



Campaign shows big increase in use of social media by candidates

[Olivia D'orazio](#) Monday, March 07, 2011

Social media and an online presence are playing an increasingly important role in elections, including for lawyers seeking positions as benchers with the Law Society of Upper Canada.

During the last elections in 2007, less than 10 candidates made use of a social networking tool or had any kind of online presence. Today, that number has more than tripled.

In addition to personal and professional web sites, many lawyers are using blogs, Facebook accounts, Twitter feeds, and YouTube channels to spread their ideas to the law community.

Omar Ha-Redeye, articling student and founder of the [Law Is Cool](#) blog, believes the shift to an electronic ballot will entice more voters to seek information online. “Lawyers will be looking to learn more about candidates immediately prior to voting if they are voting online,” he says. “Having a social media presence provides that information that these lawyers would be looking for.”

Getting such a presence is relatively easy. Most social networking sites allow users to start a page or feed free of charge. Bencher candidates like [Mitch Kowalski](#), [Dorette Pollard](#), and [Basil Alexander](#) have begun Facebook pages dedicated to their campaigns. [Thomas Conway](#) has a Twitter feed promoting his campaign, while [Emir Aly Crowne](#) has a blog devoted to the election.

Monica Goyal has left a particularly large footprint over the web with a [Facebook page](#), [Twitter feed](#), and a [YouTube channel](#).

“Each of these media offer a different demographic and allow for a different message,” Goyal says. “For example, LinkedIn is very much a professional forum, so I’ve focused on advertisements, whereas Twitter is more interactive, so I try to engage people.”

Many other candidates have created new personal web sites or updated existing ones. [Constance Backhouse](#), [Julian Falconer](#), [Robert Wadden](#), [William McDowell](#), [Christopher Bredt](#), [Malcolm Mercer](#), [Steven Benmor](#), and [Linda Rothstein](#) have all opted for the slightly pricier option of personal web site. The cost of domain names and server hosting is still much less than the \$18,000 the law society estimates each candidate spent on campaigning in 2007, mainly due to mailing costs.

Social media will be especially helpful to those running in ridings outside of Toronto. “We do still tend to be clustered around urban areas,” Ha-Redeye points out. “Social media allows those outside of urban areas to have a stronger presence.”

Ha-Redeye adds that those who have previously established a presence online, whether by blog or other social media, are at an advantage. “The campaign period for the bench elections is very short, only a few months. It’s very difficult to create an Internet presence in that amount of time.”