



New York
Young Lawyers Building Buzz Tweet by Tweet

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When a mistrial was declared Thursday in the perjury trial of former Yankee Roger Clemens, Matthew Galluzzo, a young criminal defense attorney not involved in the case, began tweeting.

"Mistrial in the Roger Clemens case? Those federal prosecutors look like clumsy amateurs," he posted, linking to a news story on the development.

For Mr. Galluzzo, 35 years old, the tweet isn't just a passing thought. It's part of a concerted effort to raise his profile. He is among an emerging group of young lawyers who are using social media to market themselves in the hopes of joining an elite class of attorneys whose names are nearly as recognizable as the high-profile defendants they represent.

In New York, where the criminal justice system often ensnares professional athletes, celebrities, mobsters and Wall Street titans, a lawyer's media savvy sometimes can count almost as much as courtroom performance. The old tools of branding—snazzy ties, confident bluster and gimmicky ads—are being replaced by a prominent web presence.

Mr. Galluzzo and his partner opened their practice, Galluzzo & Johnson, in 2009. Their first brush with quasi-fame came when their client, Angel Alvarez, was shot more than 20 times by police in Harlem in 2010. He was charged with gun possession, but the case was later dropped when a special grand jury declined to indict him.

While the partners already maintained a blog commenting on and analyzing prominent cases, Mr. Alvarez's case made them aware of Twitter's reach. They joined Twitter to post updates on the case.

"We were getting so many phone calls about the case from the media, we decided to tweet about it and have people follow us for updates," Mr. Galluzzo said.

Today, his Twitter feed is dominated by announcements about media appearances he's making on French television and radio, and links to blog posts he's written in French analyzing the sexual assault charges against former International Monetary Fund chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Mr. Strauss-Kahn is represented by Benjamin Brafman, who ranks among a group of top criminal defense lawyers that includes Murray Richman, Ira Sorkin, Gerald Shargel, **Joseph Tacopina** and others.

Mr. Galluzzo's law partner, Zachary Johnson, 34, said the web isn't just a space for pointed commentary. "It's a very cost-effective way of marketing," he said. "Facebook and Twitter are becoming so prevalent amongst consumers of all services, we would be doing ourselves a disservice as a law firm to not use these channels to reach people."

The blog, he said, is a "perfect forum" to showcase their knowledge of the law. He and Mr. Galluzzo often post conversational items explaining charges levied against defendants in high-profile cases.

"The blog is intended to be informative," he said. "You can add a level of intelligence to the discourse."

It's also intended to draw clients and attention from the media, others said.

"I'm writing about a topic that people are looking into or investigating," said Jeremy Saland, 36, a criminal defense attorney who runs a blog and Twitter feed for his practice, Crotty Saland. "This is no different, at the

end of the day, than the Yellow Pages back when the Yellow Pages were relevant. It's just another vehicle."

Advertising and marketing have long been contentious issues in the legal world. State bar associations, until the early 1970s, grappled with the ethics of legal advertising. Even handing out business cards was seen as a dubious practice that came close to breaching the prohibition against soliciting clients.

The bar associations eventually came around, allowing ads with clear disclaimers. Even then, a large number of attorneys did not advertise, looking upon it "as fundamentally demeaning of what we're trying to do," said Scott Greenfield, a Manhattan defense attorney who has a popular blog and more than 1,500 followers on Twitter.

Mr. Greenfield said his web presence has nothing to do with marketing or advertising. Indeed, his posts explore the more existential elements of the law, or simply serve as "an opportunity to say my piece."

"To be honest, I don't think it's done a damn thing for me," he said of his blog's ability to attract desirable clients.

Mr. Greenfield is a frequent lecturer and occasional media commentator. He disapproves of using the Internet for self-promotion. Still, he doesn't begrudge young lawyers.

"It's not just about creating an Internet persona," he said. "They have to have the ability to handle the cases that they seek."

Nicole Black, an attorney and co-author of "Social Media for Lawyers: The Next Frontier," said bar associations have recently studied web marketing and social media and concluded that they are subject to the same ethical rules as traditional advertising.

A good rule of thumb for attorneys is that "if you can't do it off-line, you can't do it online," Ms. Black said.

Mr. Richman, a well-known Bronx attorney, said that when he was starting out, he got clients by going "where the criminals are."

"I went to bars, clubs and pool rooms on a Friday night," said Mr. Richman, 73. "By the end of the night I had five, 10 or 12 new cases because they got to know me."

Mr. Richman—who conceded he's "old-fashioned"—said his distaste for lawyers using social media stems from his refusal to advertise.

He also regards tweeting and commenting online as an attempt to "hustle the cases" away from the existing counsel.

"You're being judged on being cute or having a cute expression and all the nonsense that goes on with Twitter," he said.

Mr. Saland said that while he has generated clients from readers, it is ultimately references from other attorneys and former clients that keep him busy.

Said Mr. Johnson: "You gain a reputation based on what you do inside the courtroom. At some point you have to win big cases. No amount of blogging or tweeting is going to put you on that level. But can you get a big case using social media? Absolutely."

Until then, Mr. Galluzzo, whose Twitter avatar is a picture of himself being interviewed by the local cable news station NY1, will continue to promote his media appearances to raise his profile.

"The very best clients are referrals from other lawyers. That's the old-school way of doing it, and that is still the best way to do business," he said. "But I've gotten some business just by virtue of media interviews."

A recent tweet Mr. Galluzzo posted seemed to speak to his aspirations: "You know you've made it as a criminal Defense lawyer when you get hired to defend a rapper," he wrote on July 7. "I've got [a] trial to do this fall in Brooklyn...."

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