



LegalTypist, Inc.

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presents:

Twitter 101



twitter

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Preface

If you find the information in this booklet helpful, let us know! Find Andrea on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook or send your comments, feedback, suggestions to support@legaltypist.com

If you want to learn more from Andrea, check out her scheduled teleclasses here: <http://www.legaltypist.com/events.htm>.

You are also always welcome to sign up and read her ezine/blog, – The Legal Connection – full of tips, reviews and recommendations for working well with others in the digital world. <http://www.thelegalconnection.com>

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SUGGESTIONS FOR TOPICS OF FUTURE GUIDES, FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS
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Introduction

Here's a quick marketing question for you: How often do you tweet? If you don't know what I'm talking about, you're missing out on one of the hottest marketing tools on the Internet today - Twitter.

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a micro-blogging site - meaning you can state your thoughts, views, opinions and links, but in a super-compact way. In fact, with Twitter, you only get to use 140 characters for each "post", affectionately known as a tweet. At first glance, you may think 140 characters can't possibly give you enough room to say anything of value but once you jump into the flow, you'll be amazed at the way Twitter can change your social media marketing world.

How Does Twitter Work?

Twitter works as a real-time social media platform for users to update their followers with tidbits of information, chit chat, tips and other information that is broadcast to this group of users who have chosen to stay updated by your tweets. While there are over 6 million users on Twitter, according to the latest statistics, individuals choose who they want to interact with by "following" them.

Every user gets a profile page, with room for a short bio, a photo and a link to the site of your choice. Your profile page also includes a button people can click on to begin "following" you - which means they will be provided with access to all of your updates.

The more followers you acquire the stronger your networking capabilities become on Twitter. Twitter functions as an ever increasing network as each person interacts with their following, who then connects them to their own group of followers and on and on it grows.

Let me break it down a bit:

When you create your user account and choose some people to follow, they have the opportunity to follow you back. As your followers start to get to know you, they will look to you to connect with other people on Twitter and when they find people they relate to, they will begin following them as well. This "tell two friends who tell two friends who tell two friends" networking will expand your network faster than you can possibly imagine.

Who Uses Twitter?

At the rate Twitter is growing, it won't be long before the answer to this question is EVERYONE! Twitter is growing at a rate of over 7500 users every day, with a total right now of over six million users. That's lots of peeps!

Twitter is a great place to connect, both in business and personally, for anyone who is looking for a platform where they can reach out to a wide network of people at one time.

Twitter is popular with many different kinds of people. In business, you'll find lawyers, realtors, writers, web designers, Internet marketers, coaches, entrepreneurs, bloggers, small business owners, large corporations, politicians - even the President of the United States! You'll find famous people, infamous people, unknown people - the truth is, Twitter is being used by folks from every walk of life you can imagine to connect with others to expand their network.

Why is Twitter So Popular?

One of the reasons Twitter is so popular is that Twitter is so popular! In other words, so many people are using Twitter that it is rapidly becoming THE place to connect on the web. In fact, mainstream media has started using Twitter **and** talking about it. CNN and Fox News both discuss Twitter and use it as a way for viewers to offer input on various stories. In the recent Presidential election, President Obama's campaign used Twitter as part of their massive campaign efforts.

Twitter's popularity comes from its ease of use. It's also quite addictive! Many people who questioned whether Twitter was worth the effort find they love the fast-paced interaction of the site. Twitter is all about immediate connections and real-time relationship building.

Human beings are social animals who thrive on relationships and interaction with each other. Twitter provides immediate contact with others - no waiting for return emails or finding people on various Instant Messengers. You can jump on Twitter any time, day or night and connect with someone immediately. Often, just taking five or ten minutes to tweet with others is all it really takes to build your followers and expand your connections.

Why Twitter Works for Marketing

Although you never use Twitter to actually market, it still works for marketing for a couple of reasons. The first, and most important one, is Twitter is different from a lot of marketing techniques. It really is all about making connections and

creating relationships. So no marketing or selling skills are required. (In fact, keep reading to find out what can KILL you on Twitter).

What you must have is a willingness to share - a little bit about yourself, your business, your world, your interests.

Perhaps it works for marketing because when you have to focus on your word choice, with only 140 characters, you take the time to make sure every letter counts.

Perhaps it works because when you come right down to it, Twitter is fun!

Of course, some folks will tell you Twitter is a great marketing tool because you can find a targeted audience who CHOOSE to follow you and read your messages and they'd be right.

The truth is Twitter works for a variety of different reasons. The good news is, those reasons all add up to the reality that Twitter DOES WORK! There is something about the way people get real on Twitter that you just don't see in many other platforms, that lets you get to know people's real personalities. That is what inspires trust and creates bonds that lead to connections, relationships and success.

Let's look a bit closer about how to get started on Twitter, so you can begin using this amazing networking tool in your business.

How to Get Started on Twitter

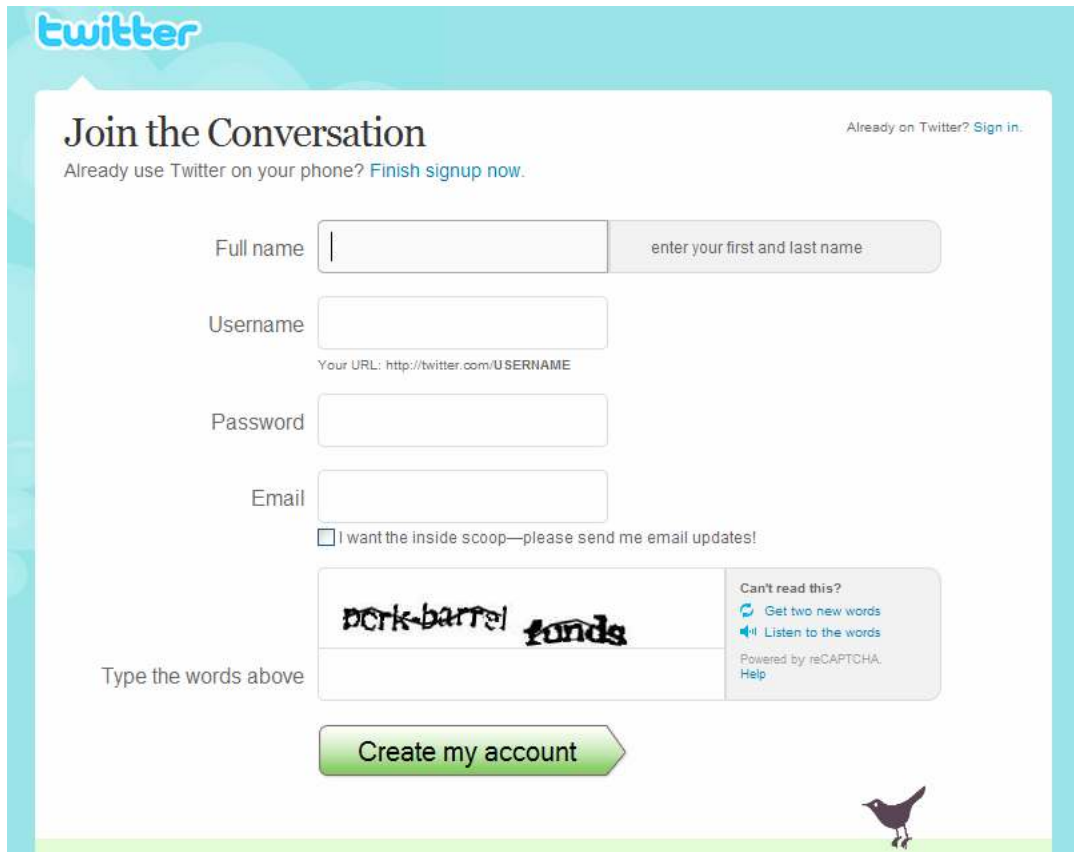
The easiest way to get a real understanding of the power of Twitter is to create an account and get started. It only takes a few minutes to set up your account, so let's get started.

Setting up an Account

Go to www.twitter.com and click on the "Get Started - Join" link.



You'll be taken to a form to create your account that looks like this, where you'll enter your first and last name in the Full Name box. (Easy so far, right?)



The image shows the Twitter account creation form. At the top left is the Twitter logo. The main heading is "Join the Conversation" with a link "Already on Twitter? Sign in." to the right. Below the heading is a sub-heading "Already use Twitter on your phone? Finish signup now." The form contains several input fields: "Full name" with a placeholder "enter your first and last name", "Username", "Password", and "Email". Below the "Email" field is a checkbox labeled "I want the inside scoop—please send me email updates!". There is a CAPTCHA section with the text "Type the words above" and two images of words: "pork-barrel" and "funds". To the right of the CAPTCHA are links: "Can't read this?", "Get two new words", "Listen to the words", "Powered by reCAPTCHA.", and "Help". At the bottom of the form is a green button labeled "Create my account" and a small bird icon in the bottom right corner.

Then follow the steps to create your username. Your username is the name everyone will know you by, so give some thought to the name you choose.

Every time you post a message, known as a tweet, on Twitter, your name and profile picture will be displayed, so you definitely don't want to choose a username made of random numbers and letters.

Twitter lets you use up to 15 characters (with no spaces) for your username, so use them wisely. If you choose not to use your actual name, try to create a name that tells people what you do. You can use your business name, but very often, something a little more personal is more effective. Remember the key to social media is the social part, so you want to choose a username that lets people relate to you as a person. Keep in mind, also, that if you choose a random username made up of assorted letters and numbers, people may think you are a spammer and block you.

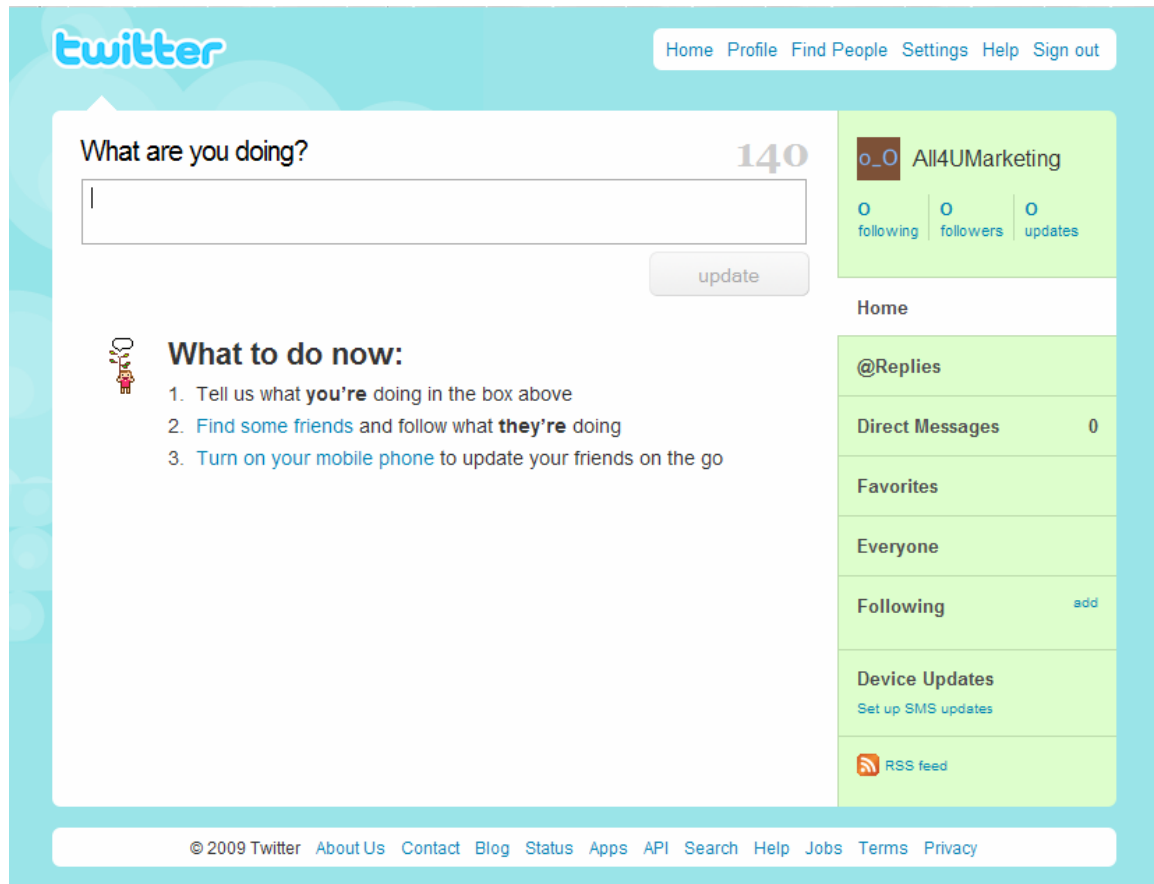
Your next step is to enter your email address. Make sure you enter an actual email address that you use on a regular basis. Twitter will not send you spam email, but they will use your email address to alert you to new followers and direct messages, if you so choose. You will also be notified, via email, if you lose or forget your username or password.

Once you create your account, you will be taken to a screen where you can check to see if anyone you know is already using twitter based on various email applications. Skip this process and do NOT share your contact list(s) with Twitter. Instead, you will slowly build up who you follow on Twitter by connecting with colleagues and friends and following those of interest to you.

Next is a screen with some suggested followers. You can scan through if you'd like or you can choose to skip this step as well.

Personalizing Your Profile

Now we've reached the area that many people skip and they should NOT. This is where you personalize your profile.



The screenshot shows the Twitter home page interface. At the top left is the Twitter logo. To the right is a navigation bar with links for Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a text input field with the placeholder "What are you doing?" and a character count of "140". Below this is a "What to do now:" section with three numbered steps: 1. Tell us what **you're** doing in the box above; 2. Find some friends and follow what **they're** doing; 3. Turn on your mobile phone to update your friends on the go. The right column contains a user profile for "o_o All4UMarketing" with "0 following", "0 followers", and "0 updates". Below the profile is a "Home" section with a list of navigation options: @Replies, Direct Messages (0), Favorites, Everyone, Following (add), Device Updates (Set up SMS updates), and RSS feed. At the bottom of the page is a footer with copyright information and various utility links.

In the upper right hand corner is the account navigation panel, with links to move around the administrative/backend of your Twitter account. Click on "Settings" to continue personalizing your Twitter account.

The screenshot shows the Twitter account settings page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out. Below this, the account settings are organized into tabs: Account, Password, Devices, Notices, Picture, and Design. The 'Account' tab is active, showing fields for Name, Username, Email, Password, Time Zone, More Info URL, One Line Bio, Location, and Language. A 'Save' button is located at the bottom of the form. A right-hand sidebar contains an 'Account' section with instructions on how to change basic account info and a 'Tips' section with advice on profile information and privacy.

Account

From here you can change your basic account info, fill in your profile data, and set whether you want to be private or public.

Tips

- Filling in your profile information will help people find you on Twitter. For example, you'll be more likely to turn up in a Twitter search if you've added your location or your real name.
- Change your Twitter user name anytime without affecting your existing updates, @replies, direct messages, or other data. After changing it, make sure to let your followers know so you'll continue receiving all of your messages with your new user name.
- Protect your profile to keep your Twitter updates private. Approve who can follow you and keep your updates out of search results.

Once you reach the settings page, you'll notice some things are already filled in for you. Your name, Username (this is what makes up the URL to your profile page) and your email address. If you want to change them feel free to do so now. You'll need to re-enter your password if you do.

After you get those items the way you want them, there are two important fields you need to fill in so that people can find you and your business.

1. The first is the "*More Info URL*." Use this to add a link to your website, blog, LinkedIn page or any other significant link you have that gives people an opportunity to find out more about you and/or your business.
2. The other field you need to fill in is the "*One Line Bio*" field. Here you have one line (160 characters) to share some more information about yourself. Make this as interesting as you can in the space allotted. This bio will be one of the ways people decide if they will click to find out more about you and/or follow you or not - so tell them who you are and what you do.

Here's my profile information:



The image shows a light blue profile card for Andrea Cannavina. It includes the following information:

- Name:** Andrea Cannavina
- Location:** Long Island, New York
- Web:** <http://www.legalt...>
- Bio:** Digital Assistant and Master VA who helps professionals upgrade to a digital workflow in order to get more done with less - less time, resources and stress!
- Stats:** 300 following, 471 followers, 790 updates

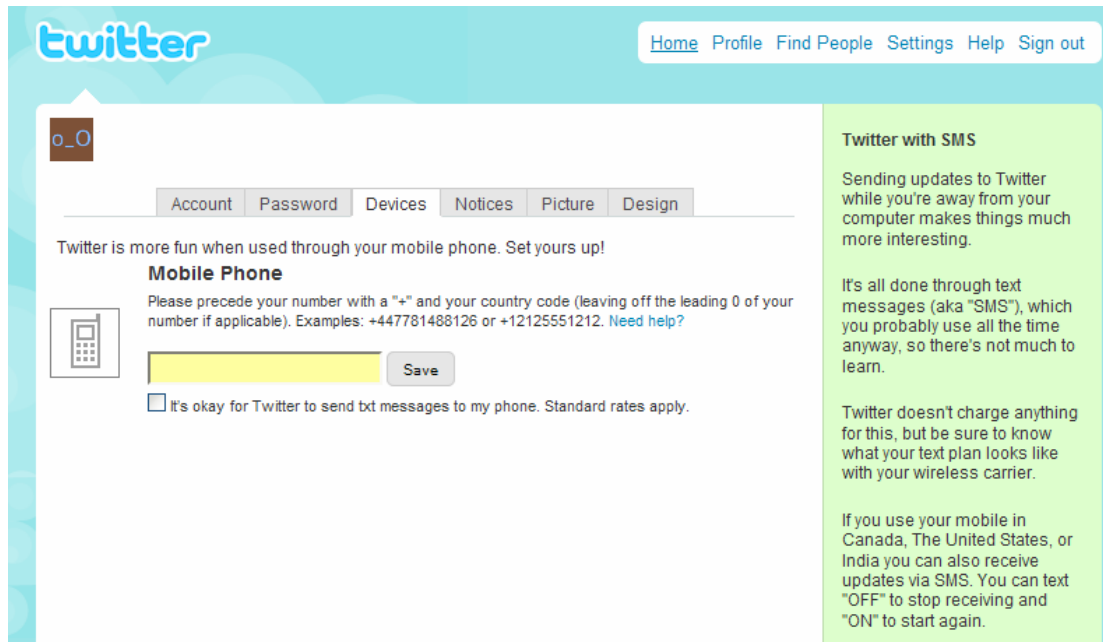
The settings page also allows you to add your time zone and your location. So be sure you complete those too.

Finally, on the bottom of the page is a box you can check if you want to protect your updates. If you check this box, people will only be able to see your updates if they have special permission. This option is not recommended - especially when you are trying to build a network of followers. Unless you plan to use your Twitter account to communicate only with a select group of people, you should leave this box empty.

When you are finished filling in your settings, be sure to click on "Save" at the bottom of the page. Let's navigate back to your home page now.

Using Twitter with Your Cell Phone

On the right hand side of your home page, you will see section towards the bottom labeled Device Updates with a link "Set up SMS Device."



The screenshot shows the Twitter mobile phone settings page. At the top, the Twitter logo is on the left, and navigation links for Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out are on the right. Below the logo is a profile picture placeholder labeled 'o_o'. A horizontal menu contains tabs for Account, Password, Devices, Notices, Picture, and Design. The main content area features the heading 'Mobile Phone' and a text input field for a phone number. Below the input field is a 'Save' button and a checkbox labeled 'It's okay for Twitter to send txt messages to my phone. Standard rates apply.' To the right of the main content is a green sidebar titled 'Twitter with SMS' containing explanatory text about SMS updates and carrier charges.

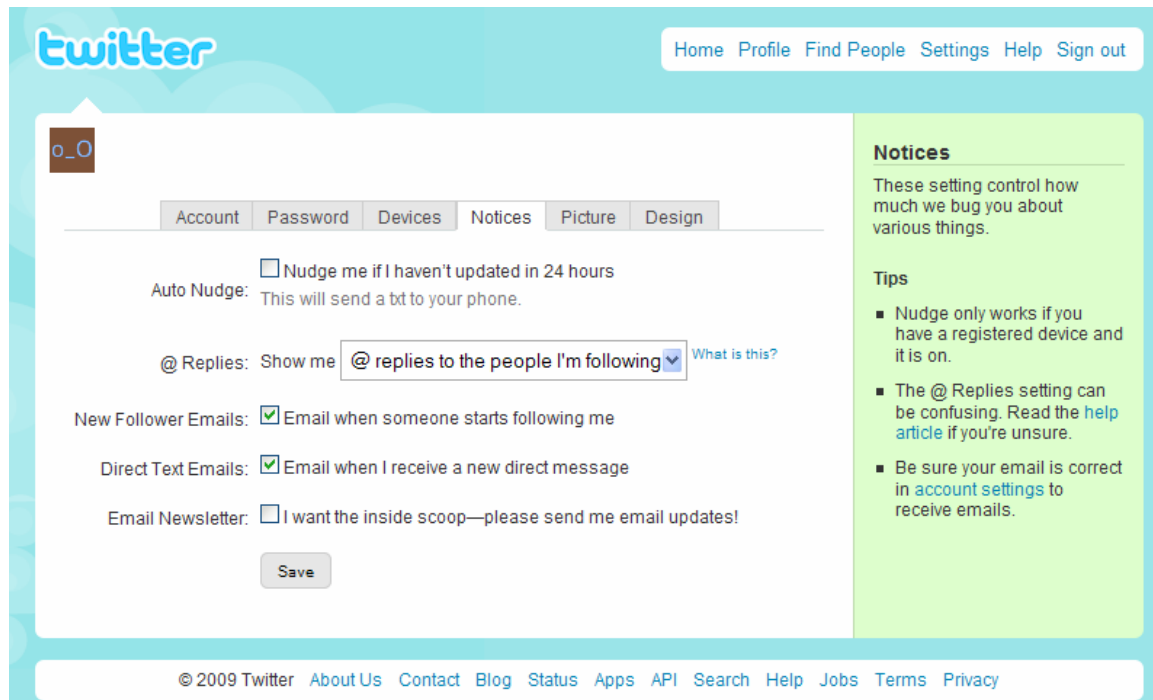
If you want to send and receive your Twitter messages from your mobile phone, you can add that information here.

Keep in mind however, if you use your cell phone to communicate on Twitter, you may be charged standard text messaging rates for your tweets.

Not all "unlimited data plans" include texting.

Notification Options

Click on the "Notices" tab and you will find options for receiving email notifications when people follow you or when you receive a direct message. A direct message is a private message sent from one follower to another, without showing up in your "public" stream of tweets for others to see.



The screenshot shows the Twitter 'Notices' settings page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out. Below this, the user's profile picture (o_o) is visible. The 'Notices' tab is selected, and the settings are as follows:

- Account** | Password | Devices | **Notices** | Picture | Design
- Auto Nudge:** Nudge me if I haven't updated in 24 hours. This will send a txt to your phone.
- @ Replies:** Show me [What is this?](#)
- New Follower Emails:** Email when someone starts following me
- Direct Text Emails:** Email when I receive a new direct message
- Email Newsletter:** I want the inside scoop—please send me email updates!

A 'Save' button is located at the bottom of the settings area. On the right side, there is a 'Notices' section with a description: 'These setting control how much we bug you about various things.' Below this, there are 'Tips' for the settings:

- Nudge only works if you have a registered device and it is on.
- The @ Replies setting can be confusing. Read the [help article](#) if you're unsure.
- Be sure your email is correct in [account settings](#) to receive emails.

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with copyright information and links: © 2009 Twitter | [About Us](#) | [Contact](#) | [Blog](#) | [Status](#) | [Apps](#) | [API](#) | [Search](#) | [Help](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Terms](#) | [Privacy](#)

It's a good idea to select the email option for direct messages (or DM's, in Twitter-speak) as you don't receive any other notification that you have one. All DM's you receive do show up in a special section on your home page (labeled Direct Messages) but other than checking this area periodically, you won't know if DM's are accumulating without the email notifications.

It's also nice to receive an email when you get a new follower so you have the opportunity to follow them back and/or send them a "welcome" message. This is a great opportunity to personally connect with those who choose to follow you.

Show 'Em Who You Are

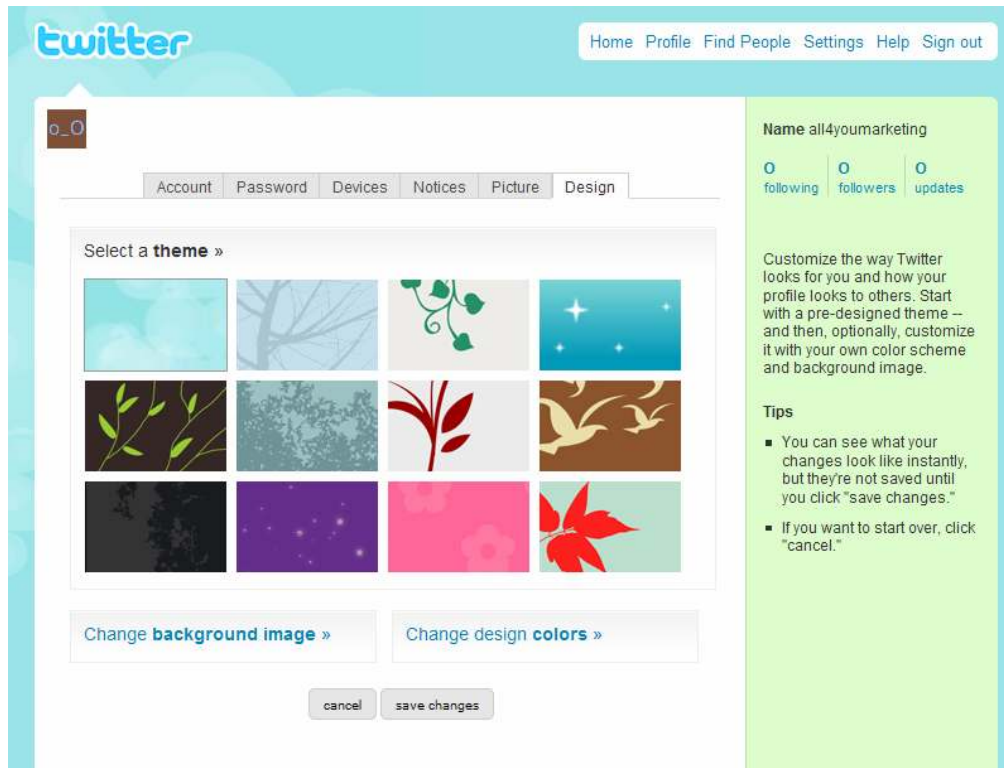
Your next step in preparing your Twitter profile is to upload a picture to be shown with your tweets and on your home page. Click the "Picture" tab and Browse to a photo on your computer, then click "Save" to upload your photo of choice. Please note the photo must be no larger than 700k and must be in .jpg or .png format. Twitter will automatically resize the photo.



This isn't the time to be shy. Use a real photo of yourself. You want your followers to see you as a real person, so they choose to interact with you and a real photo goes a long way toward helping people connect with you. It helps to use the same photo you use on other social media sites as well as on your own site or blog. Once you are on Twitter for a bit, you can play around with your photo – changing it out for an avatar or cartoon, or in conjunction with holidays is always fun – however, be certain you have a professional looking headshot as your "main" picture.

Give Your Page Some Personality

Finally, you can customize how your homepage looks by clicking the "Design" tab. This feature allows you a small amount of flexibility in the look of your homepage.



There are a few default design backgrounds you can choose and you can change the colors of your background. It can be helpful to use colors that complement your website or blog colors as part of your branding strategy. The design feature in Twitter is pretty limited. If you are interested in a custom background, you can design your own in Photoshop, hire a designer or use a service like TwitterWebs.com or TwitDesign.com to create a custom Twitter background for you.

If you have a custom background made, you can share more links with the people who view it. Although these links are not clickable, your background is a place you can at least let people know how they can connect with you. It's a great place to share your other social media profile names or links, like Facebook and LinkedIn. You can post a phone number if you like or any other information about your business. While it's good to have clear information available so people can find you if they like, be careful not to let your background become too crowded or cluttered. Keeping it simple is the best route to go.

I like to keep things plain and simple. Here's my profile page for [LegalTypist](#).

The screenshot shows a Twitter profile for 'LegalTypist' (Andrea Cannavina). The profile includes a profile picture, a bio, and statistics: 300 following, 467 followers, and 780 updates. A recent tweet is visible, along with replies from other users.

twitter Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out

LegalTypist

Name Andrea Cannavina
Location Long Island, New York
Web <http://www.legalt...>
Bio Digital Assistant and Master VA who helps professionals upgrade to a digital workflow in order to get more done with less - less time, resources and stress!

300 following | 467 followers | 780 updates

Updates

Favorites

Following

Chris Garrett

New blog post: Are You Tongue Tied? <http://www.thelegalconnecti...>
1 minute ago from web

@ExpertParalegal I'm addicted to the Cadbury Mini Eggs - hard crunchy shell with yummy Cadbury milk chocolate inside... must stop eating...
25 minutes ago from web in reply to ExpertParalegal

@jimcalloway Some like to let their peeps know when they on twitter so sign in/out at start/end of day
about 4 hours ago from OutTwit in reply to jimcalloway

@leenaReilii Sending them your way now

Now that you've created your account and customized your profile, you're ready to get started using your Twitter account.

In other words, it's time to tweet! :)



Tweeting – Get Social!

There is an art to using Twitter to its full capabilities. The most important thing to remember is to be social and really interact with people.

The quickest way to ruin your Twitter credibility - whether you are a new user or a seasoned vet - is to use Twitter as a platform to hype yourself, practice your sales pitch or hawk your products. Twitter is not about marketing, sales or pushing anything.

Twitter is about giving, connecting and forming relationships. Your goal isn't to see what the tally is at the end of the day. It isn't about how many people are following you.

It's really about how many people choose to learn more about you and travel from your Twitter profile to your website. Once on your website, you then have the ability to educate, promote and responsibly market to Twitterers just as you do any other website visitor.

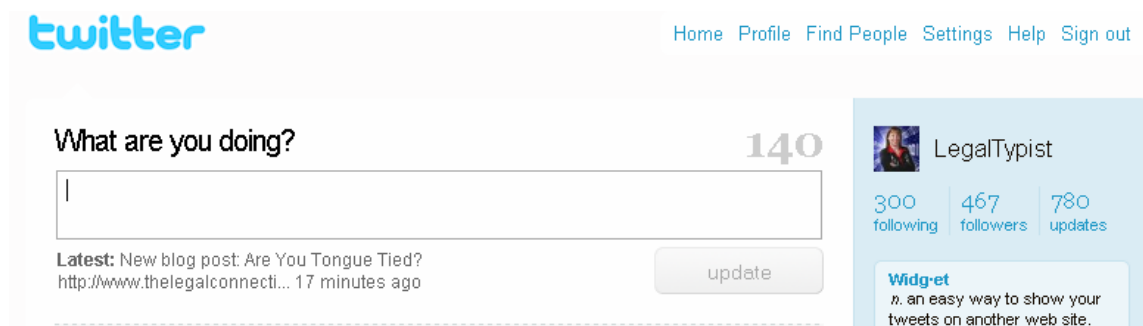
To tweet most successfully, vary your messages between encouraging and uplifting others, offering helpful tidbits in your area of expertise, sharing a bit about your real life and the occasional offer or link to your site.

You should consider a ratio of about 20 to 1. In other words, for every tweet directing followers to your website, you need 20 tweets without site links. The exception to this is if you have a blog with frequently updated content. There is nothing wrong with letting people know you've posted to your blog, but it is critical that you are also posting the other types of tweets.

Answering the Ever Popular Question, "What Are You Doing?"

To post a tweet on Twitter, select the Home link from your navigation links.

Fill in the box that asks "What are you doing?" Remember, you only have 140 characters to work with so make it count!



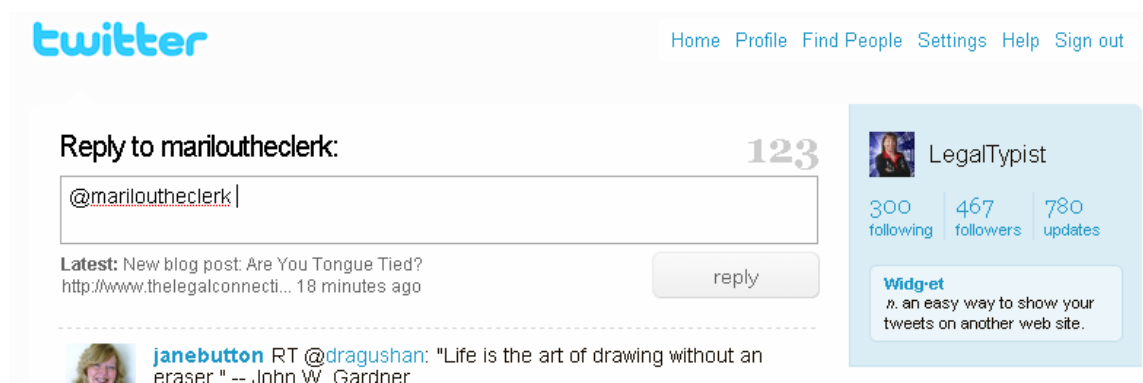
The screenshot shows the Twitter interface for composing a tweet. At the top left is the Twitter logo. To the right are navigation links: Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out. The main area has a text input field with the placeholder "What are you doing?" and a character count of "140". Below the input field is a "Latest:" notification: "New blog post: Are You Tongue Tied? http://www.thelegalconnecti... 17 minutes ago". To the right of the input field is an "update" button. On the right side of the interface is a user profile for "LegalTypist" with a profile picture, 300 following, 467 followers, and 780 updates. Below the profile is a "Widg-et" widget description: "n. an easy way to show your tweets on another web site."

Type in your answer letting others know what you're up to. Click the "Update" button. Your message has now been published and others will see it.

Replies On Twitter

One of the best ways to use Twitter is to reply to other people's tweets. When someone asks a question or makes a comment you can answer or respond to, use the @ sign before their username to reply to them.

Here's an example:



The screenshot shows the Twitter interface for replying to a tweet. At the top left is the Twitter logo. To the right are navigation links: Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out. The main area has a text input field with the placeholder "Reply to mariloutheclerk:" and a character count of "123". The input field contains "@mariloutheclerk|". Below the input field is a "Latest:" notification: "New blog post: Are You Tongue Tied? http://www.thelegalconnecti... 18 minutes ago". To the right of the input field is a "reply" button. On the right side of the interface is a user profile for "LegalTypist" with a profile picture, 300 following, 467 followers, and 780 updates. Below the profile is a "Widg-et" widget description: "n. an easy way to show your tweets on another web site." Below the input field, there is a tweet from "janebutton" RT @dragushan: "Life is the art of drawing without an eraser " -- .John W. Gardner

You can also click on the small arrow at the end of the user's tweet you are replying to. You need to hover the cursor over the tweet and look to the right side of the tweet to see the delete and reply icons. When you reply to someone in this way, it posts to your public Tweet timeline.

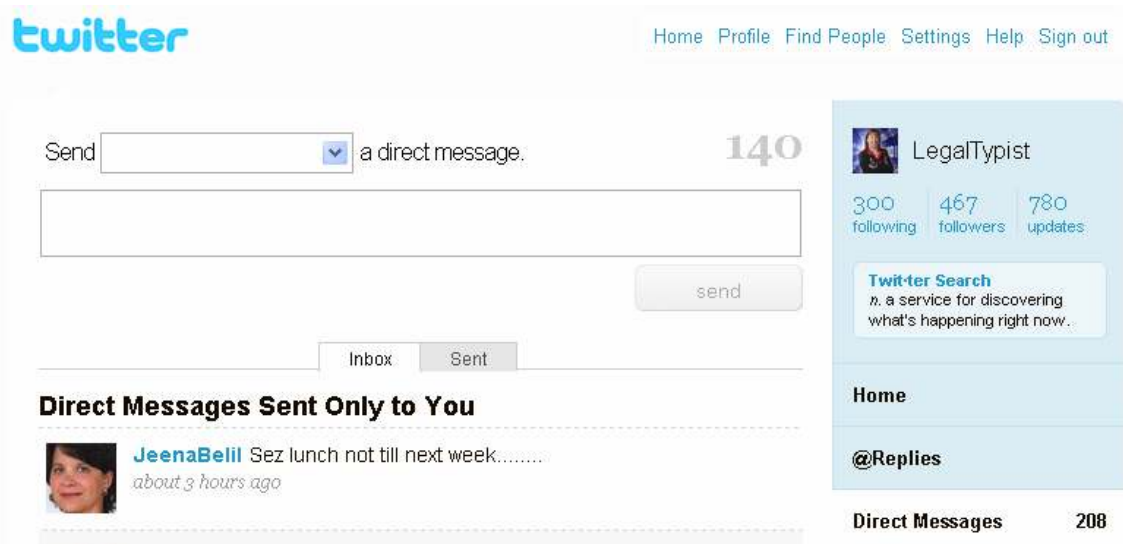
Direct Messages

So, what do you do if you want to send a private message to someone without everyone else on Twitter seeing it?

If you want to carry on an exclusive conversation with one person for more than a few tweets, it's a good idea to use the direct message (DM) feature. This allows for a more private method to communicate as anything that is a DM does not post to your public Tweet timeline.

Do keep in mind that Twitter is a free service, so there is no guarantee that your DM's are or will remain "private". This means you should not DM anything you wouldn't want found through a simple Google search (i.e., full names, private telephone numbers, negative comments).

You can go to your DM folder from your Twitter home page by clicking the link on the right hand side of the page. Once you're there, you will see a drop down list of the people you can direct message.



Note: The only way to use this feature to DM someone is when both parties are following each other. If you do not see the person you wish to DM in the drop down list, that is because they are not following you.

The other way you can direct message someone is by typing the letter D, leaving a space and typing the username - without the @ sign preceding it in the text box of your home page. Example: D username

Re-tweeting (RT)

One way to interact on Twitter is by re-tweeting something interesting or informative someone else has tweeted. This is known as Re-tweeting (RT).

Re-tweeting is simply repeating what another user has said, preceded by an @ and their username. If you want to re-tweet something a particular user has said simply type "RT @" then block copy their original tweet into text box on your home page.

Here's an example of one of my RT of @taxgirl:



Re-tweeting helps you out in two different ways:

1. It provides interesting, useful or informative content to your followers.
2. It helps spread the network of original tweeter.

Re-tweet fairly often, but keep it for things that are truly worth repeating. Again, don't use this method of communication as your sole type of tweet, but mix it in with your other posts.

Another way to spread the word even more about you (and your business) is to provide your followers with quality information that will have them re-tweeting your messages to their followers.

Next we cover how do you find people to follow and more importantly get followers of your own. After all, no one likes talking to themselves, right?

How to Find People to Follow & Get Followers Too!

Building a network on Twitter starts by finding people to follow. You do not want to limit yourself to exclusively following those in your target audience or industry – you need to mix it up a bit and include a variety of other people.

Twitter is an amazing place to connect with people for new ideas, joint ventures and partnerships.

By following people in your own industry, you can find inspiring ideas, opportunities to help others and the camaraderie of connecting with people who understand the ins and outs of what you do. Every field has specific highlights and lowlights that only others in that same field can relate to and understand.

When you get to know people who struggle with the same issues you have, you have the opportunity to encourage each other and offer suggestions for working through the tough stuff. Many people in business online work in a solo enterprise, which can become extremely isolating and stifling. Twitter can be an excellent remedy for this affliction - which can lead to greater productivity and success.

There are several ways you can find people to follow on Twitter. Starting from your home page, you can look to your right and find the link that says "Everyone". This is called the public timeline and it will show you tweets from absolutely everyone on Twitter. Read through these until you find one that interests you. Then simply click on the username or profile picture to go to that person's home page. Read through some of their tweets, go to their website, and read their bio - whatever you need to do to get a sense of who they are. If you like what you see, click the follow link under their picture and voila, you are following someone!

Another way to find followers is to use the "Find People" link. This is at the top of your homepage, in the navigational links. There are four different options in the Find People section.

- *Find on Twitter:* Here you can search for people by their username or their real name. This is great for searching out specific Twitter users.
- *Find on Other Networks:* This feature lets you import names from your Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail or MSN accounts. I do NOT recommend you use this feature – your contact list is none of Twitter's business. It's best to connect to your existing peeps one at a time.

- *Invite by Email.* You can enter email addresses here and send anyone you can't find through the generic search a pre-written message inviting them to connect with you on Twitter.
- *Suggested Users.* This little feature will offer you some possible users to follow. Many of these names are celebrities on Twitter - it may not do a whole lot for your business networking goals, but then again, you never know. You might just enjoy what they have to say!

On the bottom of your home page is the "Search" function. You can use Twitter Search to look for a username, a topic or a keyword. Type in your search word and you will instantly get a page of results containing that word. This is a great way to find followers in your niche.

Again, when you see a tweet that resonates with you, go to that person's homepage and look around a bit. If you like what you see, add them to your following list.

Once you are following a few people, you can check out their followers. Go to their home page and on the right side of their page, you see a link that says Following, with a block of photos underneath it. Click on the link or on a photo to go to the profile page of that Twitter user.

Finally, you can get followers by adding those who follow you. As you start tweeting and interacting with people, you will start gaining followers of your own. Many people follow everyone who follows them. Other people are more selective and only choose to follow back those who are in their niche. The choice is yours, but don't limit yourself too much. You may miss out on some great new friends, colleagues and customers.



Mistakes to Avoid on Twitter

There is no "right way" to use Twitter. Some people use it as a purely social platform, others use it as a teaching tool and still others use it for both of these reasons - and more. There are, however, a couple of important things to avoid doing on Twitter.

- The biggest mistake to avoid on Twitter is using it solely as a sales platform. If the only tweeting you do is self-promotional, you'll burn your bridges before you have a chance to even build them properly. You need to focus on the networking aspect of Twitter and not use it as a sales tool. Spend plenty of your tweet time reaching out to others, sharing useful information and being a social butterfly. If you focus strictly on self-promotion, you will be ignored or worse yet, blocked by other users.
- The other mistake to avoid on Twitter is spending all of your tweets on literally interpreting the "What Are You Doing?" question Twitter asks at the top of your home page. While you can certainly include information about your daily life, don't focus solely on your mundane activities. No one cares if you are brushing your teeth or what you had to eat today. The primary purpose of being on Twitter is to be engaging with other people. Ask questions, offer helpful links to things you are reading that might be of interest to your followers and seek out ways you can be useful to other users. Always remember Twitter is a networking tool - not a sales engine.
- Some applications that work in conjunction with Twitter allow you to set up an automatic direct message to be sent to people who begin following you. Although many people use these auto - DM features, a large number of Twitter users frown on them. Several Twitter polls have shown that a large majority of users do not like automated messages. So if you get that option – opt for "no".
- If you do send direct messages in response to new followers, sending a link to your website - especially if you are trying to sell something - is a huge No-No! Most folks on Twitter would like to get to know you first before you start trying to sell your products and services.

Additional Goodies for Making Twitter Use Easier

There is no shortage of programs and applications used to make Twitter readily accessible and easier to use. Many of these can save you time and add convenience so you can make the most out of your Twitter time.

Some of the most helpful Twitter tools include desktop clients for accessing Twitter without needing to spend your time on the actual Twitter website. The two most popular desktop clients for Twitter are TweetDeck and Twhirl.

Desktop Applications

As an aside – I do not recommend that anyone download, install or use any Free or Beta program on a mission critical machine. While many of these downloads can be extremely helpful, they also have the potential to be extremely harmful. Therefore, if you do wish to use a desktop resident application in connection with your Twitter account, download and use it from a secondary machine or laptop – not a machine which holds all your business data and software. Of course, before you download or install any application on any machine, create a System Restore Point.

TweetDeck

TweetDeck is an Adobe Air application that can be used on either a Mac or PC. It helps you break down the vast amount of information on Twitter into manageable sized groups, which helps you stay abreast of your conversations.

You split your TweetDeck screen into columns, helping you to sort things out. For example, one column is for your regular tweet stream, much like your Twitter home page. However, you can also set up separate columns for your @replies, your direct messages, designated groups of people or results of a keyword search.

When you separate things into these various columns, you remove a lot of the "noise" from Twitter and can see the information most important to you. This is especially helpful so you don't miss any replies sent to you by other users, as well as showing you direct messages instantaneously. One big frustration with the Twitter webpage is you have no way of knowing someone has sent you a direct message, without continually checking that page. The same applies to your @replies (messages sent to you, but in the public stream.)

TweetDeck lets you continue working on the web, or any other program you may be using and alerts you when you receive messages, with a little chirp and a small pop-up window. Then, with just a glance, you can see if the tweet is a

direct message, a personal @reply or a response to a keyword search or simply a general tweet from another user.

Twhirl

Another popular desktop client for Twitter is Twhirl. Twhirl is much smaller than TweetDeck and doesn't have as many features, but it does give you a small compact application to tweet and follow your tweet stream.

Twhirl lets you know when you have new messages and has a search feature. It also allows you to keep track of some other social networking sites such as Friendfeed. Twhirl can also be set up to cross post to Facebook and LinkedIn.

OutTwit

If you're like me and always have Outlook open, then you can easily update your Twitter status and follow the goings on in your twiterverse using OutTwit. OutTwit seamlessly integrates Twitter into Outlook allowing you to post new tweets as well as view, reply and DM – all from Outlook. Better still, you can sort by name, subject, received date or flag and forward messages to those not on Twitter right from Outlook.

OutTwit is my preferred desktop resident application for Twitter.

Other Handy Twitter Apps You Might Find Useful

Many other applications serve to improve upon your Twitter experience. Here's a quick list:

Social Too

This application gives you the option of automatically following anyone who follows you. It will also send you a daily email with the names of everyone who follows you or un-follows you each day.

Some people like to know who unfollows them, as they believe it will help determine if they are tweeting unpopular posts. However, the general consensus is to not worry so much about those who un-follow you. There are plenty of fish in the Twitter Sea and if someone decides to stop following you, it doesn't necessarily have any great impact.

Twitter Grader

There are also some services to help you connect with appropriate people to follow. One of the most popular one of these is Twitter Grader. Twitter Grader calculates the power of your Twitter network based on who you follow, who follows you and how often you tweet. The more popular your followers the higher your Twitter Grade. Twitter Grader also gives you suggestions for people

to follow based on your profile and the most commonly used words in your tweets.

Twitter Buttons

This is a site where you can pick up cute buttons to paste on your website, blog, newsletter and more that encourage people to follow you on Twitter. They're free and updated frequently.

URL Shortening Applications

One type of service many people like to have available on their tool bar is an URL shortening service. Because Twitter limits you to only 140 characters per tweet, posting a link to your website can be troublesome. There are several services that let you type in the URL of any site and they shorten it into a clickable URL. <http://www.tinyurl.com> is a longstanding reliable service I recommend for shorting urls.

You will find many more applications and services available to help you get more out of your Twitter use. There are new ones being developed everyday. If you aren't sure how they work or which ones are the best, simply ask around right on Twitter itself. You'll find plenty of people more than happy to offer their opinions. In fact, one of the things you will notice on Twitter is plenty of people are more than happy to share all kinds of things.

Conclusion

The atmosphere on Twitter is a bit like a party filled with generous, helpful go-getters who truly enjoy interacting with people and doing all they can to help each other out. THAT could just be the secret power of Twitter right there - real people letting down their guard just a bit and truly enjoying helping each other. There is a genuine cooperative spirit on Twitter that is making it one of the most popular spots to be on the Internet.

So, what are you waiting for? Start tweeting and join in the revolution!

About The Author:



Andrea Cannavina is a Master Virtual Assistant and Digital Office Manager who specializes in helping professionals upgrade their processes to digital in order to get more done with less – less time, less resources and less stress!

Just a sample of topics and organizations for whom Andrea has presented: *Go Virtual! Tools of the Trade*, *Working the Web Securely*, *Effective E-mail*, *Creating a Digital Workflow* and *Websites 101*; International Virtual Assistants Association, OIVAC.com, Association of Legal Administrators, Suffolk County Bar Association.

Along with speaking to virtual and live audiences, Andrea publishes *The Legal Connection* e-zine. Subscribe to The Legal Connection and receive a free copy of Andrea's report – **D-A-F-T Your Way To Organized!** a simple process that you can put to use today to end inbox/information overload forever!

You can sign up for the e-zine, see upcoming events and learn of the resources Andrea recommends by visiting her website <http://www.legaltypist.com/events> & blog <http://www.thelegalconnection.com>.

If you'd like to set up a complimentary call to speak with Andrea about your tech or processes or to book Andrea for your web based event: <http://www.legaltypist.com/ConsultForm/>

Andrea recommends the following tech:



<http://www.legaltypist.com/onebox>

Control your calls, voicemails, faxes and e-mails from one secure web based account. Use in conjunction with a LegalTypist Digital Assistant to instantly be on the same page.



<http://www.tinyurl.com/mozy-legaltypist>

It's not a question of if your computer will fail, it's a question of when. Need I say more? Mozy is easy to install/set up and is endorsed by the ABA.



Want to collaborate with anyone in webspace? Use 37 Signal's BackPackIt to securely upload and share content on 100 separate pages.

<http://www.tinyurl.com/backpackit>