

# MINNESOTA LAWYER

## Legal News

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### Marketing via the Web: It's not just Facebook any more

by Jane Pribek Special to Minnesota Lawyer

So, much to your children's embarrassment, you're on Facebook, for fun and maybe marketing, too. Want to really annoy your kids? Embrace Web 2.0. You'll soon be all over the Web, and probably even getting new clients along the way.

It's been an effective and cost-effective strategy for Jeffrey C. O'Brien, of Mansfield, Tanick & Cohen P.A. in Minneapolis.

But first, here's an abbreviated definition of Web 2.0 from Wikipedia: "The second generation of web development and web design that facilitates information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration on the World Wide Web." Examples include social networking sites like Facebook, wikis and blogs, to name a few.

To see how Web 2.0 can boost your marketing efforts, from a search engine optimization standpoint, Google "attorney Jeffrey O'Brien." At the time of this writing, his bio on his law firm's website was the first result on the first page. Moreover, he was the subject of nine of the 10 results on that page.

O'Brien says he started making a Web presence for himself, beyond just his biography at his firm's website, a few years ago, and was an early adopter of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Not too long ago, a client who works as a website developer, and who knows of O'Brien's interest in online social networking, suggested he create a profile on Google Profiles ([www.Google.com/profiles](http://www.Google.com/profiles)). He took that advice. It took just a few minutes to create the profile, which now serves as the "clearing house" for O'Brien's various Web networking activities.

Go to Google Profiles and search for "Jeffrey O'Brien." At his profile is a head shot and a professional bio, and on the right-hand side are 12 links to his profiles/personalized Web applications. The first is his bio at his law firm's website. Next you'll recognize some of the better-known links, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. He also has a link to his own website, his profiles on SuperLawyers and MeetTheElite, and to the WCCO Real Estate Radio Hour, where there are links to podcasts in which he speaks. He also has links to the groups in which he's actively involved, such as the Front Nine Business Builders (his BNI chapter) and the American Association of Microbusinesses.

"Face-to-face networking is how I built my practice, but I've found online social networking to be a great complement," he says. And yes, it has generated business through it, for himself and his firm.

For example, he "friended" another attorney on Facebook via the recommendation of a mutual friend. That attorney has referred him business. They have met in person since then, but the online connection and business referral came first.

More recently, he used Hootsuite ([www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)) to stagger his posts on Twitter for the following day. Specifically, he used its "Scheduled Tweets" feature, so that between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., his tweets appeared hourly, each with a link to an article from his firm's summer newsletter. One of them was about noncompete agreements. Within a few days, two of his Facebook Friends who saw the tweets, and who were starting new jobs, contacted him for advice about the noncompetes they'd been asked to sign. O'Brien, a real estate and business lawyer, referred them to his law partners who practice employment law.

"It works for me, and I'm doing it for the firm as well. We have a strong brand in providing education on legal issues, so you can do that kind of soft marketing by putting educational content out there," he says.

It's not hard to become a Web 2.0 aficionado, according to O'Brien. While he's created his own website, that level of tech-savviness isn't required. The Web applications are all free, but they do take time. When creating his profiles, O'Brien cut-and-pasted the same text for his professional bios to streamline the process. Also, he's linked his Twitter and Facebook accounts, so that updates on one become posted to the other automatically.

Be advised that there are downsides to Web 2.0. It's very likely you'll receive more spam e-mails. O'Brien has seen only a very slight increase, and thanks his firm's spam quarantine program for that. He says it's a small nuisance, compared to the big benefits Web 2.0 has yielded.

Moreover, be sure — really, really sure — that what you put in your profiles, and on Facebook and Twitter, is information you don't mind sharing with the whole world. Some lawyers just aren't comfortable with putting anything on the Web about themselves, and if that's you, stick to the bar meetings and golf outings (O'Brien likes those, too).

As for O'Brien, he says his friends and clients all mesh together, so he doesn't mind posting personal tidbits now and then, along with his news as a professional. He's careful to avoid anything overtly political, or worse, uninteresting posts like "Getting a latte at Caribou."

His goal is to be the "the first name on the brain" for those who, like him, are favorably inclined toward Web 2.0. That's more and more people every day.