



# Certification Matters

## Social Media Strategies Q&A with Board Certified Attorney D. Todd Smith

By TBLs Staff



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Many lawyers and firms are beginning to realize the potential of social media in building meaningful connections, reaching important audiences, expanding thought leadership and more. TBLs recently interviewed D. Todd Smith, an Austin-based attorney Board Certified in civil appellate law with a prominent social media presence, to get his thoughts on what online channels he uses and their benefits.

### 1. What social media tools are most useful to you and why?

Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are my most useful social media tools. I use them standing alone and in connection with my blog and firm website to enhance my online presence and start conversations. After I upload a blog post on something I feel strongly about, I can share the link on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn and potentially reach a larger audience.

One great aspect of Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn apart from other online platforms is that you have a limited amount of space to get your message across. This allows you to post more frequently while at the same time refine your message to include only the most important content.

Also, these channels help to build and reinforce relationships. When you meet someone in person, you go and follow them online to learn more about them. When you meet someone online, which happens a lot when you see the same people posting, you can arrange an in-person meeting at a later date.

### 2. You manage three Twitter accounts: one personal (@dtoddsmith); another on behalf of your firm (@SmithLawGroup); and a third for your blog (@AppellaTex). What benefits are there to separating your professional and personal accounts?



My personal Twitter account is a catch-all. I might post about college football, my kids' sports games or what's going on in my neighborhood, so the target audience isn't limited to lawyers. My law firm tweets tend to announce firm news or recent happenings in appellate law and therefore enhance our brand. The purpose of my blog's Twitter feed is to share information about civil appellate issues with audiences interested in that subject when the topic doesn't necessarily justify writing an in-depth post.

Although Twitter has a broad reach, having different accounts allows me to broadcast content focused on different subjects important to me and attract followers interested in each one.



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### 3. How do you go about choosing and posting content?

I try to keep in mind what Gene Major, head of the Advertising Review, has said, “We should be adding value on social media, rather than selling.” Additionally, I read what others tweet about and engage them on those topics because it’s important to build relationships through topics your followers are interested in.



### 4. Do you use your Board Certification online, and if so, how?

I use the newer Board Certified logo format, which includes my specialty area, in my email signatures and several of my online bios. TBLS makes sure that Board Certified attorneys are and stay accountable, and it also does a great job of educating the public on what Board Certification means. Civil appellate is a notoriously difficult area to get certified in, and so having a logo that tells people I am a specialist in that area has been great for my career and practice.

### 5. What’s one takeaway you’d like legal professionals to have from this article?

If legal professionals are looking to expand their online presence, they should be true to themselves and not portray themselves as something they aren’t. The online community will see right through that. These are powerful communication tools, and if you are going to promote yourself in a certain light, you need to have the knowledge and expertise to back it up. If you are true to yourself, honest, and add value on social media, it will benefit your practice.

