

Legal-Specific Social Networking

Industry-specific social networking sites can help your firm reach your audiences with the right marketing message as well as network with professionals in the legal industry.

Social networking sites come and go. Some don't last long while others seem to be in it for the long haul. Each site has its own way of doing things, but they all accomplish pretty much the same thing. When it comes right down to it, each one allows you to interact with different people and companies and helps you catch up on the latest news, right? But what if you aren't interested in the 'different' aspect and want something a little more targeted?

Industry-specific social networking sites are beginning to gain traction on the Internet. Using LinkedIn for business networking is great, but you do have to join targeted Groups and participate in discussions on these Groups to network with other legal professionals. Industry-specific social networking sites allow you to interact with professionals from your industry and are focused on news and events that affect your business directly.

Because of this, these sites may be less distracting than regular social networking sites. You don't have to hunt through pictures of your niece's birthday party or your mom's recipes in order to find that article your coworker suggested. For those that aren't keen on using social networking yet, this could be a great opportunity for them to get their feet wet, since they'll be able to participate in a "safer" environment where they are knowledgeable and comfortable.

What got me on this topic is an article I recently read on iShade, the new social networking site for the accounting industry. It is targeted solely to accountants and the people that serve them. (Hint: if CPAs are in your target market, or good referral sources, you may want to join too). In some ways, it's similar to LinkedIn, in that you create both individual and firm profiles, add regular updates, join groups and connect with others on the site. They also let you create an online ad and marketplace profile for your firm for free. Where they really provide value is by offering onsite and online CPE courses. So the site goes beyond social networking and becomes a place where accountants can get the CPE they need to maintain their licensing.

I think it has great potential, but it will only work if people join and participate. Like any networking effort, it can't be the place where only vendors gather. I expect the benefits of this site, and others like it, should draw social media savvy professionals first, and then hopefully continue expanding to those who think Twitter is silly, but may give this one a shot.

So how many of these industry-specific sites are currently up and running? I've found a few that look pretty interesting:

- LinkedIn's News Today, which you can customize towards the legal marketing industry.
- Lawyrs.net which is a site made specifically for lawyers so they can network with each other. Currently, there are **7087 lawyers** from **179 countries** in public beta.

- [Attorneys Online](#) is a social networking site that includes a Lawyer-to-Lawyer referral base.
- [Legal OnRamp](#) is another great social networking site for lawyers. This site allows in-house counsel and invited outside lawyers and third party service providers to collaborate. The basic service is free, and I highly recommend considering this site.
- [LawLink](#) is a site that refers to itself as “The Attorney Network.” On this site you can join groups, chat on the forums, pose questions and learn about other attorneys in your field and beyond.
- Also, LinkedIn has a variety of Groups targeted specifically to attorneys. This is a great forum to use to talk and discuss legal marketing issues with other lawyers. A lot of lawyers do not utilize this great LinkedIn tool.

What other sites do you use to network with other lawyers or learn industry news? Is this the future of social networking? Do you think people will begin to navigate toward these sites versus continuing to use sites like LinkedIn, or will they use them in addition to the big ones?