

## How Law Firms Can Use LinkedIn – 10 action steps.

A couple of my clients approached me this past year asking if I had any advice on helping them market themselves. I wanted to give them a good answer so I started to do some researching. I have found that legal media for lawyers is a powerful new way to create opportunity. I believe blogging (blawgging), LinkedIn, and Twitter are the most effective social media tools available to attorneys.

In my last newsletter, I introduced Twitter. I believe if you don't want to do anything else, at least start using LinkedIn to your advantage. Here are some suggestions as to how:

1. Create your LinkedIn profile and use a professional, friendly photograph. People are more likely to want to connect to you or do business with you if they at least know what you look like. It is hard to connect to a gray outline of a person.
2. Add keywords throughout your profile. When someone is doing a search for a certain type of legal professional in LinkedIn, you will want your name to come up. If you specialize in family law, employment or complex business litigation, and you're particularly successful in defending municipalities, include those types of words. Just imagine what words a person would use to find you if they were doing a Google search.
3. LinkedIn allows you to add up to 3 links. Be sure to add your links to your firm's website, your blog, your Twitter account, or anything else that might help people find you and add to your "authority" in your legal segment.
4. Add connections with people you know and trust and who are well respected. Never, never, never link with a stranger or someone you don't hold in high regard. With social networking, you want people to respect who you are and who you "associate" with.
5. Be strategic with your connections. Your goal is to connect with people you want to do business with and/or people your connections do business with. I coach a men's soccer team. I have players who work at a lot of big corporations in San Diego. I am asking them to please link with everyone in their company as a thank you for being their coach. Five of my players are executives at Hamilton Sundstrand. If one of my clients needs an introduction to someone who works at that company, I can help facilitate the introduction. I believe attorneys should be linking with every business person you meet, whether on the golf course, at the gym, or at a networking event. There is always a potential for future business. Just remember, they have to be well respected.
6. Search for and join professional LinkedIn groups. You can share news, discuss best practices, answer questions, and network. You can also pay attention to what your competition is doing.

7. Use LinkedIn groups to establish yourself as an authority and/or leader. When there are questions being asked or discussions going on, jump in and participate.
8. “What are you working on now?” On your Home page with LinkedIn, you are asked this question. The legal marketing people suggest you answer this question three times a week. It will go out to all of your connections. Obviously, you have to be cautious and not write about certain clients or cases, but you can write about posting a new blawg, if you are expanding your offices and have hired new talent, or if you are traveling to a conference. Even if you answer this question once a week, it keeps you “top of mind,” which is the key to social networking.
9. Every Saturday morning I get an email that tells me about all of the activities my connections have had in the past week. The email lets me know who has changed jobs, gotten a promotion, who is connecting to whom. It takes me about 2 minutes to skim over all of this information. Any time you want to get the latest updates about your connections, just log onto your LinkedIn account. Take note. This is valuable information. If one of your best clients just moved to a new company, take that client out to lunch. You will have access to a new company as a client.
10. Time. I understand time is extremely valuable to you. I suggest you start slowly. Invite five people a week to be a contact. Answer, “What are you working on now?” at least once a week. Be strategic and set a goal.

There are over 45M people participating in LinkedIn – national, international. It is a professional networking site. All of the Fortune 500 companies are represented. I believe LinkedIn is one of the best ways an attorney can market their firm and become an industry leader. There are no hard costs. The only cost is time.