.

Approach

Six week digital campaign pilot in New York - a key growth market

Targeting C-Suite executives and senior in-house lawyers

Test, measure, refine, measure again – ROI is key

Channels:

Pre-Roll Video: 15 second brand video introducing the New Lawyer, shown on social media and via content networks

Contextual Display: Impactful display on prime sites like Wall Street Journal and New York Times driving traffic to bakermckenzie.com

Native Content: Thought leadership content served through specialist media networks targeted by topic

Sponsored Media: LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, targeting specific job level and location.

Results

The campaign delivered over **11 million impressions** across social, display, and native networks, bringing over **50,000 engagements** with our content – visits to our global website, views of our thought leadership, or plays of our video.

With impressive metrics and strong click-through rate of 0.4%, it is important to look at the real ROI, in line with our objectives to increase

awareness and consideration of Baker McKenzie. To measure the impact of the activity, we ran a survey before and after the campaign.

We saw a significant **3 percentage point lift** across Consideration, Branding Recall and Message Comprehension. The strongest lift was in Recall which saw a **5 point increase** after the campaign. Overall, a strong ROI of \$8.11 per persuaded individual - comparable industry surveys typically see ROIs of \$60 and above.

Key Takeaways

Digital advertising, even for a short burst, can positively affect recall and consideration

Optimisation - An effective digital advertising campaign is constantly evaluated, measured and refined throughout

Tailored messaging - messaging resonated more when it was about a topical business issue, and not a branding message

Retargeting - targeting users who had already seen our ads boosted performance

Frequency - seeing 15+ weekly media impressions increased effectiveness

Importance of mobile traffic – 65% of clicks came from mobile devices

Looking ahead: Social video

YouTube remains the world's second biggest search engine but has lost its quasi-monopoly on video uploads. With video production so prevalent, every social media network is fighting for a share of the market.

Today's technology allows anyone who owns a smartphone to create good video content, without compromising on quality, few law firms have so far invested in "social video". The most common forms of videos shared by law firms are expert interviews and recordings of public events posted to YouTube.

For most firms, YouTube (or Vimeo) is used simply as a repository of video content – occasionally shared on other platforms. Very few firms have experimented with live broadcast and most are still lacking in the most basic best practices.

All global metrics point to video content continuing to grow and even dominate social media content. Video can be used to provide a summary of longer form content, explain complicated concepts, showcase case studies, promote thought leaders – and much more.

No law firm has so far distinguished itself as a leader in this content format, but we look forward to analysing many more videos for next year's Verdict.


300 hours 
of video are uploaded to
YouTube every minute

10 billion videos are
watched on
 every
day

5 billion are watched on
 **YouTube**
videos every day

100 billion are watched on
facebook
videos every day

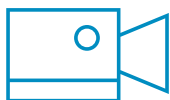
6.6 million hours of live video are
broadcast on
 through
Periscope
every quarter, attracting
31 million unique
viewers

93% of Twitter video
billion views are
videos  on mobile
devices

Social video generates
1200% more
shares
than text and images combined



Top tips for social video



Integrate video into your campaign and content planning

Social video can be used to promote any topic but this shouldn't be done in isolation. Including video as a standard option in your communication planning will help ensure maximum returns.

Whether it's the launch of a new report, a thought leadership article or general corporate news – video can help spotlight key messages and drive traffic and engagement.

A simple first step is asking the author of any new content whether they are willing also to record a short introductory message to promote the content.



Format is key to making a video social ready

Mobile technology has changed how we access information in so many ways – and video is no exception. 90% of Twitter video views are through a mobile device and 85% of Facebook users watch videos with the sound off. Optimizing your video for social media is the difference between dozens and hundreds of views.

Keeping the video as short as possible (ideally less than one minute, max two minutes), including subtitles and text top and tailing are standard best practices but many law firms are still failing to recognise the impact of these small changes.



Consider the full spectrum of distribution options

In most cases, recording and producing a social video is still the most time consuming task and much less thought goes into how the video can be promoted on different channels.

Marketing, design and corporate communication colleagues and teams must work closer together to make the most of content being produced.

As a simple example a clip of a longer interview uploaded to YouTube can be tweeted and uploaded to LinkedIn but also embedded in an article on the website, or in an email newsletter. Live broadcasts can also be easily set up to record the opening remarks at a public event – and later used to promote any follow-up event report or email update.



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