

LinkedIn for Lawyers: Basics, Power Tips and Caveats

LinkedIn can be a powerful online tool to help you expand your professional network, raise your visibility, and position and control your personal brand — if, that is, you know how to use it. Here are 10 important tips for getting the most out of your LinkedIn profile.

By Amy Campbell

Linkedin is fast becoming the business-to-business directory of default and the most popular social networking platform dedicated to professional business development. Most would agree that legal services is a relationship business and that success as a rainmaker comes from effectively working your network of relationships. LinkedIn provides you with specific tools designed to help you harness the latent power of your professional network.

LinkedIn can help you to:

- Rekindle old relationships
- Strengthen current relationships
- Build new relationships
- Increase your visibility and enhance personal brand among key audiences
- Keep an “ear to the ground” in key market segments
- Facilitate information exchange/distribution.

Effective use of LinkedIn leads to:

- New inquiries
- In-person meetings
- New business.

Success stories are abundant, and the value of participating in LinkedIn is clear. To not have a presence on this popular social media platform can in itself be a liability — resulting in a perception of, perhaps, not being in step with things current. (See video dramatizing this point at <http://bit.ly/whylinkedin>.)

It takes an investment of time and attention to set up an account, and a little more time to understand how to begin to use it effectively. However, the more time you put in to LinkedIn, the more you will get out of it.

In this paper I propose some LinkedIn basics for getting started, and I also provide some less obvious but important tips for setting up your account for maximum effectiveness. And because lawyers are usually bereft of spare time, I have arranged these in order of impact. However, please read through all the tips first to get an overview of how to position yourself (paying special attention to sections labeled “CAVE-ATS,” and then set aside some time each week to complete and enhance your LinkedIn profile according to this plan.

1 – Sign up and complete a Profile

Every day more and more professionals are using LinkedIn to listen, learn, make connections, ask for advice, make recommendations and hire people. As the new default directory, you need to be in it. Even if you don't think you have time to use it to its full potential, having a completed profile is important. I believe it is better to be on LinkedIn even if you have not yet fully maximized your profile, than to not be found on it at all. Don't worry if your profile is not quite perfect when you begin. But commit to come back to it and improve it over time. To get started, click here: <http://linkedin.com/>. It's free.

2 – Use a photo

Don't be a faceless persona, add your photo to your LinkedIn profile. Your photo is used at a small thumbnail size, so the tighter you crop the photo, the larger your image will appear, and the more recognizable you will be. (A tight crop can also make you seem closer, friendlier and more approachable.) If necessary, ask someone familiar with photo editing software to help you to crop and upload your photo. Notice the difference a photo can make (at right).



LinkedIn provides tools to upload and crop photos (.jpg, .gif and .png files) as large as 4MB. Photos should be at least 80 x 80 pixels and no larger than 4000 x 4000 pixels. Use the same photo for LinkedIn that you use for your law firm web site bio, and repeat it for any other social media accounts you may have — this helps to achieve a consistent “brand you” image across multiple platforms, and helps others remember and recognize you more easily.

3 – Edit your Headline

Your “Headline” is the description directly below your name on your profile page. When you first start an account, you are asked for your title or position, and when LinkedIn creates your profile page, it uses your title as your Headline. However, you have the ability to edit this — and you should. As the second line on your profile, the Headline’s communication power is great. Think of the Headline as your professional tagline. It is an opportunity to more specifically describe the type of lawyer you are and the type of work you do.

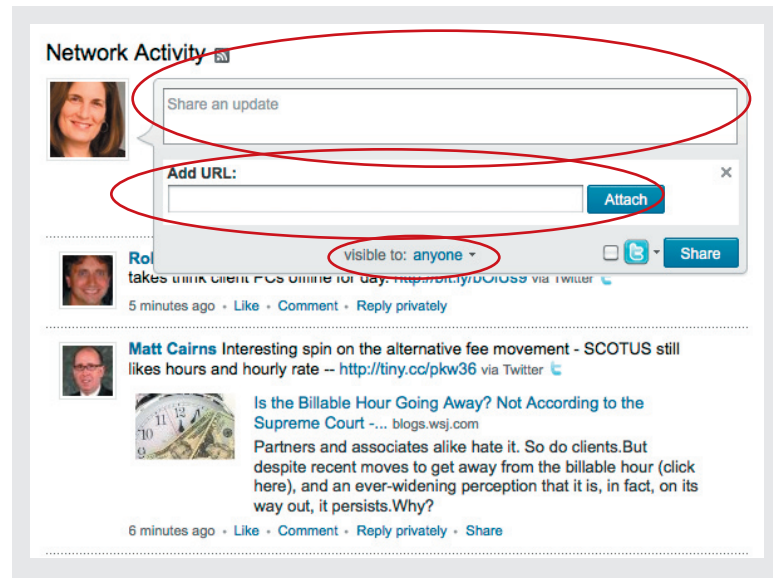
For many attorneys, their Headlines will read: “Partner at XYZ Law Firm” or “Shareholder – Director.” Neither of these is very descriptive or compelling. A better approach is to use the Headline to communicate specifically what kind of lawyer you are and what type of law/industry/niche you work in. A good example is: Licensing and IP attorney experienced in growing video game space. (Click on the link in the Headline edit mode to see examples of suggested headlines.)

To edit your Headline, from your profile page, simply click on Edit My Profile, then, click on the [Edit] link beneath your current Headline. A new screen will display with a field labeled Professional Headline where you can type in a new one. You can edit this and all areas of your profile as often as you want. So, don’t struggle too much filling out your profile perfectly the first time. You can continue to fine-tune it over time. The important thing is, first, to complete it.

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn profile for Amy Campbell. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Home, Profile, Contacts, Groups, Jobs, Inbox, and More... The profile header includes the name 'Amy Campbell' with an [Edit] link, a profile picture, and the headline 'Web Marketing and Communications Consultant - Specializing in Law Firms, Professional Services Firms' which is circled in red. Below the headline is the location 'Greater Boston Area' and the industry 'Marketing and Advertising'. A recent post by Amy Campbell is visible, titled 'Online reputation management in the news. Hey, I do this! (as part of search engine optimization and online brand advocacy)...'. The post includes a photo and text about a real estate broker and a banking executive. Below the post is a 'Current' job listing for 'Marketing and Communication Consultant at Infoworks!' with an [Edit] link and an 'Add Current Position' button. The 'Past' section lists previous roles: 'Magazine Editor at Cahners Publishing', 'Editor at CW Communications', and 'Public Information Officer at NHVTC'. The 'Education' section lists 'Harvard University' and 'Boston College'. On the right side, there is a 'Hi, Amy' greeting, a '100% profile completeness' bar, and two ads: 'Amazon Product Ads' and 'Free Research Webinars'.

4 – Power Tip: Share an Update

This is where the true social power of LinkedIn kicks in. The Update area (or Share box) invites you to communicate to your connections with a brief update of what you are working on, what's new, or anything you feel comfortable asking or sharing. You can also easily Attach a Link to your Update, which can be a simple and powerful way to share relevant information with your connections. Simply click on the Attach a Link icon, and then copy and paste the URL you want to share. LinkedIn will autofill the entry



with the web page's headline and description, but you can (and should) edit them in order to add your take on the information you are sharing. Also, you can decide whether you want to share your Updates with your connections only, or with everyone. Choosing “everyone” gives you more visibility.

The Update (formerly called the Status Update) is the grease that makes the LinkedIn wheels turn. The following personal example helps to illustrate this. When I first started using LinkedIn more regularly, I performed a Status update and soon after received an e-mail from a colleague (who is a LinkedIn connection) whom I had not seen in at least two years. In my Update, I shared information that I had “just finished setting up a nifty news blog for a law firm,” and I gave the web address of the new blog site. Said colleague e-mailed me to say, “Hey, I really like the blog you did for your client, I have a couple small web projects I’d like to talk to you about.” So that simple Update led to an e-mail, which led to a phone call, which led to a face-to-face meeting, which led to new job! My Update served the same effect of bumping into this colleague on the street or at a conference where a typical conversation ensues around the proverbial question, “So, what have you been up to?” While I was acquainted with this person, I had no current active connection or access to her without LinkedIn. With LinkedIn, that latent relationship quickly and easily became an active relationship.

I have heard similar success stories of the Update working quickly and effectively with people who are already acquainted but not actively in touch. For instance, one lawyer told me how his Update about how he was attending a conference where he was speaking on a specific area of the law, turned into a paying client when one of his LinkedIn connections (whom he had worked with in a previous job and was now an in-house attorney) responded to him saying, “I didn’t know you were working in that area — we need

someone here to assist us with that.” Again, because they were already colleagues, and the need and the skill matched up, the job was quick to follow. Think about how many latent relationships you might have out there — like trees with ripe fruit just waiting to be shaken.

Spending the time to update your Update box related to events you are attending, business that you’re working on, articles that you’ve written, etc., can go a long way in positioning yourself as an active expert and keeping yourself “top of mind” with your connections. Changing your Update box once a week would be a great goal. More often than that isn’t really necessary and may be perceived as too eager, or too “spammy.”

The Attach a Link feature is fairly new and is a great way to publicize a new article you’ve written or a great article someone else has written. Don’t be afraid to share information of value to your connections. (See this link to an article on RainToday.com that lists the types of attorney news that make good fodder for your Update box - <http://bit.ly/statusline>.)

5 – Power Tip: Edit your web site links

One of the great benefits of a LinkedIn profile is that it allows you to add up to three links to your law firm’s web site, bio page, blog, Twitter page, or any other web link you deem important to add to your profile. The default settings are:

- My Web Site
- My Company
- My Blog.

But those are just suggestions. Take advantage of the ability to customize the link labels by choosing Other in the drop down menu in the Web Sites edit mode. Select Other, and then type in the name of the site you are linking to. So, instead of the above generic labels, you can have specific ones, such as:

- Jeffrey Smith’s bio page
- Smith & Jones – IP Law Firm
- Massachusetts IP Blog.

The advantage here is one of branding and good communications. You want to reiterate the name of your firm and other branded communications products, as well as your own name where appropriate, and supply any clues to your specific focus when possible or appropriate. A specific and descriptive label also helps others decide if they will take the step of clicking through to view the site. People are more apt

to click when they have a good idea of what they will find when they get there.

In addition, customizing your web links with appropriate keyword-rich labels can be helpful for search engine optimization.

6 – Power Tip: Customize your URL, and make your profile public

When you first sign up with LinkedIn, it assigns you a URL (or web site address) that is, well, a bit messy. For instance, my original LinkedIn URL was:

`linkedin.com/pub/amy-campbell/9/187/80bx`

My customized URL is now:

`linkedin.com/in/amylcampbell`

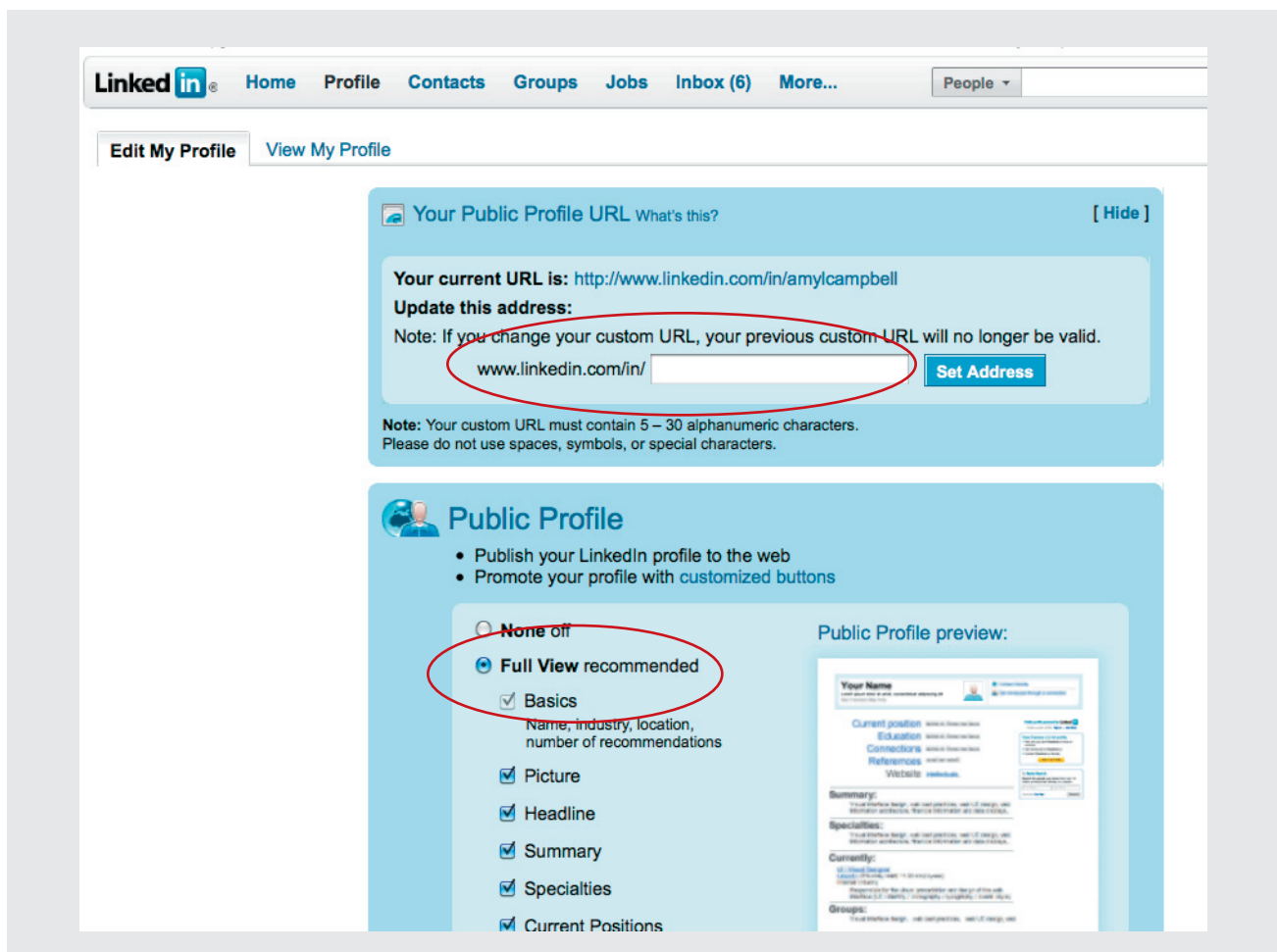
The shorter version is much easier to put on a business card or in an e-mail footer, and easier for someone to type in or provide over the phone when necessary. And, again, it is now better optimized for search engines.

Next, you'll want to make your profile public. By making your profile public, you make all the information in it available to search engines, and you make it easier for people to find you and learn about what you can do for them.

To make these changes to your profile, in Edit My Profile mode, simply click on the [Edit] link next to the current URL related to your Public Profile (at the bottom of the first section of your profile). This brings up a new window as shown below.

Next, click on the [Edit] link next to your current URL, and type in a new one using either your name or a specific keyword phrase that you may want to brand yourself around, such as “videogamelawyer.”

Then, on the same page, right below your new URL, check the radio button to make your Profile public. Select “Full view,” and scroll down to click the Save Changes button.



7 – Don't copy-and-paste your attorney bio as your Summary

The Summary is meant to be just that, a summary, not a complete accounting of your life story. Don't copy-and-paste your law firm attorney bio into this space. Rather, use the Summary as a place to position yourself specifically for the type of business you are seeking, and to “brand” yourself in a specific area of law or an industry segment. If, for instance, you are a licensing and IP attorney looking to do more work in the burgeoning video game industry, then use your LinkedIn profile and Summary to position yourself for that industry by mentioning some of your recent work in that industry and any leadership positions you may hold or organizations you are active with in that sector. You can always link to your web site bio for more information. This is your chance to define how you want to be perceived, which you can update as often as necessary (and, remains intact even if you change jobs or firms).

Also, because LinkedIn is a social site, consider using the first person when creating your Summary. As a social site it's okay to take a more friendly, direct and personal approach. Use a conversational tone and allow a little bit of your personality to come through. Keep it short and easy to take in at a quick passing — and use the language and keywords that your potential clients would use.

CAVEAT: A part of the Summary is a subsection called Specialties. Do not fill this section out; use of the term “specialty” or “specialized” or “expert” is not allowed by attorney ethics rules in some states. The general rule for lawyer profiles is to just leave this space blank. You may still describe the focus of your practice in the Summary section, but avoid terms like “specialize” and “expert.”

CAVEAT: Some state bar associations have specific rules regarding attorney advertising. To be extra safe, and to avoid any potential violations regarding attorney advertising laws, consider the following:

1. Make clear in which states you are admitted to practice
2. Add disclaimer language to the last line of your Summary, such as:
“DISCLAIMER: This material may be considered attorney advertising under certain rules of professional attorney conduct.”

8 – Making Connections

Only you can decide with whom you want to connect on LinkedIn. Some people take a very open-ended networking strategy and want to connect with as many people as possible, viewing everyone they meet as a potential LinkedIn contact. Others are very judicious about whom they connect with and will only connect with persons they know well or have worked with in the past. You must decide what’s comfortable and right for you.

CAVEAT: When you first sign up for LinkedIn, as part of the sign up process it will ask you if you would like LinkedIn to search your Outlook address book and send invitations to your contacts. Say No! First of all, you don’t ever want to grant an application access to your address book. It’s just not a safe practice. Secondly, you will want to consider carefully who you want to invite, and when.

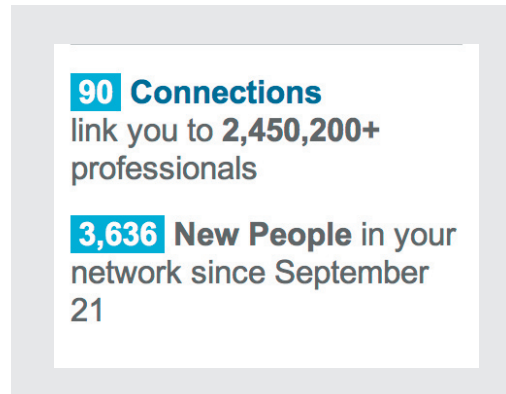
Some attorneys don’t want to connect to clients for fear of having those clients poached by competitors. If you fear this type of situation, then perhaps you should be working harder to serve that client better. It’s your call. But you’ll find often that it is your client that will ask to connect with you on LinkedIn.

You can, however, hide your contacts from anyone who is not a direct (1st level) connection if you are concerned about “outsiders” viewing your connections. To do so:

1. Click the Settings link in the top right area of the home page.
2. Click on Connections Browse under Privacy Settings.
3. Choose Yes (to show your connections) or No (to hide your connections).
4. Remember to click the Save button at the bottom of the page.

If you hide your connections list, Network Updates announcing your new connections will not be sent. Remember, your connections will always be able to see shared connections regardless of this setting.

The larger your network becomes on LinkedIn, the more it can work for you. Dedicate a specified amount of time each week to spend on LinkedIn and to consider people to add to your network. Don't worry that you don't have 300 connections. Building a quality network can take time.

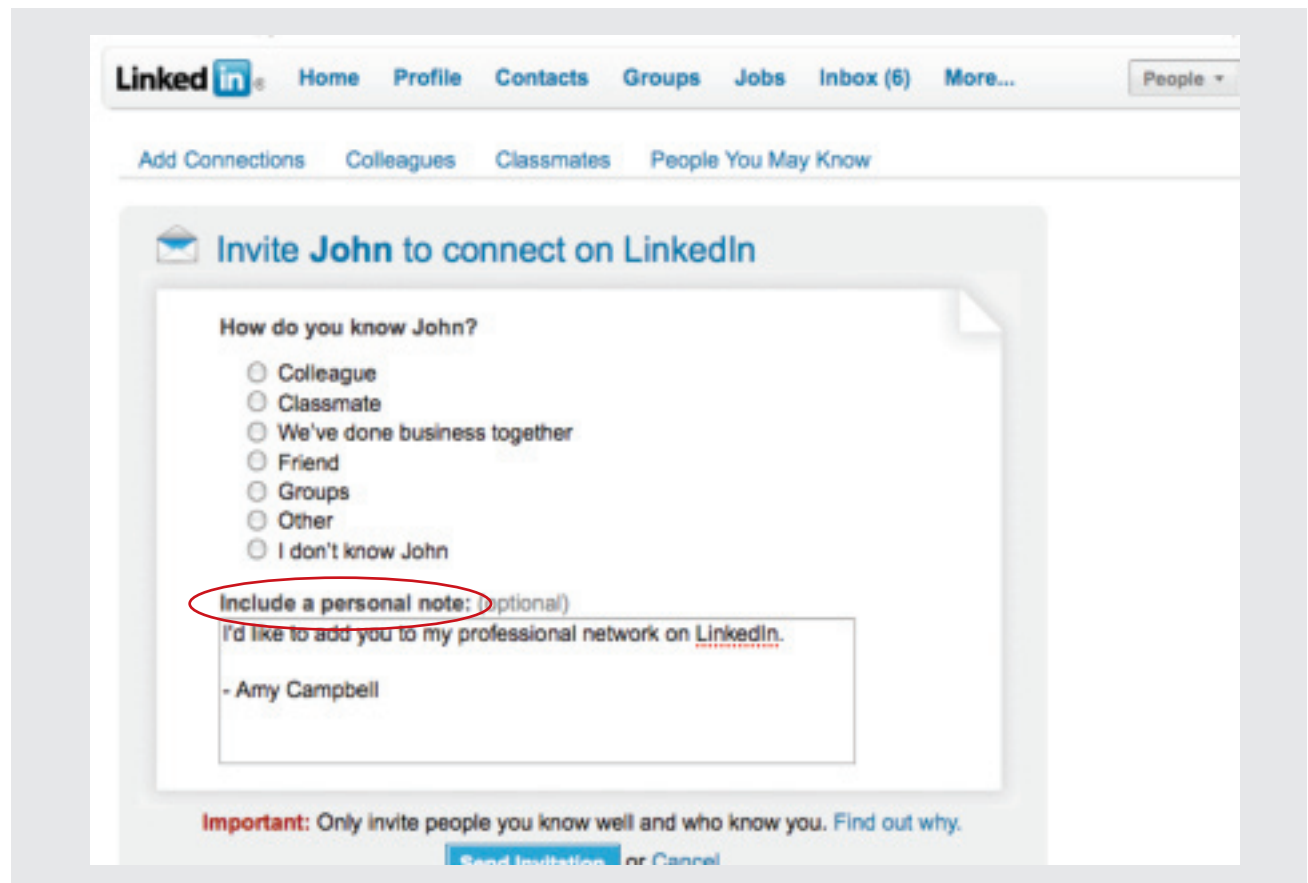


90 Connections
link you to **2,450,200+**
professionals

3,636 New People in your
network since September
21

See (at left) how even 90 direct connections can connect you to a much larger potential group of contacts.

Building your LinkedIn network also gives you an excuse to reach out and touch an old client, and old colleague or friend. While LinkedIn provides an automated form for adding people to your network (see the default message below), don't just send the form without customizing the message for each person you send it to. Remember, this is a social networking site, and the idea is to be personal and engaging! Take the time to write a little note to the person you haven't talked with in 5 years and ask about what's new with them, tell them you're looking forward to getting reconnected, and tell them a bit of news about yourself.



The screenshot shows the LinkedIn interface for inviting a connection. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, Profile, Contacts, Groups, Jobs, Inbox (6), and More... A dropdown menu for 'People' is visible. Below this, there are tabs for 'Add Connections', 'Colleagues', 'Classmates', and 'People You May Know'. The main content area is titled 'Invite John to connect on LinkedIn'. It contains a form with the question 'How do you know John?' and several radio button options: Colleague, Classmate, We've done business together, Friend, Groups, Other, and I don't know John. Below the options, there is a section for 'Include a personal note: (optional)'. The text in this section reads: 'I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.' followed by '- Amy Campbell'. At the bottom of the form, there is an 'Important' note: 'Only invite people you know well and who know you. Find out why.' and two buttons: 'Send Invitation' and 'Cancel'.

Be personal! Many people just send the default LinkedIn message, so it is easy to set yourself apart by taking the time to personalize your message. You'll make a good impression and be more likely to get a response back, and begin the process of building the relationship. Remember, the idea here is to renew and build relationships, not tally contacts as part of a numbers contest.

9 – Use Recommendations carefully or not at all

In order for your LinkedIn profile to be “complete” it requires that you have and give at least two Recommendations. However, lawyers and investment advisors should be careful. First of all, no one can post a Recommendation without your approval, so don't worry about that happening without your knowledge. However, various attorney advertising laws and ethics guidelines do not allow “endorsements.” While a recommendation that claims “John is pleasant to work with, always returns my phone calls promptly, and is a great bump skier” may be okay, a recommendation that claims “John is a master in the courtroom and I'd recommend him for any case” would be an obvious no-no.

CAVEAT: On this issue, I defer to Doug Cornelius, a compliance attorney and social media enthusiast, who recommends that attorneys steer clear of Recommendations. See his commentary on LinkedIn Recommendations on his blog Compliance Building at: <http://bit.ly/recommend-me>

#10 – Power Tip: Explore, join, and become active in Groups

Becoming involved with LinkedIn's Groups is a more advanced step. It takes a little time using LinkedIn before you may be ready to participate fully in Groups. Using Groups can be a very effective way to raise your visibility among specific niche audiences. Start by searching for and joining groups. Some places to start include alumni groups from schools you've attended, alumni groups from former employers, and (even more importantly) groups in the industry segments you and your clients follow. Do this by using the Search Groups function to find groups of interest. Sign up to receive a weekly summary of activity in the groups you join, and then sit back and watch, listen and learn. Then, once you have a feel for how the Groups work, you can join in by posting questions, answering questions, recommending articles or news stories and commenting on other people's conversations. Regular activity in a Group can help build your reputation and awareness within that sector. You can also search for people you'd like to know and find out which groups they belong to, and then join one of those groups with the hope of gaining some exposure through your value-added participation in that group.

CAVEAT: When participating in Groups, in particular, answering questions posed by others, be careful not to offer legal advice.

BONUS TIP: Know thy settings – Before you dive into active use on LinkedIn, take the time to work your way through the Settings. Click on “Settings” in the top right of the page next to “Help.” Here you can double check and reset visibility and privacy settings and more. Be sure to visit each of these links to verify your settings. I know it’s a pain in the neck, but you shouldn’t use a social media platform without going through each Setting option and choosing the sharing and privacy settings. Don’t be daunted by the many settings that exist. Just work your way through them one at a time. If you are in doubt or don’t understand a specific setting, choose the safer option or disable it.

NOTE: The LinkedIn platform is constantly evolving. All screenshots and commands were accurate as of the publication date of July 2010.

Please send comments on this document to: amy@infoworks1.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Amy Campbell is a marketing and communications consultant providing strategic advice and hands-on services to professional services firms, both large and small. Amy’s specialty is information-based marketing services optimized for the web. She is available to present on social media topics to professional service firms, and/or to coach individuals and firms in utilizing social media as part of their overall web marketing strategy.

For more information, see Amy’s web site: infoworks1.com

View her LinkedIn profile at: linkedin.com/in/amylcampbell

Follow Amy on Twitter at: twitter.com/amyblog

Read Amy’s law firm marketing blog at: blogs.law.harvard.edu/amy

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Amy Campbell

24 Harvard Street #1
Charlestown, MA 02129
617.494.9444
amy@infoworks1.com

Infoworks! Services Overview

■ CONSULTING AND EDUCATION

Positioning, Differentiation, Strategic Marketing Consultation

Assisting firm with self-analysis to target most profitable markets, and develop differentiating language to position firm and attorneys for that space. Involves a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and review of revenues to identify and target most profitable clients and industry sectors with brainstorming on how to develop “information of value” marketing tools to attract attention of desired markets to raise brand awareness and support business development activities.

Practice Group/Industry Group Marketing Consultation

Working with practice areas/industry groups on developing and implementing integrated strategic marketing and business development programs using “information of value.”

■ WEB MARKETING AND INTERNET PRESENCE

Starter Web Site (template based)

- Search engine optimization add-on
- Web monitoring and tracking add-on
- Simple web log add-on

Custom Web Sites/Redesign

- Design and development of small sites, or
- Tech savvy liaison with your development team

Professional Blog

- Set up and training
- Editorial management and ongoing updates

Social Media/Web 2.0

Advise and/or set up and maintain blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networking/directory accounts as part of a defensive strategy or as part of an active informational marketing/SEO campaign.

Search Engine Optimization Audit (SEO)

Professional review of your firm’s internet presence and web site with recommendations for improvement.

SEO Advocacy and Evangelism

Ongoing monthly retainer service to monitor, promote, tweak and take advantage of on- and off-site tactics to gain search engine strength.

■ BRANDING AND ADVERTISING

Brand Identity Graphics

- Logo
- Color/typography/imagery
- Taglining/branded language
- Positioning statement/value proposition

Integrated Marketing Collateral

- Business cards/letterhead
- Presentation folders
- Brochures/marketing sheets/etc.
- Basic ad template

Advertising Campaign Design

- Ad template(s)
- Ad production

■ INFORMATIONAL MARKETING/PUBLISHING

Strategic Marketing Web Content Audit

E-Newsletter Design and Implementation

Traditional Newsletter

Additional services

- Writing, editing and publication design
- Ongoing web management
- Web maintenance