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*“Round my kitchen table podcast: lawyers on twitter” 16 September 2011*

Chair:

Alex Aldridge (AA)

Guests:

Emily Jupp, Social Media Journalist ([@TheIndyNews](https://twitter.com/TheIndyNews) and [@TheIPaper](https://twitter.com/TheIPaper)) and in a personal capacity as [@EmilyJupp](https://twitter.com/EmilyJupp) – (EJ)

Kevin Poulter, Employment Law guru of Bircham Dyson Bell [@kevinpoulter](https://twitter.com/kevinpoulter) - (KP)

AA: Hello and welcome to this week’s edition of my round the kitchen table podcast, I’m Alex Aldridge, columnist from Guardian Law section and US correspondent of UK Legal blog ‘Above the Law’.

With me this week is Emily Jupp (EJ) Social Media Journalist ([@TheIndyNews](https://twitter.com/TheIndyNews) and [@TheIPaper](https://twitter.com/TheIPaper)) she also writes regular features and blogs for The Independent.

Also we’ve got my regular guest Kevin Poulter, a modern day Dick Wittington who left his hometown of Sheffield to head to the gold paved streets of London to practise corporate law at Bircham Dyson Bell.

Last week I wrote an article in the Guardian about lawyers who tweet which caused some anger within the legal Twitter community. That’s nothing compared with the

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abuse that Emily gets when she makes a spelling mistake in her tweets! (Not that this occurs very regularly)

Emily, tens of thousands follow The Independent and the ipaper on Twitter. What is it like being responsible for tweets that go out to so many people?

EJ: It's brilliant, apart from when I do something wrong, then everyone pulls me up on it.

AA: So what's the worst mistake you've made?

EJ: I think I may have mentioned before that I once spelt 'whether' wrong (laughter) it was a very busy day in my defence. I spelt the 'whether' as in rain (weather) , sunshine should have been 'whether' as in 'whether or not'. Within about 2 seconds I had about 22 (tweets) going "you're fired!" (laughter)

AA: Did you lose your job?!

EJ: No, they let me keep it, I said sorry!

AA: It must be good then sending tweets out to so many people when you get it right?

EJ: It's really good because you get instant feedback. It's not like writing an article where this is a delay, then you have comments and they pile up. You instantly know if people like it or hate it.

AA: Kevin, similar experience? Obviously your tweets far fewer people (laughter), No, well, you've got a fair number of followers for an individual not quite as many as me unfortunately but you're working away...

KP: Thanks... (Laughs) yeah, I know what you mean. The thing about twitter is it's about interaction and it's so easy to give feedback which unfortunately you've experienced in the last week. Its social media, it's supposed to be interactive, and sociable. For me I love it, when you do a really good tweet, you got it right and its retweeted (RT) and people comment on it and other times you think "Shit! Really wish I hadn't put that" then you want to delete it but maybe someone else has already commented on it, it too late and you expose yourself to criticism. It's out there in the public, yeah, there is a lot of thinking to be done beforehand and I think it takes a long time to get used to writing down to 140 characters to say what you want to say and I think that's a skill which many people don't seem to have now. Another thing is, certainly with a day job, you have to be careful, especially as a lawyer you have to self-regulate which is not easy on a Friday night after a few pints with the guys from work.

AA: Are you sending tweets from the pub on your 'phone?

KP: You can do. It's easy to do spelling mistakes or worse if you have an account which supports multi-platform social media such as...

EJ: TweetDeck

KP: You've got numerous accounts and you think you're posting to your own account instead you're posting to another account you might look after or you go to LinkedIn, Facebook...

AA: I've never seen anyone do anything outrageous on LinkedIn, in my life, ever!

KP: That's because people go back and delete it!

EJ: (Laughter) Capture it via a screenshot or something! I've seen journalists using twitter that were clearly trying to do a search and accidentally writing the search as a tweet or thought they were texting and accidentally tweeting it. Those are some of the pitfalls of it (social media).

AA: Did you hear about the twitter account, I think this is really cruel, someone told and old man, I think it was there father, that Twitter was Google...

EJ: Aw....(sympathy sound)

AA: So everything he typed in, in Twitter was everything he thought he was searching for on Google. So Kevin, as a lawyer on Twitter whatever you write on, it is a mind field and one of the things I got in trouble for, for this Guardian article on Tweeting lawyers was that I was mildly critical of some of the lawyers and I feel that as a journalist if they are using twitter they are putting themselves out there in the public domain and benefiting from it in careers terms and I feel that it is fair to be able to look at what they wright in a critical way

KP: I think if you're prepared to go on twitter and reap the reward of twitter you also have to be prepared to take the consequences too and if you get caught out, you get caught out. As an employment lawyer...*(more here but lack of sound quality)* if you write something about your employer or customers, whatever the situation might be – if you're harassing, or cyber bullying/abusing any of your colleagues of course it stands to reason you will be disciplined over something like that. Hence, more and more law firms are savvy to this and there are more commercial elements to it coming through and I just don't know how they're doing, to be honest. The lawyer I find interesting on twitter have interesting personalities outside of their job and I think this is important as a law firm tweeting then it's usually quite dry, press release after press release and I find that a turn-off and I don't follow them. Or you mentally ignore whatever they are saying.

AA: Mmm...

KP: If it's someone who is having a weekend away, got something nice to say about a hotel or restaurant ill read that, from that point it can be good promotion and it can be also good to criticise and it is easy to criticise on twitter with the expectation you will get something back from it.

AA: Mmm...people do like bit of a (verbal) bust up. Do you see that Emily, with the ipaper and Independent?

EJ: Yeah, definitely. Going back to your earlier point (AA) these lawyers are on twitter for altruistic reasons to share their ideas and I don't think that people are on twitter just for the good of mankind. I think they want to be known and they want to get their point across. Often, more so than wanting to read other peoples' opinions. And so I think that's a bit of a coarse argument that they are just there for completely altruistic reasons, they are there to get something out of it as well.

KP: Mmm of course they are...

EJ: From that point of view twitter is one of the most democratic (*more here, but background noise*) but if you start an argument you should be allowed to interact socially with social media.

AA: The celebrities that use the tabloids to build their profile, become fair game, and the tabloids go after them for the story, is it then if you are using twitter to benefit your career then the downside is journalist can look at tweets and can argue that they don't think they are tweeting very well or they are tweeting very well?

KP: Well here is the solution: if you don't like it, don't bother!

AA: I think it's also quite flattering, here is an example, I was at a press party last night and this journalist comes up to me and said you come across as bit of a twat, actually he said "real twat" on twitter and he was joking, we had all had a few drinks and a little bit of me felt hurt, another little part of me thought "true" (laughter) and another part of me thought "at least he's reading me tweets!"

KP: Yeah

AA: But he's allowed to say that you know, sure if he put that in an article it would be bit of a shock but I think once you put yourself out in the public domain, you have to accept that. I might not agree with him, I might think I come across wonderfully on Twitter which I don't actually, often I don't always come across very well. But I think that people have to accept that. But it's interesting because Emily, as a journalist, you will often write blogs on the back of stories that you get from Twitter. How much would you criticise the tweeters in your blogs that you write?

EJ: Well, obviously I love everyone who follow me (laughter) I wouldn't ever criticise them because they pay my wages inadvertently

AA: Ah...

KP: Other newspapers are available... (Laughter)

AA: But I suppose that is the other side of the coin then? You wouldn't feel comfortable pointing out if you thought one of your followers was...

EJ: If I'm writing a blog that wouldn't be the same as reply to someone on twitter. On twitter you got a level playing field if your replying through the medium of national

newspaper then that automatically giving you a massive loudspeaker, and that is where it stops being equal.

AA: I suppose one of the things taken out of the discussion so far is how new twitter is. Everyone is still working out the rules. I tried criticising tweeters the other day through an article in the mainstream media, and you said, Emily that you are reluctant to do that so I suppose that's two journalists that have taken the opposite approach. And you have a lawyer, again, who walking bit of a tight rope...

KP: yeah that's exactly how it feels.

AA: But then I guess there is no success without risk and you know, young up and coming lawyers marks himself out through social media, it's worth the risk I would say?

KP: Yes and No. There's obviously parameters to draw, and the problem is those parameters have to be your own because there is no law that is saying what they should be everything is moveable.

AA: its common sense isn't it?

KP: Instinct, common sense. Few people share the same common sense.

AA: That's a good point.

KP: It's totally subjective. Regarding clients, I tell them it's dangerous to assume everyone has common sense. You (the employer) should be telling them what their common sense should be. And that's the reality of it.

AA: Just going back to our expert on social media, Emily, what do you see the future as for all this?

EJ: Ooh (pauses)

AA: That's putting you on the spot.

EJ: Yeah...

AA: One thing I should add here is that I should probably give Emily some time to think, nobody gets any questions in advance in this podcast. But we did last week!

(Laughter)

AA: For this week, no questions in advance! (Laughter)

EJ: Things like location? That's becoming something that (*unable to determine name*) uses already that will become more important as we go along. I think people will be able to share their location from whatever social media they're using.

AA: You mean another dimension?

EJ: I think there will be a much more mix media, people will share videos of themselves, photos of themselves a bit more and I think the barriers of seeing something and being able to say you 'like' it will get broken down as well. For example, Google +, I quite like it even though I only have about 7 friends who are on it.

AA: But nobody uses Google + do they?

EJ: But you just need everyone else to be using it, and then you'll use it as well.

AA: Do you reckon that will take off?

EJ: I think so because you'll get a critical mass of people using it then you'll feel like you're missing out, the same with any other social media.

AA: One of the things I like about it the most, actually, I got this from Adam Wagner who is the editor of the UK Human Rights Blog, he was saying how it breaks down hierarchy. Twitter has its own hierarchy, but he sees a QC join twitter, once a week. On twitter they're nobody. It's not everyone that starts bothering them initially. There are exceptions, I remember when Joshua Rozenberg he's followers just rocketed into the thousands immediately because he is such a big name. But I do think that is the exception to the rule. And Adam (Wagner) was pointing out that the most famous person on twitter in the legal world is David Allen Green.

EJ: He's leveraging so many other social media, it's not just twitter, he has his own blog, his own column, and so he's was able to map out (twitter) before he joined.

AA: Well he wasn't really though because he used twitter to let people know about his blog, he used (Twitter) well but used all those things at the same time. There are people trying to replicate that model.

EJ/KP: Yeah.

EJ: I think that's where it becomes important because you Alex, can tweet links to your article.

AA: And the podcast last week, that's how we got the listener through twitter.

KP: Not just the one?!

(Laughter)

KP: The key thing for people coming into it now, is don't expect to become a big name on Twitter immediately and don't expect to get a training contract from it. Or a job from it, to a certain extent it happened to me...

AA: Is that your current job?

KP: Yeah.

AA: Very briefly?

KP: Very briefly I joined a group through twitter and one of the people who was part of that group was taking instructions from a particular solicitor, that solicitor told me she was leaving, that person who followed me on tweets, tweeted me then 'phoned me and said I understand someone is leaving this particular position, you might want to apply for it? And I did (*more here but lack of sound quality*).

AA: I think that's the key thing, direct benefits through twitter; rare. Loads of good indirect stuff.

KP: Yes.

AA: OK, I think we'll wrap it up there. Emily and Kevin it's been a pleasure.

EJ/KP: Thank you.