

What better place to discuss social media law than in a Twitter live chat?

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Court reporting on big news items like the #OscarPistoriusTrial are now synonymous with live-tweeting and 'breaking news'... but legal experts advise the media to rather focus on quality and accuracy.

What better way to spread the word about social media law than through a live social media chat? That's exactly what media lawyers @EmmaSadleir and @TamsynDeBeer, were thinking when they scheduled a live Q&A session on 14 October from 3pm to 4pm on Twitter.



In addition to their legal background, the two have co-authored a book titled *Don't Film Yourself Having Sex*, so clearly they know what they're talking about.

They discussed topics such as:

- Social media and the law, touching on topics such as defamation, intellectual property and data protection; as well as
- Social media risks for employees, employers and companies - be warned:

“ [@UJAccountancy](#) ... *That picture of you with a joint in one hand & a beer in the other could compromise future job*

prospects [#socialmedialaw](#) Tamsyn de Beer (@TamsynDeBeer) [October 14, 2014](#) ”

- Social media risks for children - [click here](#) for Sadleir's views on SA kids falling for the nude selfie craze; and
- General queries about social media, and took questions from the audience - one of the top ones concerned whether the current issue of [journalists live-tweeting](#) and reporting via Twitter in the courtrooms is in fact legal.

I jumped right in at that point. Sadleir answered my tweet where I stated there was confusion over whether court-tweeting was even allowed during the Oscar Pistorius trial by explaining that while tweeting from court is standard practice in SA, we definitely need guidelines from the judiciary. She agrees confusion reigned supreme when there was a brief Twitter ban in the #OscarTrial, which was later overturned. The only other Twitter ban was in the Modimolle case due to the rather gruesome testimony.

While that topic piqued my interest, I was also interested in tips to keep in mind when using social media for business instead of for individual/personal use.

Training is crucial when running a business social media account

De Beer offered the following tips:

- Firstly, to make sure you have trained, and trust, whoever you outsource your voice to - whether it's in house or through an agency; and
- Remember that the voice on social media is loud: if they get it wrong, your business can suffer serious reputational harm.

That's probably enough to scare any company that has social media accounts - and in 2014, who doesn't - into signing their teams up for social media training, stat! But it's not just about speed.

A word of caution: Do we really need to qualify it as 'breaking' news?

On the topic of whether we should bother using the precursor 'breaking news', in rushing to get a story published, particularly when it comes to court reporting/live tweeting, as [discussed on Bizcommunity](#), a number of the live chat attendees retweeted the sentiment that "Quality & accuracy over speed must win the day", and Sadleir responded: "It's more important for journos to be RIGHT, than to be FIRST!

Wise words, right from the legal experts... so be careful out there, in the social media wilds.

For more from the talk, search for the hashtag #socialmedialaw in Twitter, and [click here](#) for a review of Sadleir and De Beer's book, *Don't Film Yourself Having Sex*.

Disclaimer: I won one of 3 copies of #DontFilmYourself based on participation in the #socialmedialaw Twitter chat.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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