

September 2009 Favorite Thing

(This month's favorite thing is from *The Jury Expert* Editor, Rita Handrich, PhD who also contributes regularly to the Keene Trial Consulting blog: [The Jury Room](#).)

Despite warnings that it's on the way out (since growth is tapering off), that 20% of content is marketing (I'd guess more than that), and that only people with too much time on their hands use it--we beg to sound a voice in the wilderness (or at least in *The Jury Expert*).

So, without further ado....our September 2009 Favorite Thing is: [Twitter!](#)

Why?

Because despite the high 'noise' ratio (e.g., "I'm sitting on the porch"), Twitter has become a terrific source for legal information, idea exchange, and resource sharing. Yes. You have to spend a little time to identify just who you want to listen to and who gets the virtual earplugs--but for daily news on juries, polls, breaking news relevant to litigation advocacy, and insight into who is (and especially who is not) going to be on Santa's list this year--Twitter is a marvel.



If you are not familiar with Twitter (and recent estimates say only 6% of attorneys use it), it is a website that allows you to 'instant message' (aka 'tweet') anyone following you using only 140 characters per message.

Here's what you do in simple steps:

1. Go to <http://www.twitter.com/> and sign up for an account.

a. Hint: Use your real name or firm name. That way your 'Twit' friends will recognize it (and you) when they see it.

2. Start by following *The Jury Expert!* We post tweets (almost) every day and focus on issues relevant to litigation advocacy & improving trial skills.

a. While logged in to your new Twitter account, go to this URL: <http://www.twitter.com/thejuryexpert>.

b. Click the icon that says '**follow**'. You will now see all our tweets when you log in to your Twitter account and go to your 'home' page.

Here is our 'official' *TJE* Twitter logo. When you see this, you know you're in the right place.



Some language lessons. As in any new world you enter, Twitter has some jargon. Here are the most important 'words' which are mostly abbreviations:

Followers: This sounds very cultish. It is Twitter language for how many people subscribe to your Twitter account. When you first sign up, it's zero. Over time, it will grow.

Following: This is simply a list of those YOU follow. (Hint: As a new Twitter member, you can find good folks to follow by going through lists of whom others follow.)

1. You simply click on the profile and review their tweets and if you like what you see, click 'follow'. Some folks follow you back, others don't.
2. If you find them annoying, self-involved, pedantic or too prone to pontification, you UNfollow them--that is Twitter's term for unsubscribing.

Social Networking: Twitter is a form of social networking. You become 'known' through what you tweet, how you tweet it, and how helpful and friendly you are. (Hint: Be nice. Be interesting. Be helpful. It comes back to you.)

DM: This stands for 'Direct Message'. It's private. Only you and the recipient/sender see it. One caveat, to send a direct message, the person has to be one of your followers. If you want to send a direct message to us, for example, you would type this in the status box on your Twitter page:

DM @thejuryexpert Your tweets are so wonderful. I assiduously memorize each & every one.

@: This is Twitter shorthand for 'Reply' (aka 'at-ting someone'). This goes out into the public timeline (it's like posting on someone's Facebook wall). Everyone sees it. It's used to communicate publicly with others. Be careful what you say and how you respond to @'s. Everyone sees it. (Hint and a warning: it's also sometimes used to bait you publicly and tug you into an argument.)

RT: This stands for 'Retweet'. If you like a tweet you see out there, you can 'Retweet' it. Basically that means you forward it on so your followers see it too. (Hint: It is good manners to RT rather than to simply repost information someone else found as though it were your own. Twitter can always benefit from more good manners.)

#FF: This is an abbreviation for 'Follow Friday'. It's a Twitter activity that happens every Friday. People post lists of Tweeters they find interesting, fun, or valuable to follow on Twitter. (Hint: If someone you follow, endorses someone you don't know about, it's a good idea to check those #FF recommended Twitterers out to see if you'd like to follow their tweets as well.)

One more tip: Limit your Twitter time! For many people, it's a great way to procrastinate and can become addictive. (We don't want that.) Think of Twitter as *ONE* approach to networking and marketing that you can do while staying informed about new lines of thinking, breaking news, new and relevant research, and a few other things along the way.

There are many more things to be said about Twitter. It's not all good. It's not all bad. Used as described above, it can be a terrific source of information on legal news, perspectives, ideas, and information. Try Twitter out for a month. See what you think. See what you learn. And if you like what we do here at The Jury Expert, then follow us on [Twitter!](#)

If we still haven't convinced you, you can benefit from Twitter without actually signing up. You can see everything The Jury Expert's Twitter feed posts at our Twitter page (<http://www.twitter.com/thejuryexpert>) or by simply going to TJE's front page on the web and scrolling to the bottom of our front page (<http://www.astcweb.org/public/publication/>). We hope you enjoy our September 2009 Favorite Thing!

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On civility, racial slurs, graphic pictures & anthropomorphism

Recent days have been filled with news about (very public) rude and/or disrespectful behavior from athletes, celebrities, and politicians. Pundits and pollsters are telling us what it means about our society and about the deepening political divisions in our country. Media outlets are covering the frenzy intently and 'civility' is being talked about as a behavior sorely lacking in our society today. It does make us stop and think about how each of us is responsible for our own behavior and for treating each other with respect.

Our goal with *The Jury Expert* is not only to help you increase your trial skills but also to offer information that helps you pause and ponder from time to time. This issue features diverse and provocative pieces that we hope will make you stop and think about hate crimes, racial slurs, graphic injury photographs, and assault weapons as self-defense tools.

In addition, we have terrific pieces on the contribution of the mediator to the negotiation process; how to identify leaders in the jury pool; the benefits of humanizing complex evidence through anthropomorphism in technical presentations; considering the need for alternative cause strategies in product liability litigation; and a primer of sorts, disguised as our September 2009 Favorite Thing.

Read us cover to cover (or web page to web page)! Tell your friends and colleagues about us. Help *The Jury Expert* travel to offices in venues where we've never been before. And, as always, if you have topics you'd like addressed in upcoming issues, let me know.

--- *Rita R. Handrich, Ph.D.*



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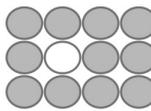
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