

Bricks and Blogs: Using Social Media to Build Your Knowledge of Virginia Construction Law

by Marie Summerlin Hamm

These days it seems like with every innovation in technology, information becomes more prevalent and portable. Ironically, this information saturation can make it *more* difficult to keep current. Rather than parse through the clutter, some practitioners choose to unplug entirely, shunning all forms of social media. Others valiantly try to stay on the cutting edge, updating, following and connecting at a frenetic pace until what is often termed “disruptive technology” becomes . . . well, disruptive. This article focuses on the continued usefulness and relative simplicity of that most ancient of social media forms: the blog. At its heart, a blog is web-based communications forum that allows users to disseminate news and information, express opinions, share articles and links, establish dialogues, and build community. For bloggers, it’s a bully pulpit. For practitioners, a frequently updated, thoughtfully written blog (or blawg, as legal blogs are sometimes affectionately dubbed) can be an ideal current awareness tool. Those interested in Virginia construction law-related topics are indeed in luck. The commonwealth is home to handful of blawgs that fit the bill:

Construction Law Musings

<http://constructionlawva.com>

Construction Law Musings is published by Christopher G. Hill, a Richmond-based construction attorney. Hill, a LEED AP, Supreme Court of Virginia certified General District Court mediator, is a member of the board of governors of the Virginia State Bar Construction Law and Public Contracts Section. Posts focus on mechanic’s liens, bond claims, alternative dispute resolution, and sustainable construction. The “Guest Post Fridays” series allows other contributors to offer their perspective on construction-related topics. If you explore con-

struction law blogs, references and links to *Musings* abound.

Virginia Construction Law News: Insights on Construction Law in Virginia

<http://www.vaconstructionlawnews.com>

The stated purpose of this new blog is “to provide helpful information for stakeholders in the construction industry and for lawyers who deal with construction matters.” It is edited by Kenneth Brett Marston, Spencer M. Wiegard, and Joshua C. Johnson, the construction practice group at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore LLP. Brett Marston is the current chair of the Virginia State Bar Construction and Public Contracts Law Section. Spencer Wiegard is a member of the board of governors for the Virginia State Bar Construction Law and Public Contracts Section. Josh Johnson is the president-elect of the Roanoke Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. Their blog covers a wide range of construction-related topics including: claims, mechanic’s liens, contract, design, and procurement issues.

Virginia Construction Law News and Notes

<http://virginiaconstructionlawnewsandnotes.blogspot.com>

Published by Vandeventer Black’s Construction and Public Contracts Department, this blog focuses on legal news of interest to the Virginia construction law community. Concise, cogent analysis is offered by Vandeventer Black partner Neil S. Lowenstein.

Virginia Real Estate, Land Use & Construction Law Blog

<http://www.valanduseconstructionlaw.com>

Published by the construction law team at Bean, Kinney & Korman, this blog “provides insight and commentary on

real estate, land use and construction law in Virginia.” Timothy R. Hughes, LEED AP, is the construction editor of the blog, Heidi E. Meinzer, LEED AP, is the litigation editor and R. Tad Lunger, LEED AP, is the land use editor.

Best Practices in Construction Law

<http://www.bestpracticesconstructionlaw.com>

Although, technically not a Virginia-based blog, editor Matt DeVries is licensed in Virginia (as well as in Tennessee and D.C.). His popular blog quite literally focuses on best practices within the construction industry.

For additional resources, the ABA Journal Blawg Directory at <http://www.abajournal.com/blawgs/topic/construction+law/> provides a fairly comprehensive list of construction and construction law-related blogs.

Additionally, Justia’s Blawgsearch allows the user to quickly scan the headlines of recently updated blogs. Construction blogs can be found at: <http://blawgsearch.justia.com/blogs/categories/construction-law>

Make no mistake, law firm blogs are first and foremost a marketing tool, replete with information about services offered. But subject matter experts who blog tend to be both passionate about their area of law and pithy in their posts, creating a current awareness tool that provides news, analyses, legal commentary, and a good read to boot.

If you peruse any of the blogs above and find the information useful, consider subscribing. RSS feeds are much like subscriptions to a magazine or newspaper. New information is delivered as it becomes available, saving you the step of seeking out new posts. You can

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choose to set up e-mail subscriptions to individual blogs, or use an RSS reader such as Google Reader, Newsblur, FeedDemon, or Feedly to manage multiple feeds.

If you peruse any of the blogs above and conclude “I could do better,” consider publishing. Tools like Wordpress and Blogger make setting up and managing a blog simple. From an SEO (search engine optimization) perspective, publishing a blog is an excellent way to increase the rank of your law firm website. From a marketing perspective, blogging is a cost-effective way to create an online presence and to build name recognition with clients and legal colleagues alike.



Marie Summerlin Hamm is a past president of the Virginia Association of Law Libraries. She is assistant director of collection development at the Regent University Law Library. She has a master's degree in library science from Syracuse University and a law degree from Regent, where she has taught courses in legal research and writing.