

# Large firms discovering a new marketing tool: blogs

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*This story by Leigh Jones first appeared in the National Law Journal.*

No longer viewed as just forums for law gossip or associate griping, blogs are becoming a marketing tool for large law firms eager to create a buzz about their practice areas.

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton of Los Angeles; Davis Wright Tremaine of Seattle; **McGlinchey Stafford** of New Orleans; and other big firms have unveiled blogs recently that focus on particular areas of the law or specific statutes. Some blogs include open discussions that allow reader comments, while others are less interactive.

All, however, are geared toward casting specific legal information-and the firm's name-into the World Wide Web.

The growing popularity of large-firm blogging represents a kind of evolution in the use of the technology, which up until about a year ago appeared to be largely the domain of individual lawyers and small practices.

"It's clearly an evolving area within the big firms," said **Anthony Rollo**, head of McGlinchey Stafford's consumer class action defense group.

## **An ideal blog topic**

McGlinchey Stafford just launched [www.cafalawblog.com](http://www.cafalawblog.com), a Web site that Rollo believes is the only law firm blog that focuses on the Class Action Fairness Act of 2005 (CAFA).

Rollo had experience speaking and writing about the federal law before it was enacted, and he said that starting a blog was an extension of those efforts after it passed.

He said CAFA, a law that expanded federal court jurisdiction over class actions, is an ideal blog topic because it is specific to a certain kind of litigation- class actions-but one that potentially affects all such cases.

But he added that the firm was careful not to create a site that was too informal or conversational. The firm had planned to launch the site the first week of September, but it was delayed due to Hurricane Katrina.

Large law firms are just starting to create their own blogs, said Kevin O'Keefe, a former trial attorney who now is president of LexBlog, an Internet consultancy. He worked with McGlinchey Stafford on its blog. He said that big firms are gradually changing their perceptions that blogs are too chatty to fit with their image.

“They’re becoming open to more things,” he said.

Since February, Sheppard Mullin has rolled out six different blogs, to which lawyers from various practice groups at the 410-attorney firm contribute.

The blogs, which cover antitrust, bankruptcy, securities and other subjects, are more efficient and effective than the electronic newsletters that the firm previously sent to subscribers, said Vickie Spang, chief marketing officer for Sheppard Mullin.

The blogs get much more readership than the newsletters received, Sprang said. Her firm estimates that the antitrust blog alone receives about 2,200 hits per day. She also said that convincing the firm’s partners to launch the blogs took some effort, but “they soon saw the light.”

For firms that decide to start blogs, O’Keefe cautions them to keep the focus on the content and not on the firm.

“The minute you dress it up as your firm, you’ve lost the true marketing aspect of the blog,” he said.

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Anthony J. Rollo, Jr.