



Strategic Communications

NEWS

For Immediate Release
August 1, 2011

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SOUTH CAROLINA LAWYERS MAKE THEIR CASE WITH VIDEO

Attorneys can educate the public and build practices via video and social media

COLUMBIA, S.C., July 28, 2011 - - Two years ago Greenville attorney [Andy Arnold](#) noticed he and his staff were spending an inordinate amount of time on the phone answering questions from people who believed they needed the help of an attorney. Often, after a time-consuming conversation, Arnold had to advise the caller that he did not have a case, but a meaningful explanation took up even more time.

"It was a little frustrating," admits Arnold, who has an active employment and general law practice. "I found myself fielding the same questions and providing the same answers on a regular basis. I didn't have the time to speak with everyone; there had to be a better way."

The answer for Arnold and a growing number of attorneys is short, content-rich videos designed to educate the public on specific topics of law. In the case of Arnold, this includes employment law, nursing home law and general law topics. Arnold serves as a subject matter guide in the videos, providing practical information in sound bites that range from one to two minutes. The videos are disseminated on his blogs, on YouTube and Facebook.

"We are a fast food nation, a television generation that does not like to read," explains Arnold. "People prefer video, so educating potential clients in a preferred format makes sense."

Andy Arnold isn't the only legal entity to tap into the power of video. The [South Carolina Bar](#) today launched an image initiative built on a series of videos designed to promote the positive impact lawyers have on their communities. The South Carolina Bar originally thought about television, but communications strategist, [Melanie Lux](#), president of [Lux Strategic Communications](#), suggested video as a more powerful, economical alternative.

"People used to go to the Internet for static information. Now they go to the Internet for video on demand, whether it's to check out a new band, view the news, or watch a movie or sports event," explains Lux. "The beauty of web-based video is that it's accessible 24/7, searchable, and if done well, viral."

It also made sense for the South Carolina Bar in that the organization wants to reach as many people as possible with its message, [Proud to be a South Carolina Lawyer](#), as possible.

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Lux recommended that the Bar produce 13 short videos featuring a cross section of South Carolina attorneys who talk about why they became a lawyer, how they help others and what their profession means to them. The Bar's Board agreed to the approach. The *Proud to be a South Carolina Lawyer* videos will be featured on the Bar's Facebook, one per week for three months, and then recycled for another rotation. All of the videos are currently available on the Bar's YouTube channel.

South Carolina Bar Communications Director Leigh Thomas says the Bar's executives and Board are excited about the new videos. "It's one thing to read someone's personal story, but when you see and hear them tell it themselves, it's very compelling. They are real people who made sacrifices to go to law school and are now helping communities, businesses, and individuals with everyday problems."

The Bar is encouraging the attorneys featured in the videos to distribute to their clients, colleagues, family, and friends—the more the merrier.

"With television, you pay for viewership in specific units. If we people miss your ad, too bad; you'll have to buy more time. Distributing video on social media channels makes your message available on demand. While you don't get the big burst of exposure of a television ad, you do get more mileage from your investment because an unlimited number of people can view and share it anytime they want," Lux says.

While the South Carolina Bar's *Proud to be a South Carolina Lawyer* videos were scripted to ensure a consistent, branded message, there are other ways to produce informational videos. Arnold chose to meet with Lux media partner and video storyteller [Bobby Rettew](#) to discuss possible topics. Arnold and Rettew put together a yearlong digital media strategy, which included filming nearly 30 one-minute videos in a single day. This gave Arnold a year's supply of videos to post on his website, YouTube channel, blogs, and Facebook.

Arnold, who is also featured in the Bar's *Proud to be a South Carolina* image initiative, prefers to ad lib because he believes the videos are more authentic and convey his passion for the law. "People form opinions in the first few seconds of seeing you. For me, the no script approach is most effective as it allows my personality to come through."

"Using online video provides a third dimension to a digital media approach," explains Rettew. "Combining rich media like video and social outlets provides tremendous digital reach for law firms that want to expand their client base by making themselves more searchable and accessible on the web."

Lux and Rettew offer clients the options of scripted and unscripted videos. The scripted approach is effective for those who want to deliver a specific, controlled message and may not be comfortable speaking off the cuff. A teleprompter and proper editing make the videos come across as natural. The unscripted approach works well for those comfortable with speaking extemporaneously.

Unscripted doesn't mean unprepared. "We meet with the attorney in advance and identify topics that relate to their practice area. The videos are short, usually one or two minutes, so the topics must be concise. Once we get the topics, we prepare a few questions for each, agree on search terms for SEO (search engine optimization) and film them interview style," Lux says.

"It's a marriage of planning, key points and passion," she adds.

Lux and Rettew edit the footage and provide clients with videos optimized for web use. The pair also helps clients set up branded YouTube, Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as blogs. They also develop overall

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strategies with scheduled posts and tweets with built-in search terms, an approach that makes diving into the digital social media world simple and effective for attorneys and their law firms. For those who want a complete turnkey approach, they will even write the blog posts to accompany each video.

Video and social media work, says Arnold. "People mention my videos all the time. Some get 25 hits, others get as many as 800 hits. It's not uncommon to get several new clients a week from my video and social media efforts."

Arnold is careful to provide useful information so his videos are not construed as advertising. "Viewers know when they are being manipulated. If your video is an advertorial, people stop watching. They see right through it," Arnold says.

While video is a powerful tool in helping lawyers make their case, whether it's promoting an image like the South Carolina Bar or satisfying the public's thirst for legal information, production values count. Arnold recommends attorneys interested in using video find a professional to produce them.

"The last thing you want is for your videos to look like a 15-year-old shot them with their smart phone and edited them in the basement. First impressions count. A poor quality video hurts you just like a flimsy business card. With video, you need good lighting, audio and editing," contends Arnold.

Lux agrees that when done well, video, when employed in combination with a overall social media strategy, will help attorneys, physicians, accountants, insurance firms, retailers, and other professionals become credible sources of information, and in the process, a source of professional services and products.

"What we're seeing is a major shift from traditional media to a digital world where the goal is to be searchable and accessible to those who can benefit from your knowledge. It's about being believable and real, and being available when people need you," Lux says.

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About Lux Strategic Communications

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