

# *Top 10 Social Media Do's and Don'ts for Judges*

## **DON'T**

1. Don't use an alias to connect with defendants or litigants....just so that you can talk about your colleagues and their cases.
2. Don't post or tweet a list of your "top funniest" or "top dumbest" defendants.
3. Never post "selfies" or comments to any Social Media site mid-trial..... from the bench
4. Resist the urge to tweet the defendant's address, phone number and "handle" after a guilty verdict.
5. Do not create a twitter handle that describes your fantasy life ex: @Hot\_TooTrot or @Bod\_Squad1
6. Don't post or tweet the results of any hearing "gone south" ex: #youmadbro?
7. Do not send fundraiser, birthday party invites, winks, pokes and virtual sangrias to defendants and litigants when their case is still on your docket
8. Never unleash a tirade of curse words and insults when you have been "unfriended" or your invitation to connect has been declined.
9. Don't post when you're: tired, hungry, angry, drunk, confused or annoyed
10. Do not post anything that you don't want your mother, father, spouse, children, clergy, colleagues, litigants, neighbors, enemies and/or pets to see

## **DO**

1. **Create an online presence.** As judges you are a walking encyclopedia and people want to rely on the valuable information you can provide as well as your neutral perspective.
2. **Be consistent** – if not with your posts due to time constraints, certainly with your rationale. This helps to establish reliability as it relates to a particular topic as well as logic in your thinking. There are however times when we as judges are convinced to stray from an original viewpoint. This may be the result of several factors, societal changes, changes in the law or changes in the community. In any event, if your viewpoint is now different from what was articulated previously, explain it to the reader in words that they can easily understand and appreciate.
3. **Be concise and direct** – as lawyers and judges, we have been taught and trained that each point or position needs a thorough analysis. Remember that your audience in cyberland is not as well versed in the law as you are – and frequently not as interested. In order to make the law applicable to plain-spoken folk, direct your comments in a way that can connect with someone who has on average a high school education.

Remember – this is not a law school course. Frequently, we are working to educate and elevate not emasculate.

4. **Limit your friendship circle.** With the advent of the internet and the sweeping popularity of social media, it's not possible to connect with most anyone. In an effort to reach the masses, it may even be tempting to accept "friend" requests from just about anyone.....until you realize next week that they are standing in front of you having been charged with an offense and you now have to decide if you will recuse.
5. **Use and create privacy settings that serve the purpose of limiting what type of content can be placed on your page.** A good example of this would be if your Facebook Friend is able to send photos of THEIR friend who is scantily clad and also happens to be a defendant in your court. You may not have had any reason to know the connection between your friend and this defendant, but now, the defendant's inappropriate photos are posted on YOUR page. A privacy setting will protect this from happening. The alternative can be detrimental not only to how you are perceived by defendants in your court, but also how you are perceived by your colleagues.