A Complete Analysis of the First 30 Days of a New Legal Blogger

By Keith Lee

On June 29, 2010, I began [An Associate's Mind](). I started the blog for a number of reasons, but mostly because I could not find a website or blog that catered to new lawyers and that provided useful information. There were the large legal company websites that had obviously been SEO'ed/marketing-consulted to hell and back and were bloated with ads and confusing navigation. There were smaller, but still slick, websites seemingly offering advising or coaching or some other such service; with fees attached. Then there were the scores of personal law blogs written by students or newly-minted lawyers that claimed to be "blawgs," but were usually about Twilight or complaining about document review.

There was no website that was informative, honest, and didn't expect anything in return. There certainly wasn't a website that catered to my particular interests: Psychology, Economics, Business Management, Classical Western Thought, Eastern Philosophy. All of these topics intersect with the law in a myriad of interesting ways, but no one was discussing them. Furthermore, no one was speaking to new lawyers, or if there was, I couldn't find one that I thought was credible or

offered something other than "4 Quick Ways to Increase Your SEO Presence." *

After being frustrated with a lack of credible information or community that catered to my interests online, I decided to create one myself. Now that I'm one month in, I thought people might be interested in how it's developed. What follows is a complete breakdown and analysis of: **my traffic, referrers, top posts, interaction/clicks, social media (Twitter, LinkedIn), document hosting (JDSupra, Scribd), rankings, & resources.**

* (I don't mean to pick on internet legal marketing. Some of the legal marketers I have connected with are genuine people with whom I have been glad to interact. However, the majority come across as overbearing and looking to sell something. Unfortunately, they give the good ones a bad name.)

Fun Fact:
The most used search phrase people used to reach An Associates's Mind?

"Cicero," famed Roman lawyer and politician, the gentleman at the left.

Fun Fact:
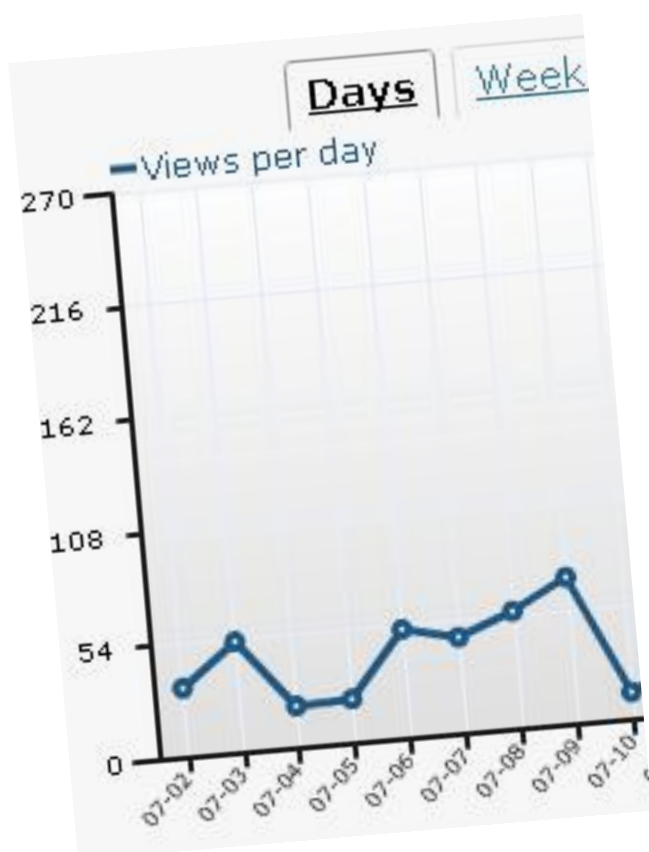"An Associate's Mind" is a play on the Zen concept of *Shosin* - "beginner's mind."

Fun Fact:
30 days in and An Associate's Mind has already received 57 spam comments - all blocked. Actually, that's not that fun. :(

Fun Fact:
The blog's busiest day has been on a Monday - but the post that got the lion's share of the traffic was put up Thursday of the previous week.
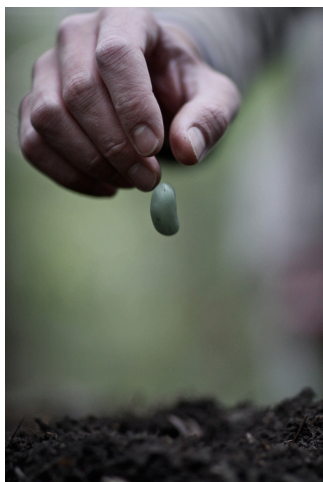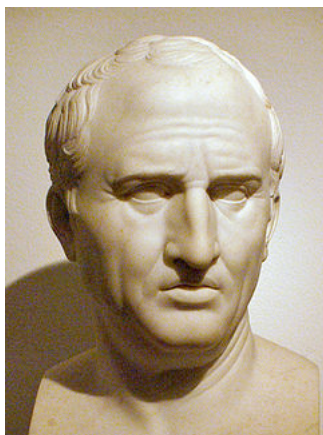
"I received nearly 14x the traffic I expected going in.

Traffic:
How many people have looked at the site?

Let's start off with the big one. In reality, most websites get very little in the way of traffic. My expectations as I began the blog in regards to traffic were modest at best. I was starting a blog off from scratch, with no marketing, support, reputation, or recognition. I thought if I could get 200 hundred views in the first month, that would be a success. On June 29, 2010, An Associate's Mind received one view. On June 30, it received four. Thirty days in on July 29, An Associate's Mind received 97 views (the current average). It peaked with 266 views on July 19. The grand total of unique page views in one month's time was:

2,783.

I received nearly **14x the traffic** I expected going in. Needless to say I was surprised. Perhaps other people are interested in what I am writing as well? Or did I have some savvy SEO scheme of my own? We'll see as we go on.

Referrers
Where is the traffic coming from?*

Referrer	Views
linkedin.com/viewArticle	240
lawyerist.com/blawg-review	63
linkedin.com/viewArticle	60
linkedin.com/viewArticle	48
myshingle.com/	48
myshingle.com/2010/07/	30
linkedin.com/viewArticle	23
twitter.com/	21
linkedin.com/viewArticle	21
linkedin.com/viewArticle	19
linkedin.com/viewArticle	17
linkedin.com/viewArticle	13
twitter.com/associatesmind	12
linkedin.com/viewArticle	11
blog.technolawyer.com/	11
30somethinglawstudent	11
google.com/reader/view/	10
linkedin.com/viewArticle	9
linkedin.com/viewArticle	8
linkedin.com/viewArticle	8
linkedin.com/viewArticle	7
linkedin.com/viewArticle	7
linkedin.com/viewArticle	7
linkedin.com/viewArticle	7
inter-alia.net/comments.php	7
linkedin.com/viewLink	7
linkedin.com/viewArticle	6
younglawyersblog.com/post/	6
linkedin.com/viewArticle	6
linkedin.com/viewArticle	6
inter-alia.net/	5
popehat.com/2010/07/16/	5
linkedin.com/viewLink	5
technorati.com/blogs/	5

The top five referrers are:

 LinkedIn   MyShingle
 Lawyerist   Twitter
 30 Something Law Student

1) LinkedIn   540 total views
"Social networking for professionals"

What can I say? It's driven more traffic to my site than any other source. The top LinkedIn referring link alone has sent more traffic my way than the numbers 2 through 5 combined. I'll break down what all those different LinkedIn referrers mean in the Social Media section below.

2) MyShingle   78 total views
"Go Solo, Grow Solo"

The open and outgoing author of MyShingle, Carolyn Elefant, Tweeted at the beginning of July that she had found an essay she had written when she was preparing for the Bar Exam and was wondering if any law student bloggers wanted to host it. I volunteered an serialized her essay into 4 separate posts. Ms. Elefant made a single post on her site in regards to my putting up the postcards and all the traffic from her site was driven from it.

3) Lawyerist   63 total views
"The leading law practice blog."

On July 12, 2010 the Lawyerist was the host of the 272nd Blawg Review, which included a links to two articles of mine. An explanation from the Blawg Review website:

Referrers
continued

"[Blawg Review](#) is the [blog carnival](#) for everyone interested in law. A peer-reviewed blog carnival, the host of each Blawg Review decides which of the [submissions and recommended posts](#) are suitable for inclusion in the presentation. And the host is encouraged to source another dozen or so interesting posts to fit with any special theme of that issue of Blawg Review. The host's personal selections usually include several that reflect the character and subject interests of the host blawg, recognizing that the regular readership of the blog should find some of the usual content, and new readers of the blog via Blawg Review ought to get some sense of the unique perspective and subject specialties of the host. Thanks to all the law bloggers who collaborate to make Blawg Review one of the very best blog carnivals of any genre."

First I'll say that the Lawyerist must have a healthy amount of viewers as a post of mine was also included in the 271st Blawg Review, hosted by [Lowering the Bar](#) ("Legal Humor. Seriously.") and I've only received 5 views from them. With that out of the way...

I'll say that's a damn shame because the author of Lowering the Bar did a bang-up job and put a lot of effort into compiling the Review and, as far as I can tell, the guys at Lawyerist put together the most half-assed Review ever. Thanks for the traffic guys, but I'd just assume not have it. Maybe they had some sort of emergency but, if you look at previous and current Blawg Reviews, it's obvious that it's something people take pride in and put a lot of time and care into - and Lawyerist phoned it in.

4) [Twitter](#)   46 views. (16 not reported)
"Social Media in 120 characters or less"

For all the praise and attention Twitter seems to receive from the media, it hasn't delivered that much for me. I like the concept - I think - and I like interacting with people on Twitter and being exposed to stories that I otherwise might not have looked at on my own. But it's not driving traffic my way. Maybe I'm not writing snappy enough headlines? More on that in the Social Media section below.

5) [30 Something Law Student](#)   18 views. (7 not reported)
"A 30-something wife and mother attempting to do the impossible: attend law school full-time."

The very sweet author of the 30 Something Law Student gained some notoriety after Ellie Mystal, a writer at [Above the Law](#) ("A legal tabloid focusing on Big Law."), came by and told her that he knew better about her life than she did in the comments section of an entry she had posted. I had commented first on the same entry and that's been the source of most of that traffic. (The author at 30 Something Law Student is about to start her first year and seems to have a good head on her shoulders. Everyone wish her luck and give her a visit.)

*(Note, these stats are from the morning of 7/28. I'm also not including any site that has sent less than 5 views my way. However, there *are* a significant number of referring links in this category. [The Long Tail](#) is not something to be scoffed at.)

Top Posts
So What's Popular?*

Title	Views
The Top 5 Reasons Lawyers Fail	799
Home page	613
Postcards from the Bar Exam – Ithaca	112
Innovation: Ideas Having Sex	107
About	97
5 Basic Mistakes for a New Associates	95
Why Lawyers Fail #20-16	74
Social Behavior More Indicative of	68
Why Lawyers Fail #15-11	56
Lessons from the Great - Cicero	53
Lessons for Lawyers From (Main)	49
Research Finds Causal Link Between	42
Do You Trust Your Intuition? - 4 Steps	38
Do Know Your Answers to These 3	38
Never Wait Until you are Ready	36
RE: Anonymity is cowardice, and	36
Establishing a Personal Narrative	35
Postcards from the Bar: Texas	30
Counseling Clients: Do You Provide	21
Lessons from the Great -Tiberius	20

Apparently, people are really concerned about what causes lawyers to fail. At first I was posting two to three entries a day but that just wasn't a realistic schedule for me to keep. I prefer to take my time with researching interesting topics and crafting, what are hopefully, polished entries that people find valuable. I've now slowed down to one to two posts a day which is a more reasonable pace. I have made a total of 52 posts over the month, resulting in an average of around 1.7 posts, which seems about right to me.

Leaving out the homepage and the About page, the top 5 posts on An Associate's Mind are:

1) The Top 5 Reasons Lawyers Fail
This wins out by a large amount. Like LinkedIn in the Referrers section, this post beats the #2 to 5 pages combined. This post was about...the reasons people fail. People are either really worried about failure or they really like lists.

2) Postcards from the Bar Exam – Ithaca Law
It has my second highest amount of views and I didn't even write it! This post was the first part of Carolyn Elefant's essay about the Bar exam.

3) Innovation: Ideas Having Sex
This post was about the role of innovation in business. Also it had the word sex in the title. I believe Helen Pitlick over at LexBlog called it a "provocative" title when she included the entry in the Legal Blogging Highlights of the Week. But what does she know? She's a vegetarian and you can't trust their kind. ;-)

4) 5 Basic Mistakes for a New Associate
This post was completely homegrown and based on my experience as a clerk. They're pretty straightforward things to avoid but it's amazing how many people seem to forget them.

5) Why Lawyers Fail #20-16
This was the initial post in the "Top Twenty Reasons Lawyers Fail" Series. So are people more interested in failure or lists? Maybe both?

*(Note: This excludes any pages with less than 20 views.)

Interaction
What are people clicking on?*

| URL	Clicks
Top 20 PDF Download	135
reason.com/archives/2010…	19
temporaryattorney.blogspot…	14
linkedin.com/in/keithrlee	11
hbr.org/2010/07/how-will-you…	10
feeds.feedburner.com/	10
blogs.bnet.com/entry-level…	9
twitter.com/associatesmind	9
thelawstreetjournal.com/	8
blog.simplejustice.us/2010/07…	7
viruscomix.com/page523.html	7
bitterlawyer.com/index.php/…	7
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert…	6
legalunderground.com/	6
iphonejd.com/iphone_jd/	6
getrichslowly.org/blog	5

Failure wins out again!

Leaving out people clicking on my LinkedIn profile, my Twitter account, and people subscribing via the RSS link, the top 5 links people clicked on while visiting An Associate's Mind are:

Splash Image from An Associate's Mind
The image in the right hand navigation bar on An Associate's Mind. It's large enough that people can see the detailed layout. Also, FREE.

Clicks
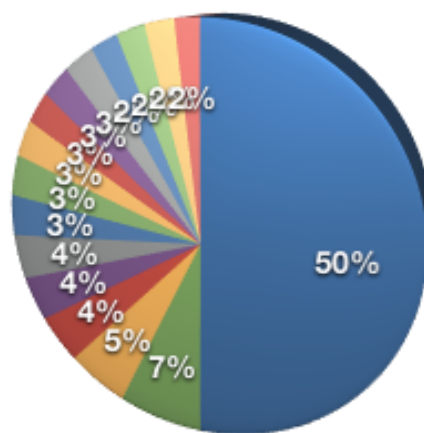
1)The Free PDF "*Top Twenty Reasons Lawyers Fail*"
I took the time to put it together in a nice page layout with pictures, varying fonts, extra content, etc and provide it as a PDF that would print out nicely. I also keep a nice visible image link on my sidebar to the PDF with the word FREE on it. That probably helped.

2) reason.com/archives/2010…
Maybe Helen at Lexblog was on to something? This is the article that was the basis for my own entry "Innovation: Ideas Having Sex." I quoted an excerpt and linked to the entire article.

3) temporaryattorney.blogspot…
This is the blog of a guy voicing complaints about the world of low-level legal work. I linked to it in Why Lawyers Fail entry.

4) hbr.org/2010/07/how-will-you…
This is the article that was the basis for my entry titled Do Know Your Answers to These 3 Questions? I quoted an excerpt and linked to the entire article.

5) blogs.bnet.com/entry-level…
This is the top link in my blogroll, so it's also the most visible. It's a blawg about being a young white-collar worker in the business world. It's also got a snazzy title. Considering the focus of my blog (new lawyers), it follows that my readers would be interested in this link based on it's title alone.

*(Note: This excludes anything with less than 5 clicks.)

50% of the clicks on my blog go to the "Top Twenty Reasons Lawyers Fail" free PDF download.

While I do think the topic was relevant to the core audience of An Associate's Mind, I also believe that people are looking for well-produced content online.

There just isn't that much available information for new lawyers to assist them with their professional development.

Social Media
What do others think?

Twitter:

Total Tweets (Messages I broadcasted):   107

Tweet Breakdown (see graph):
    Announcing a new post: 51
    Mention (my twitter name appears):   29
    ReTweets (quoting a message):   21
    Link to a story: 6

Following (People I have subscribed to):   85

Followers (People subscribed to me):   53

Lists: 6
(Lists are categories created by a user to organize who they are following by type. The lists I'm included in are "Law/legal" categories except I'm in the very cool @Law-yerKM's Brazilian Jiu Jitsu List as well)

"The qualities that make Twitter seem inane and half-baked are what makes it so powerful"

Jonathan Zittrain, Harvard Law Professor

As I noted in referrers above 12 people actually clicked on one of my Tweets to read something I posted on An Associate's Mind. 18 people clicked on on a Tweet from someone else to come to my blog.

So for 112 actions (Tweets) on my part I have received 30 page views. So roughly for every 3.7 Tweets I have been receiving 1 page view. I don't know if that's good or not, but that's my current ratio.
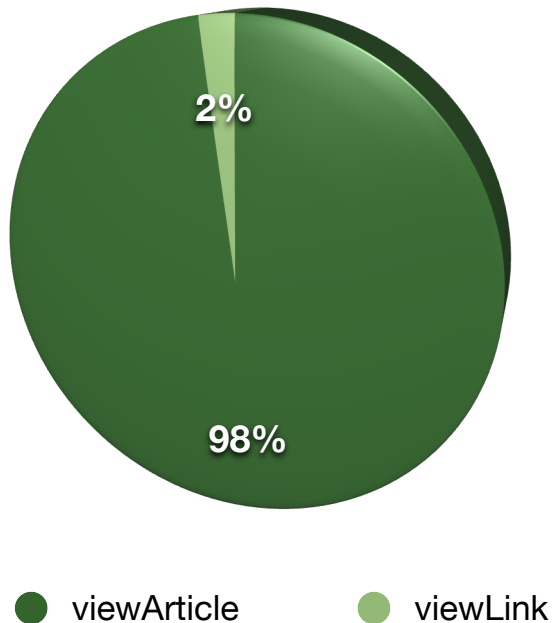
My thoughts:
I have to admit...I'm not sold on Twitter. Maybe it takes more time to catch on, but it largely comes across as a distraction to me.

I usually only turn my Twitter client on 3-4 times a day, look around, then turn it back off. I couldn't imagine having it up all the time.

Tweet Breakdown
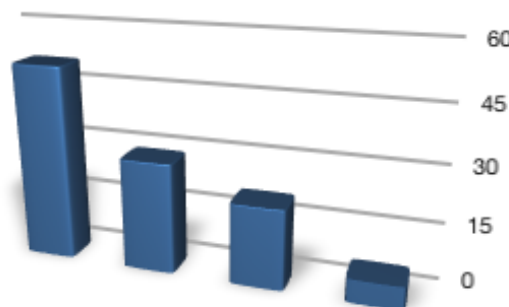
Origin of LinkedIn Referrers

2%

98%

● viewArticle   ● viewLink

Message: Status updates don't drive traffic. Interacting and posting within groups does.

LinkedIn:

There are two types of links viewArticle and viewLink. viewArticle are people clicking over from a story I posted on a group I belong to on LinkedIn. viewLink are people clicking over from a "status" update I've posted on LinkedIn. These are similar to Tweets. I have my Twitter and LinkedIn accounts connected so the same message goes out on both when I send out an announcement of a new post. So I have made 51 "Status" updates on Twitter which has resulted in 12 referrer views. However, I have had 528 referrer views from entries I have posted to groups on LinkedIn.

I belong to twenty-seven groups on LinkedIn. Some are public and some are private, which means a user must request to be accepted into the group by group owner. Of those twenty-seven groups, I actively post and interact with roughly ten of them. Of those ten, three of them funnel nearly 75% of the traffic I receive from LinkedIn - sorry not revealing the groups though.

The strength of a good LinkedIn group is a high signal-to-noise ration. Many LinkedIn groups are full of nothing but marketing garbage.
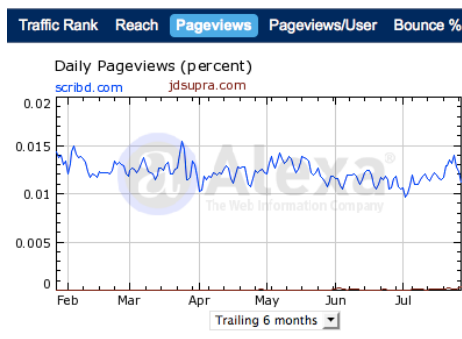
JDSupra / Scribd
Document Hosting Services

It's hard to directly measure these two services because Scribd offers free statistics with an account, whereas JDSupra wants to charge $75 a month for what should be a basic service (download/read count of a document you've uploaded). So we only get to see Scribd's Stats.
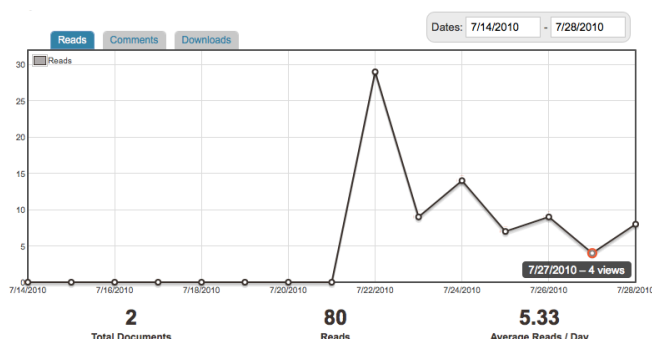
Scribd's detailed graphing tools seem to lag a couple days behind their actual current statistics. As over the course of 14 days, I've actually received 95 views on the two documents I uploaded to Scribd. "Top 20 Reasons Lawyers Fail" received 78 views and "Do You Trust Your Intuition?" received 17 reads.

Tough to compare my personal statistics between the two since I don't have statistics from JDSupra...but we can compare that statistics between the two websites themselves.

It took me a couple of times re-loading the graph of the comparison between the two because I thought there was an error...until I realized that JDSupra was a flat line in comparison to Scribd's traffic. You can make the comparison yourself at Alexa.com. Scribd gets far, far more in the way of traffic, provides free analytics and statistics, and easily integrates with any other social media site. JDSupra gets little traffic (and I imagine the traffic it does get is mostly people in the legal industry), provides no free analytics and statistics, and while connected to social media (LinkedIn was just added, with much fanfare among legal bloggers) - only for people you are already connected to. To actually broadcast a document to more people, there is that $75 a month fee attached again.

So while I can't make a recommendation based on a comparison between my personal statistics at Scribd and JDSupra, we can come to some determinations based on the traffic comparison and popularity of the sites. With Scribd offering so much in the way of free services v. JDSupra ($75 a month!? Really?), I can't see myself spending much more effort at JDSupra. I just don't see it being worth it. Sorry guys.

That being said, I could be wrong. Maybe JDSupra is doing some really awesome things behind the scenes, but I'm just not aware of it. If someone over at JDSupra wants to contact me and give me a peek behind the curtain and show me otherwise, I'd be glad to re-visit the topic.

Going by Alexa.com rankings (like Nieslons for TV, but for the web), even though I'm only a third year law student, I have the most popular legal blog in my home state.
How's your blog doing?

Rankings

Justia runs what seems to be the largest and oldest "blawg" directory and have been keeping statistics since 2006. It is a voluntary directory, if a legal blogger does not sign up for the directory, they will not be ranked. Also, while Justia lists over 4000 legal blogs, there is no telling how many of those are now defunct.

An Associate's Mind went from registering on Justia to being the 516th most popular blog on the service.

Avvo.com which provides a rating service for lawyers, provides marketing services, etc. provides a directory of the top legal blogs as well. Again, this is a voluntary directory.

An Associate's mind went from registering on Avvo to being the 315th most popular blog on the service.

Not bad for 30 days.

Wrap Up
So what's the take away from all this?

So there it all is.

Sometimes I get the feeling that sharing all of the above is a bit like talking about money with people in person; it's rather frowned upon. That is unless you've got tens of millions of dollars, or in the case of online media, you've got traffic in the tens of thousands, etc.
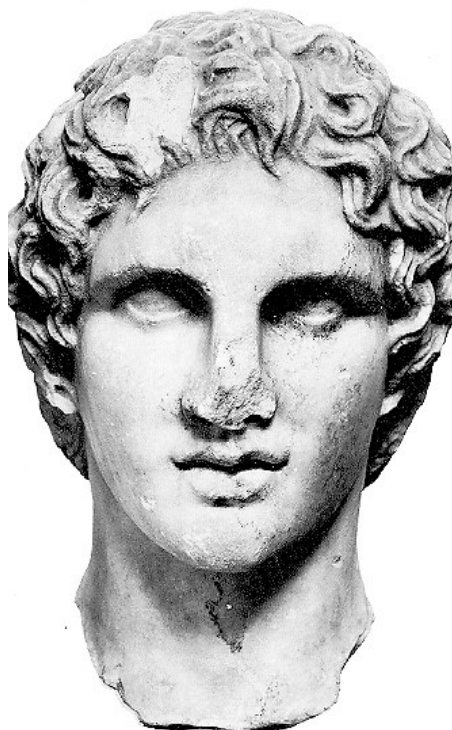
However, as I stated, this is my first month and I didn't really have anything to lose by sharing it freely.

So what was the secret? How did I get over 2,500 hits in my first month as a blogger? Did I SEO-optimize An Associate's Mind and strategically litter my posts with keywords? Did I advertise with Google AdSense? Did I network and retweet with "inner circle" law bloggers to try and integrate my content with theirs? Did I smile and nod along with the "Happysphere" as Scott Greenfield refers to it at Simple Justice?

At first....I did, sort of. I never SEO optimized nor did I bother with trying to figure out what keywords would be popular for the website. However, I did start to follow people on Twitter in which I had no interest, because it was what you were "supposed" to do in order to get traffic and grow on the web.

I was following something like 150 people on Twitter in the first week. But...it felt cheap and it was a lot of work. I was spending as much time bothering with social media networking as I was on the site. So about two weeks in I threw in the towel with all of it. I culled the people I was following down to 85, and I need to distill it down even farther.

Instead I focused on *why* I started the site. One, I have a variety of interests that I think converge with the law in in-

triguing ways. Two, as I am about to start my legal career I wanted to think aloud about the type of lawyer I want to be, and elicit feedback from others in the same situation. Trying to do all the other stuff seemed disingenuous.

So instead, I just focused on writing my posts. I ensured that what I was writing about interested *me*. If other people got something out of it, I look at that as a bonus. I still tweeted (on LinkedIn as well) when I had new posts but I quit really worrying about it. When I had a post that I thought would interest a particular group on LinkedIn, I would share it there - but not spam every group I belonged to.

> "I had rather excel others in the knowledge of what is excellent, than in the extent of my power and dominion."

Alexander The Great,
In a letter to his friend and mentor, Aristotle. From Plutarch's, *Alexander, Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (c. 75-100 AD) John Dryden translation.

So, as far as I can tell, here is the big secret to having a successful first month at blogging:

Be honest, write about what interests you, and let your passion show.

That's it.

About the author:
www.associatesmind.com

Keith Lee received his BS in History from The University of Alabama at Birmingham and is currently a 3L at Birmingham School of Law. He is the senior law clerk as an insurance defense firm in Birmingham and contributes to the firm's blog and handles all of its social media outreach efforts. In his free time, Keith competes in marathons, triathlons, adventure racing and Brazilian jiujitsu. He also continues to dig his way through as many works of the Great Conversation as time allows. Somewhere in there he found time to find an amazing wife and have a beautiful son.

Found this report interesting? Want to talk about it?

http://www.linkedin.com/in/keithrlee

Linked in.

http://www.twitter.com/associatesmind

twitter

associatesmind@gmail.com

Resources for new legal bloggers
Thinking about blogging?

If you are a law student, a new (or old and cranky) law-yer, or just interested in legal matters in general -you might be interested in starting your own "blawg."

Here are four resources that you might find valuable:

www.wordpress.com

This is the platform on which I run An Associate's Mind. It's the easiest, most robust, and cost-effective (free!) way to start blogging.

www.flickr.com

Never underestimate the power of a good image. Many of the photos that appear on my blog are images taken from the Creative Commons-licensed pool (search "creative commons" under groups) on Flickr.

reader.google.com

You don't actually still visit webpages do you? Very 2004. If you are going to sift through a lot of content online, it's easier to make it come to you. When you are at a web-site you enjoy, click the RSS button or icon and subscribe in Google Reader. There are other readers, but Google's is free and powerful. It also has a great mobile version.

www.eff.org

This is the website of the Electronic Frontier Founda-tion. It has a wealth of information about digital rights. In particular, it has a legal guide for bloggers. Useful if you are ever worried about what you are saying online.