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## Social Networking on the Rise for Legal Professionals

New survey data reveals that more than 70% of lawyers are members of an online social network, which is an increase of nearly 25% compared to last year, while 30% growth is reported among lawyers aged 46 and over.

"Networking remains a critical means of business and professional development for lawyers even as opportunities for face-to-face networking have become severely limited by budget and staff cuts," said Vanessa DiMauro, CEO of Leader Networks and author of *The 2009 Networks for Counsel Survey*. "Online networking has emerged as a viable and fast growing means for legal professionals to accelerate or augment their ability to connect with their peers and share best practices."

About 26% of lawyers believe that online networks will change the business and practice of law in the next five years, according to LexisNexis. Some expressed concerns about data security and sharing personal information, while others questioned whether online legal networking will be widely adopted.

The second annual *Networks for Counsel Survey* of almost 1,500 lawyers was commissioned by LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell. Other findings show that more than 50% of respondents think online networks have the potential to change the business and practice of law, while 65% expressed interest in joining an online professional network designed specifically for their profession.

"Lawyers are transforming the way they network by

incorporating social media tools into their work in record numbers and in increasingly sophisticated ways," said Ralph Calistri, CEO of Martindale-Hubbell and senior vice president of Global Client Development at LexisNexis. "Both the survey results and the phenomenal membership growth in our own online legal network, Martindale-Hubbell Connected, demonstrate the strong demand for a secure, authenticated network designed specifically for legal professionals."

"One of the most challenging things with Connected is keeping people engaged," said Laxmi Wordham, a LexisNexis vice president.

Martindale-Hubbell Connected has 15,000 members and is the biggest online network for legal professionals, according to LexisNexis. Membership is free for general counsel, but law firms pay for subscriptions, Wordham said.

Wordham pointed to Sermo's success as a model for social networking Web sites for professionals. Sermo is an online community for physicians founded in 2006 by Daniel Palestrant. Open to only M.D.s and D.O.s in the U.S., Sermo is a place for physicians to post observations and questions about clinical issues and hear other doctors' opinions. ■