

## Why Lawyers Should Use LinkedIn

By Dee Schiavelli

So you are not a social media guru and you don't have time to participate in all of these social media communities. Or maybe you have created a profile on LinkedIn (LI) because someone you know professionally has invited you to link to them. Whether you have added your profile to LinkedIn or not, I'm going to tell you why you should do this - *it will help you build your business.*

Marketing guru David Maister says, "80% of your [marketing] time should be spent on relationship building and 20% spent on your reputation." LI supports both.

LI is not like Facebook. No one can post photos or comments on your profile - privacy already exists. Think of it as a personal relationship between you and your contacts. The only information going out from your profile is what you want it to say. Comments coming into you are to you personally, not your network. You will receive updates from LI on changes to your contacts' profiles which are very helpful to keep you abreast as your contacts increase.

The biggest question is, "*If I create a profile, how will it build my business?*" The answer is by having a profile (and doing nothing else) it will help you be found by those seeking you by name. Not everyone has an effective profile so you want to make it as complete as possible. (LI will rank the completeness of your profile for your view only).

If you have a well thought out profile and *USE* LinkedIn, you will:

- have a profile that will improve your SEO - not only for your name, but your firm, practice area and your reputation
- expand your professional relationships (appropriate people will seek you out)
- set you apart as a thought leader
- invite people in your Groups (people with a common interest) to participate in valuable discussions
- find specific people to whom you want to be introduced
- follow companies and industries in your market
- build strong relationships with those in your network
- promote events in which you participate
- link your presentations or your video to your profile
- be introduced to people you want to know

Now you are thinking, "*This looks time consuming.*" Consider the time spent networking in person. Time is the one thing few of us have in excess. You want to spend your "in-person" networking time very targeted with people and organizations that will help you meet people you want to know. But you can't attend every event, so you must choose which ones are the most important. In-person networking is local. LI networking is global.

LI allows you to participate in Groups that you don't have time to attend; to make connections that are not only in your geographic area but beyond.

*"How do I do this?"* First, have a basic plan: What industries do you work with? What type of people do you want to meet? What kind of problems do you solve? Who do you know that you have lost touch with? Who do you know now? After you maximize your profile, begin by inviting people to your network. It isn't a numbers game; it's a business contact activity. Once you have invited the people you know, the people you used to know (alumni, former colleagues, friends), and people you want to know, you will have rekindled and established stronger relationships. In addition, you will be able to see if your contacts know someone that you may want to meet. Then you can ask your contact for an introduction.

Let's talk about *Companies* (top menu). Go into it and search for companies that you would like to "follow" (meaning stay abreast). There is an amazing amount of information on small and large companies that is all public knowledge but found here in one place. You can follow companies that interest you and receive updates in your LI site. You will know if they have just hired a new IT person, promoted someone or have job openings. Most important is that you should add your firm as a new company. (Directions for this are in the Company Tab.) This will make your firm rise in SEO and provide valuable information that you want people to know about your firm.

*Groups* is where you can distinguish yourself and learn. Groups allows you to belong to your alumni organizations and stay in touch. You can join Groups that are of interest to your practice, your client's needs, and the legal industry. JD Supra is one you should definitely join. You can join groups that represent your client's industry, e.g., land zoning, biotechnology. Or you can join Groups that represent your client's problems, e.g., risk management. And you can create your own Group if you see a need.

Once you join a Group, discussions will come directly to your email and you can quickly see what is being discussed and decide if you want to participate in the discussion. (The more you participate, the more you add value to the Group and go to the top of the Internet search engines.) You can also start a discussion which will allow you to lead it and participate.

You can have information from the media come directly to your LI site (Harvard Business Review, WSJ, etc.) enabling you to stay on top of important topics.

Go ahead. Build or expand your LI profile now. See how LI can help you grow your business. 80% is relationship building – 20% is reputation.