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An introduction to social networking
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Advertised synopsis - Run through Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogging - explain what they are each good for from a personal and business perspective, show some examples (obviously including the Society's group page on facebook) and give some key tips.

[Extra information added after the seminar is in square brackets, hope this helps]

Social networking is a term which is often used but what exactly is it? Here are just *some* examples. Now do not panic we are not going to go through each of these, to be honest, I had not even heard of some of them until I started preparing for this seminar. Also some of them are also no longer the “in thing”, like Bebo and MySpace so I know you won’t be interested in those. I decided not to include things such as Google+, Foursquare and Flickr – partly because I do not use them all, but mostly because I see them as more personal use than business and my synopsis promised both now didn’t it?

So today’s introduction to social networking will concentrate on just 4 main areas: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and blogging. All of these can be used for both personal and business use, sometimes intertwined. My plan is to tell you what each does, show you what they look like in practice, go over some advantages and disadvantages, and give you some tips for using them.

So let’s start with Twitter. Well known for its limit of 140 characters, it describes itself as enabling you to “Find out what’s happening right now with the people and organisations you care about.” Obviously I can’t control what people I follow say at any time so I decided it was sensible to take a screenshot in advance to show you. This is my private account, which is protected so people have to ask permission to follow me before they can see any of my tweets. In Twitter you have Followers and you Follow other people. Some of my friends have 2 accounts – 1 to tweet about their personal life and talk to friends and 1 to tweet about their professional life and network with suitable business contacts. Some companies have decided to have Twitter feeds – such as SAP as seen here (SAP stands for Systems Applications and Products in Data Processing). Companies would not have a protected account as they would want as many people as possible to see them and interact with them – if your firm is considering an account they need to decide what they aim to benefit from so doing, and consider the pros and cons first .

I liken Twitter to one of those Tamagotchi things that were popular in the late 90s, a digital pet that needs to be fed and cared for or it dies. If you open a Twitter account you need to tweet regularly and to interact with others who may choose to tweet at you. I’ve seen Twitter used to compliment companies, to complain to them, to ask them questions about their products and services, to recommend them to others and obviously to warn people away from using them! A smart company would respond to all of these – and Twitter being what it is that should be done in a timely manner, not just someone logging in monthly or whatever.

Twitter is an immediate, in the moment, beast and people expect a quick response accordingly. [Question asked at end about if possible to join Twitter but just to read others entries, the answer is yes, you can set up an account with very little of your own information and you can be called anything so you could have an account under the name Bob (if there isn't one already) and follow anyone of interest but never actually tweet anything or let anyone know who you are. Of course you wouldn't be able to follow people with protected accounts as they would probably not accept a request to allow you to follow them without knowing who you are but it would still be useful for gathering information and seeing the news etc.]

I am a member of a professional body for law librarians called BIALL and after joining their Website Committee, last year at our annual conference I volunteered to take over the official Twitter account and tweet the conference. I was given no guidance as to what was expected from this so decided to tweet the title and speaker of each session as it started, plus live tweeted the awards ceremonies as they were announced at the dinners. We used the hashtag # feature of Twitter for the conference so anyone tweeting about it was to include #BIALL2012 in any tweets so they could all be found together in a trend search. You can see some hashtags used here, if you click on one you find other tweets with the same hashtag so it's a good way of following a conference or certain topic, or trends as they are called on Twitter. The Leveson Inquiry into the role of the press and the police in the phone-hacking scandal was a good example of this. [Added slide showing use of #leveson]

The downside to a protected account such as my personal one is that when I use hashtags they do not show up in a search, even if I do the search when logged in as me. Similarly people cannot re tweet my tweets if they agree with me. Re tweeting is when you click on a little icon that then copies the tweet to all your followers. Some people spend a lot of time trying to get re tweeted by their favourite celebrity by a large number of people in the case of petitions or sponsorship requests for fundraising. This can also be functional, such as when that little girl in Wales got into a van, I saw a tweet about it not long after it happened and dutifully re tweeted it, as did many other people. That kind of incident could benefit from such immediate widespread distribution.

What advantages have I missed? Ah yes, Twitter gives us access to people we may not otherwise have been able to speak to, for example one of my friends managed to show Stephen Fry a caricature she had drawn of him and he replied to say thank you, very happy day! Obviously if a business tweets it is a form of free advertising, or a free way of getting customer feedback and input in product development by asking customers/fellow tweeters what they think of an idea. This ties into my last point about debating with people, for example when I needed to change mobile phone network I asked for opinions and got immediate responses that were very helpful – also useful in the middle of the night when alone with a small baby and needed advice on something, or just company – on Twitter there are always people “in the room”.

I saw an article in a business magazine recently where it likened Twitter to a hugely successful drinks reception. It allowed people to get together and discuss things that mattered to them, swap contact details and build relationships. Except without the huge expenses bill of most corporate entertainment, without that horrid feeling of walking into a room, or the pressure of having to give a welcome speech, also without the awkward trying to ensure there's no one left in a corner on their own – and no one notices if you arrive late or leave early.

Some downsides I have already touched on, there are some things that are hard to say in 140 characters – so heaven forbid you start using text speak or missing out punctuation to save on

space. If your account is public you have no control over who is reading your innermost thoughts, and apparently spambots send you messages if you type key words they pick up on. However being protected limits what you can do with respect to re tweets and hashtags/trends – plus if a company who doesn't follow you has a competition where you have to tweet to them or about them they won't see your entry.

It is important to remember, as with many things online (especially Wikipedia!) that not everything can be taken as the truth. Some people think it is funny to spread rumours that, for example, someone has died. I saw news of Michael Jackson's death first on Twitter, but then I also saw Johnny Depp was dead a while ago – and luckily that's just not true.

My last disadvantage happened to me recently, I tweeted something about my dearly beloved and his friend then put a comment on his Facebook page about it where all his friends could see. That just lead to an embarrassed man (and me in the dog house obviously). A more serious example would be the #TwitterJokeTrial which you may have heard about in the press, where Paul Chalmers was annoyed at an airport he was due to fly from was closed and tweeted that Robin Hood airport should sort it out or he would be “blowing the airport sky high”. Now it's maybe not a very funny joke but it was a joke, as the High Court finally agreed. However the trial that followed that flippant tweet ruined his blossoming career as an accountant and had tremendous effects on his, otherwise very normal, life. It also shook up the Twitter community, I mean who hasn't at some point said they could just kill their boss or mother in law or whoever? Yet here was someone being prosecuted for a similarly throwaway, in the moment remark.

As with many things in life what you get out of social media is dependant on what you put in. When I first joined Twitter I had flashbacks to being the odd gal at school with no friends sat in a corner. You can just read what people are saying and doing and from a business perspective it can be a useful tool providing current affairs, and tweets about a prospective client or service. It is a free and easy way to keep tabs on trends in your industry. However you do have to instigate conversations and interact with people before you start to become part of it (if only I knew that at school!). Then you can be seen as participating in informed discussions thereon, hence boosting your profile and other people's awareness of, and respect for, your firm.

The key tools of Twitter are these buttons or functions. The at sign is for talking to someone, if you use this it will not show up in the feed of everyone who follows you, just those who follow both of you – including of course the person you spoke to. A way of getting round this is using it part way through a tweet as in this example as then it shows up for anyone who follows you. Hashtag is for following trends as I've already mentioned with my conference example. Re tweet just lets you show all your followers something great someone else said, there is also an option to Quote Re tweet which lets you add your own opinion, if you don't run out of character spaces! Clicking on the star to mark something as a favourite then saves it for you to be able to find easily later, much like bookmarks in Internet Explorer. This can be useful if someone links to an article you don't currently have time to read, if a friend links to something they “want” and you can save yourself thinking what to buy them for their birthday, or just if it's a fabulous photo you want to look at again later or save onto your computer. You will also hear people talking about DMs, they are just Direct Messages, private to you and the person you send it too. Useful for swapping phone numbers or email addresses among other things.

Anyway onto Facebook where we can connect and share with the people in your life. Now this started as a way of communicating with friends and family, with the benefit being that it encompassed the world so even an Aunt in Australia could see photos of your son and

comment how cute he was. However now it is also used as a valuable marketing tool for businesses, and again a way to interact with your customers. In Facebook we have Friends. Who wouldn't want to rush down to visit my friend - Castletown Farm shop for one of these cakes? Martin Lewis of MoneySavingExpert.com and various tv shows including Daybreak, has been hugely successful and now we can participate in his research and fact finding for it. Again this is a screenshot of my personal page so you can see what it is like, I carefully took this on a day when none of my friends and family were posting personal or insulting things! It shows the general layout and the main features of offering you event and birthday reminders, possible friends to add, sponsored adverts to click on, and friends' activity to follow (more on that later). At this point I will just point out the icons at the top – 2 heads light up if you get a friend request, the speech bubble is Facebook's version of a DM, and the world with a number shows how many notifications you have of people commenting on your status, liking a photo of your dog or whatever.

You can also see at the left the Groups I am a member of and the Page I control – our Society of Advocates one of course. The page can be seen by anyone either searching for us, or "Checking In" as being here. This is something that can be done on the smart phone app, when you "check in" as being in a place – the idea being if you check in say, at a restaurant across the road, I could see it and go running to join you. When you check in at a place that has had a Page set up it means people clicking on the resultant hyperlink can then see the information you've put up there. So if you check in as being here one of your friends may think, ooh that sounds interesting, then click on it and see what the Society is about and decide they should join up so they can come to our events too, or hire our library for their own event. Conversations can also be seen here such as Mich saying thank you to us for providing such a lovely venue for her recent birthday party.

The Group works differently as there are a variety of privacy settings you can choose, for ours it is a closed group so people have to request admission into the group. I can then check they are a member of the Society before admitting them. Once in, you can see who else is a member, suggest your friends join, see what events there are, any news or views that have been posted on the groups page, or start your own discussion on a particular topic. This works especially well for things such as our Society as it means members can talk to each other about Society or professional issues – without actually being Facebook friends, so managing to keep personal and business life separate. Also when on Facebook you probably have more time to investigate the important things like Cheese and Wine Tasting details than when in the office and one of my emails ping up on your screen.

So here's the pros and cons as I see them, most of which I've touched on already. I have been asked a few times by members about what to do when clients send a friend request – many firms have, or at least should have, a social media policy that outlines what they expect their employees to do or not do online. For example, my son's nursery forbids me to add any of their staff as Facebook friends. If your firm does not have a policy you have to judge each request carefully, it depends what you use your account for – status updates about numerous nights out might not reflect well to a client, or potential client. This is where careful management of the privacy settings can be important as well – for example I have 2 teacher friends who are not on under their real names so that their pupils cannot find them, whereas I'm in under my current name or if you search for my maiden name you will find me. When setting up your account if you use your work email address, anyone who knows that address and have it saved in their address book will probably get a People You May Know suggestion from Facebook to add you, such as you see here . So if you want to keep personal and business life separate use your personal email address to set up your Facebook account. Privacy settings can be adjusted by going to the drop down menu next to Home at the top

right and choosing Privacy Settings, each section can then be worked through and set up to suit your own needs.

The last disadvantage I've listed is that you may end up with a full stream of rubbish – I “Like” various companies so I can keep up with what they are doing, or enter any competitions they have, but sometimes it makes it hard to see what my actual real friends are doing. There is an option to set up lists of specific contacts so you could add all family members to one called family and then just see what they are doing, or one called competitors and see what they are up to. Again though this is an example of how businesses can use social media to connect with their customers and make them feel more valued and listened to.

As for Tips – the most important one is to remember that friends can see all your activity in the bar on the right I pointed out earlier so if you Like a page for Alcoholics Anonymous or comment on a colleague's wall about your boss, it will be seen! As you can see in the example on this slide there are options for Like, Comment, and Share on each status. Giving something a “thumbs up” is just that, Sharing means that it appears on your wall and all your friends can see it, or you can just Share onto one friend's wall if it is something that is particular to one person. If you comment on something it means you will then receive notifications if anyone else comments so you can participate in the ensuing discussion. If you want to draw someone's attention to something you see on someone else's wall you can ensure they receive a notification about it by putting an @ sign before their name in a comment on it. You can change how you receive notifications in the Settings section but you can either get an email of activity affecting you, or you can leave it so you have to log in and see the red number at the top of the screen. If you have the smart phone app it can beep/vibrate or whatever you have your phone set to do. Another useful thing to remember is that you can be Facebook Friends with someone but “hide” all of their status updates. If you hover over one of their status updates to the top right there is an option to Hide, I did this to one of my cousins as she keeps quoting the bible – if I want to read a book I would go to my bookshelves rather than my iPhone, I'm old fashioned like that!

Onto LinkedIn which has a far more professional focus. Its principal idea is for an individual to post an equivalent to their CV, with professional achievements and publications produced. This is the Home page where current projects can be Shared, news items read and see what some of the big players such as Obama are doing. Again the website connects into your contact details in your email account so it will suggest “People You May Know” based on that, as well as matching up your Connections to try and work out who else you may, or should be, connected to. Not followers or friends but Connections in LinkedIn. Here's a screen shot of my actual profile LinkedIn also uses this to increase your Connections so as mine says I worked at McGrigor Donald in Edinburgh it suggests people who worked there at the same time as me. It can be used for networking, job searching, identifying local experts on a particular subject, catching up with old colleagues or uni chums - or just showing off how great you are! A practical use for the Society is obtaining bios for speakers we have coming so that the person introducing them has a bit of background information before they start. [When you put information into your profile it becomes publicly available so anyone can see it online so if you do not wish people to know you used to be work in a bar you should not include that position in your profile, of course this does also mean you will not be invited to connect from other people from that bar.]

I am also a member of a few groups for law librarians where we can discuss current issues that affect us all. To find relevant groups go to the Groups menu at the top, it will show you what groups you are a member of and suggest some you may like to join. Alternatively you can use the search box at the top with the drop down menu set to Groups and look for something relevant.

I think the advantages are quite obvious, and firms like Simpson and Marwick having LinkedIn links on their People profiles prove them. My first disadvantage is maybe a guilty conscience – obviously I have not been job hunting for several years! It is easy to set up a profile and then forget about it, but obviously if you do not keep it current and interact with it and other people on it then it will have no benefit to anyone. It also seems to be keen for everyone to pay a subscription so they can access further functionality.

My top tips for LinkedIn would be to add to the standard text for an invitation to connect by giving some context to who you are, for example – we met at the networking event last night and were discussing windfarms. There is also an option to edit your personal URL, or website address, so that your name is in it which looks more professional. Update your profile as necessary, if you change job obviously but also if you get promoted, join a committee or publish an article. You do need to interact and be proactive, its not what you know its who you know and fully exploiting LinkedIn can lead to you having lots of relevant useful contacts, even when they move firm and the business card they gave you becomes invalid.

Lastly I want to touch on blogs – basically these are an online diary. No longer do us talkative girls have a little book with a padlock that we fill with our secrets. Now we post them online – and add photos, links etc for the world to see! Each blog has its own “raison d’etre” whether it is me babbling on about my lovely life, or James and George Collie’s news blog about recent legal developments. Blogs can be a useful research tool as long as you remain aware of the authority of the information.

This blawg is about all things legal and is quite well respected across the legal blogging community. You can see here some recent posts as well as links to other forms of social media. They welcome guest blogposts for those who fancy giving it a try, raising their profile, or increasing traffic to their own blog.

As for pros and cons, again there’s the free distribution of information, or advertising but showing your firm’s knowledge and expertise. In the wider context of social media it can be a way to expand on something – take as many characters as you want to explain your opinion on something then just post the link on Twitter or elsewhere. Doing this obviously reduces the disadvantage of limited interaction as that can then happen on these other platforms.

As for tips, well it’s the same as any published work, you should proof read carefully as the content you provide reflects on you and your firm if it’s a professional blog. We all know lawyers need good attention to detail so if you cannot even spell in your blog it is not going to encourage new clients. It is important to utilise the additional functionality, include relevant photos or pictures, give links to useful websites or other companies you are mentioning. Even though my blog is a personal one I’ve been complimented on the way I kink to things I’m talking about such as places we’ve been that someone reading my blog may also like to go to. It is important to blog regularly, people can set up an RSS feed to be alerted to new content but if you do not blog regularly they will forget and loose interest. It also looks bad to someone finding your blog for the first time if there’s been no new posts for quite a while. Obviously you want to maximise visitors to your blog as well so make sure you publicise your blog – link to it from your website homepage, post links to new posts on your LinkedIn account, maybe even email a mailing list of contacts with a synopsis and link.

Just a final couple of tips that apply to all social networking tools. Take time to explore your chosen outlet, see how other people use it and what they are doing with their profile. Set up your profile carefully especially including a good quality photo – and in the case of

professional use an appropriate photo. Think twice before hitting send – who is your audience, how will your content be perceived by others. Obviously this last point also works for email. I would also advise, if you have a smart phone, that you get the relevant app. Getting notifications of activity on your account means you can react more in the moment which is I think at the core of social networking. Whether it's someone talking to or about you on Twitter, a business lunch invitation through LinkedIn, or just someone posting a photo of you on Facebook, its good to know when it happens and you look professional responding straight away to things on the professional side.

I've already touched on a couple of legal aspects – social media policies, the Twitter Joke Trial. Facebook has also been used in court for employment issues such as a lady who was signed off work sick with a very bad back but was silly enough to then post photos of her actively participating in a sailing expedition during her absence. After Doors Open Day I received a phone call from the Evening Express asking if our gavel was missing as it had been reported that someone had posted a Facebook status "I stole a gavel from a venue on Doors Open Day". Similarly it can be used to deter crime – recently a couple of my friends reported on Facebook about a van outside a school trying to persuade a pupil to get in, Grampian police did not confirm this story until the next day by which time it could have been too late, but I saw mentions of a few people taking extra precautions just in case – which was a relief when it was later confirmed by the police.

From an employer's point of view a social media policy is important to let your staff know what is and is not expected of them. If they have on their profile where they work then in effect everything they post could be seen as representing their employer, and they need to be aware they could face disciplinary action as such if they post something inappropriate. I heard of a girl who took part in a charity calendar, posed round a chair such as you are sitting on so she looked undressed, she posted the photos on Facebook to try and sell more calendars and her employer disapproved as she had clients as Friends. Therefore another good thing to include in a policy is if there are any guidelines on partners "friending" employees, or lawyers "friending" clients. A company's account on Twitter, Facebook or wherever also needs to be monitored, who is in charge of the content, should items be cleared with a manager before being posted, are they being done regularly enough and in keeping with the company's brand image?

As for law firms, well we have already looked at gathering evidence from social networking sites for trials – photos of working a rigging on a yacht for example. It can also be a tool in tracking down beneficiaries to help with tying up a deceased estate. Obviously social media is a key topic which business clients may ask advice on, needing to know how to set up a social media policy or deal with a situation that has arisen online. If used correctly it can promote a: caring, informative, knowledgeable, and interactive law firm. This could help break down the stereotype, that I've occasionally heard of, that lawyers are just money grabbing fat cats that use legal terminology to confuse us mere mortals...

I've put a disclaimer at the top of this slide that I am not a lawyer, I should maybe also state that with social networking I am self taught (although I did attend a seminar on LinkedIn). The important thing for any social networking medium is to spend time getting to know it, either on your own or ask someone you know who uses it – most of us junkies love to share our addiction! This obviously was just an introduction, there are lots of other things out there as I showed in my first slide, plus I've not even touched on the range of online business tools such as Wikis, Yammer, Dropbox – maybe that could be another day if I get any reasonable feedback for this session. Forms were on your seat when you came in, please leave them on the table outside the door as you leave.

Don't forget, if social networking is all a bit too much for you, there's always the "Facebook of the real world" – the Society of Advocates in Aberdeen!

Thank you for listening, any questions?

[Asked for show of hands for who used Twitter – 3 out of 21]