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LinkedIn: Do I Have to? Some Resistance Continues

According to the 2016 American Bar Association Technology Report, *“Taking control of your online presence is a necessity, and there are few better ways to do so than social media. Used carefully, social media can give your firm a voice, amplify your professional reputation, and help drive new business.”*

Yet many attorneys and other professional service providers continue to avoid this reality. Social media and content marketing *are* this new reality but excuses and resistance to change still abound. With so many different social media platforms let’s narrow the focus of this conversation to the #1 platform for business – **LinkedIn**.

According to Forbes, LinkedIn drives 64% of all social media visits to company websites. And 74% of those on LinkedIn use it to research companies and people. Do you really want to offer an incomplete LinkedIn profile when others come to check you out? Yet Forbes also tells us that over 50% of the LinkedIn profiles are not completed or optimized.

When professionals say they do not have time for LinkedIn the reality is it does not have to consume a great deal of time. In fact, once your profile is truly optimized you can spend 10-minutes on most days to be a part of the conversation and to let your other connections know you are in the game and also noticing their posts and articles.

Take a Moment to Learn the Ease of LinkedIn

To begin, simply scroll down through your feed that appears on the Home page when you sign in to LinkedIn. This is also the location of your status update page. Make a few comments to some of the posts from your connections or simply click on “Like” and they will know you read their post and took the time to notice it.

Posting original content on your status update page is part of the process but this can be just a few sentences in which you post about a meeting or event you went to, or an article you read with a comment about it and a link to it. Whenever you post a blog be certain to repurpose it by posting it on LinkedIn and attaching a link to it. Perhaps you are sharing some information your firm posted or information that one of your colleagues posted about a case or other legal discussion.

Have you written an article? You can post fresh content, such as an article, to your profile page and also to your status updates. This is a free way to continue to demonstrate and enhance your expertise on a topic. Yes, business actually happens from LinkedIn.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce it can take between 8 to 20 touch points before someone knows you well enough, understands the depth of your knowledge in a particular area, and feels comfortable enough to want to do business with you. So after your next meeting, speaking opportunity, networking event, this free tool we call LinkedIn can assist you in making numerous touch points demonstrating your knowledge, expertise, and ability to connect and care. Be certain to add new connections after every meeting you attend. Stay top of mind by connecting with your clients, prospective clients and referral sources.

What is all of This Talk about Optimizing Your Profile?

LinkedIn is the go-to social media for business. In fact, Forbes' research tells us that most individuals will go to LinkedIn before going to your firm or company website.

Optimizing your LinkedIn Profile helps others find and learn about you. To optimize your profile start by looking at the following two areas in your profile. There is more to be considered than what is included in this article but this is a great place to start to connect and get noticed on LinkedIn.

Let's start by creating a **clear Profile Headline** (120 character limit) which appears under your name. Do not be generic, rather be specific. Try, "Resolving complex business litigation disputes," rather than "Litigation attorney", or consider "Forensic accountant who makes it happen in court" rather than "Accountant."

1. Do not use the name of your business or firm in your headline. Consider incorporating key search words in your headline and also in your profile. LinkedIn automatically provides the name of your company and your education on the next line under your Profile Headline.

Your **Profile Summary** comes next (2,000 character limit). A well-branded **Profile Summary** helps distinguish you from the competition and allows viewers to get a deeper understanding of *what you do, how you do it, and why you do it*. Generic descriptions just don't work well on LinkedIn. Emphasize your professional skills.

1. Avoid the use of "I." After a few times of seeing that word it begins to sound like "me, me, me and then there is me!" Instead of saying, "I am a forensic accountant. I help companies..." Consider, "As a forensic accountant, we assist companies...." You might also consider writing in the third person such as, "As an attorney who successfully closes M & A transactions, Stacy spends time honing in on each client's business goals before any transaction begins."
 - a. Include key words that clearly describe what you do so that LinkedIn and search engines can connect those searching for your area of practice, experience and expertise. LinkedIn has over 500 million users and therefore is one of the largest search engines in and of itself. And you, as a LinkedIn user, get the enhancement of LinkedIn when folks are searching the web. For most of us, the first thing that comes up under our names on a Google search are several LinkedIn connections, posts, article and the like. This is powerful stuff.
 - b. Modify your Summary from any other online bios or profiles just a bit. Search engines will discount your Summary if it is taken literally from your website bio since that information is already online.

Engage in the LinkedIn Community

Once you have completed the steps above you may want to polish and complete your profile. We will not delve into the details of these next steps but the following aspects of your profile page should be easier to finish once your Headline and Summary are completed.

1. Be sure to upload a professional high resolution color photo.
2. Establish credibility with recommendations.
3. Manage your endorsements.
4. Use the Media section to link to content on your website and blogs. Post presentations, articles and other content on your profile page. It provides the reader with a sense of the depth of your expertise and your distinctions.
5. List education, projects, certifications, volunteering/causes, honors and awards. Use logos, colorful images and photos.
6. Join a few targeted LinkedIn groups.

Conclusion or Can I still Ignore LinkedIn?

We began this article with a quote from the very conservative American Bar Association. It reminds us that we are way past the tipping point for the adoption of social media, especially LinkedIn. It is far from being considered a disruptive technology these days. LinkedIn was launched in 2003 and was adopted by the Innovators who were visionary and saw the possibilities of this technology. Next came the Early Adopters and by 2004 there were over a million users. By 2011 the Early Majority were on board. By 2013 this technology was adopted by the Late Majority. According to the laws of disruptive technologies only the Laggards, defined as critical thinkers who are more comfortable with tradition and the status quo, remain passive about using LinkedIn.

Ignoring social media at this stage would be akin to Late Adopters who avoided disruptive technologies such as email, company websites and branding. The future is now. Get connected through the use of the number one business social media in the world, LinkedIn.

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