



SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LAWYERS

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Facebook turns 12 this month, and most observers agree that social media is here to stay. But many in the legal profession remain skeptical about social media and the role, if any, it should have in their business development efforts. But legal marketing experts agree that social media can be useful—as long as you understand how to use it.

First, the experts emphasize, not all social media sites are the same. They occupy a spectrum of formality or professionalism, and those differences dictate how they can be used for business development. For Robin Hensley, a business development coach and president of Raising the Bar, LinkedIn should be the center of a lawyer's social media efforts. She believes LinkedIn is currently the best social media site available for gathering information about potential clients and referral sources. Hensley recommends spending at least 10 minutes a week keeping up to date with the people in your LinkedIn network. "If your law school classmate is now General Counsel of a major company, you need to know that," she says.

Beyond keeping track of the people you already know, she suggests you use LinkedIn's other features to expand your existing network. If you have a prospective client or referral source in mind, you can use LinkedIn to find out who you already know that has a con-

nection to the prospect. You can then ask your existing contact for an introduction. "It's about relationships," Hensley says.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that the flow of information goes both ways, says consultant John Remsen, president of the Remsen Group. "Anyone thinking about hiring you is Googling you," he says, and that means you have to maximize your own presence on LinkedIn. For law-firm consultant Alvaro Arauz, a good LinkedIn presence starts with having your profile picture taken by a professional photographer.

"It baffles me what some people will use as their profile picture," he says. "No selfies, nothing flirtatious," he warns. But, "it shouldn't look like it was done at Olan Mills either," he adds. If you can't afford a professional photographer, he recommends finding a photography student from SCAD or another art school to take your picture.

There is also an art to writing your LinkedIn profile Arauz says. "Don't make it just a C.V. or a résumé, especially the introduction," he says. Instead, your profile should be in the form of a narrative that tells the reader three things: First, it should

tell the world who you are and what clients you serve. Second, it should illustrate why you are good at what you do. And finally, he says, it should include a personal element, such as a favorite football team, that will allow you to create a human con-





nection with someone you do not already know well.

Once dismissed as a fad for college students, Facebook now has 1.8 billion active users, and its sheer popularity makes it hard to ignore. But Facebook's potential for mixing the personal and professional sides of your life makes it tricky for business development, the experts say. "You have to be very conservative in your sharing if you are going to bring in your professional network," Hensley says. For Remsen, Facebook is better left out of your marketing plan. "Facebook for friends and family, LinkedIn for professional contacts," he says. While LinkedIn and Facebook have both become more popular over time, blogs seem to have become less so. For most lawyers a blog is just too hard to maintain. "Don't commit to a blog unless you are sure you can sustain it," Remsen advises, noting that a dormant blog looks worse than none at all. But even if you can sustain a blog, you need to be sure somebody is actually going to read it. Before you start a blog, Hensley recommends asking a few of your best clients and referral sources if they read blogs and whether they would find your blog useful. If your core audience is not enthusiastic, you are better off devoting your time and effort elsewhere, she says.

If you do start a blog, follow what Remsen says are the three essential qualities of a good blog post: brevity, relevance, and timeliness. "Don't try to write a law review article," he says. Arauz agrees. A blog post should show an entertaining connection between a current event, like a professional athlete's divorce, and your area of legal expertise. In the end though, Arauz says, you need to understand that a blog is not likely to attract a client who does not already know you. It is more likely to be read by a potential client who has been referred to you and is doing her due diligence. Finally, the experts emphasize that no form of social media can replace old fashioned networking. At best, social media is a tool to facilitate real world interactions. "Don't hide behind social media," Remsen advises. ■



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