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Short Legal Explainer Videos to Debut on Social Media Feeds Near You

TalksOnLaw, a legal video learning platform, debuted a set of social media-optimized short videos.

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With news media increasingly turning to video to capture the attention of social media viewers, TalksOnLaw, a video library platform featuring explanations of legal topics from top attorneys, launched its "briefs" section.

The website now features two sets of materials—30-minute "talks" on issues ranging from the current state of the Voting Rights Act to property rights around abandoned sperm and "briefs," shorter-form content that takes on more current topics in five minutes or less.

TalksOnLaw founder Joel Cohen said that the briefs videos are part of TalksOnLaw's attempt to "create content for nonlawyers who are eager to learn about the law." Given that social media is increasingly a part of people's everyday lives, he thinks the briefs could be a good way to use viral platforms to give people easy access to legal questions that may arise in their daily lives.

"Law is less sexy than baby koala bears cuddling, but some of the issues for the right audience can be just as captivating and really important," he said.

"We get a lot of requests," Cohen said on the briefs video topics. Most recently, TalksOnLaw's briefs videos have taken on topics around the 2016 presidential election ("What if a nominee withdraws pre-election?") and police accountability ("Is there a right to record police?"), both of which have dominated news cycles over the last few months.

Cohen said that TalksOnLaw is aimed at both legal audiences, those with some understanding and interest in legal questions, and the general public. These briefs, he said, are designed more so with nonlegal users in mind.

"We see that in general, people are hungry to learn more about the law, and there's a lot of ignorance around legal issues and misconceptions about what the law is. That's pretty dangerous because the law doesn't just affect lawyers, it affects everyone," he said.

Cohen said that the explainer videos featured throughout the platform have already demonstrated great public service utility. For example, Cohen noted that TalksOnLaw partnered with Her Justice

Inc. to put out videos clarifying what "orders of protection" and "restraining orders" are, specifically so that the organization's clients can better understand what means of action they have available to them.

Cohen said that the idea for the platform was borne out of his own search for relevant media during his time as an attorney.

"I was looking around for basically fun, interesting entertainment for myself that would also enable me to learn about the law, something like a podcast or Ted Talks for law, and didn't see that so much out there at the time," Cohen said.

Thus far, talks have featured speakers such as president and CEO of the National Constitution Center Jeffrey Rosen, senior judicial analyst for Fox News Judge Andrew Napolitano, and ACLU president Susan Herman. Cohen said that TalksOnLaw has tried early on to partner with law firms and other nonprofit legal organizations to identify experts for their videos.

Though many organizations have prepared explanatory materials geared toward the general public as a means to increase access to justice, Cohen finds that the written explainer materials on the TOL website almost never get as much attention as the videos.

"For better or for worse, people are not looking to read legal explanations. We do great explainers, but even the lawyers don't read them," he said.

As for the future, Cohen is hoping that attorneys across many different disciplines and expertise levels will be able to submit their own short videos for the briefs sections, though he notes that they will be asked to meet strict production and research standards.

"We don't see any limit on this. I'd love to have thousands of videos by the end of next year. We would love to be the first resource for people with legal questions," Cohen said.

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