



## LINKEDIN DEMYSTIFIED

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I've been spending a lot of time on LinkedIn lately. And by a lot, I mean at least an hour or more every day. Many of you who have a profile have noticed, because I've sent you a request to connect. By you, I mean almost *all* of you. And while about 35% of you are deciding what to do about it, or have perhaps already selected to ignore my request, the rest of you have been happy to connect. Thank you for joining in on my social media experiment.

What my experiment is all about is discovering how people — lawyers, clients, and prospects in particular — are using social media. Yes, I know, there is a lot written about it already. A big yawn, right? It could be, but what I have been learning about more is what people *don't* know about using it. And why many people still don't understand why they should use it at all.

**Numbers matter.** The first thing everyone needs to understand is that the actual number of connections you have does indeed matter. I'm not suggesting you link up with a mess of people who have no connection with what you do. I get connection requests all the time from investment counselors, insurance agents, personnel agencies, and many more who would greatly benefit by connecting with me. I ignore almost all, but only after I have thoroughly investigated their profile and connections. If I see something helpful or unique about their service, or particularly insightful in their writings, or even if they "LIKE" things I would not normally see and might find educational, I accept the invitation.

What most people don't understand is that it's not just the number of connections you have which matter, it's the number of connections each of your connections has. In LinkedIn they're referred to as tiers. Those I am directly connected to are 1<sup>st</sup> tier. Those who are directly connected to my 1<sup>st</sup> tier and not to me, are 2<sup>nd</sup> tier, and so forth. Think of a tier as a degree of separation. Recently a member I am *not* connected to by the name of Richard Katz posted the following:

*Let's see how effective LinkedIn really is! I am interested to know how many of the close to 2500 connections in my*

*network are actually seeing this. If you notice this posting, I'd be grateful if you could 'like' it.*

In the 17 days since Katz posted his request, 6,316 people have chosen to LIKE, while another 306 have given him a DISLIKE. Amazingly, 70 people have taken the time to post a comment, including me. Most of those who comment do so to let others know what tier they're in, and where they're located. Many have expressed gratitude for this "experiment" opening their eyes to the true geometric nature of this medium. As you can see from the numbers, lots of tier 2 and 3 individuals have "seen" this message, and taken action. They include a response primarily from the U.S., but the reach has been global.

Let me use my own numbers as a final illustration of this geometric factor. As I write this article, I have 1,272 tier 1 connections. That means that every time I write an update, comment on an article, or LIKE something, a total of 8,761,838+ LinkedIn members will see it. Chances are pretty darn good that when I post something written specifically for my target audience, a lot of them will read it. Even if that means that only 3 out of almost 9 million react, by contacting me, (the most desirable outcome), commenting, (which gives me a chance to start a dialog), or giving me a LIKE, (which then extends the reach even further), it's worth the effort.

**Content matters.** Having a presence on LinkedIn is one thing. Making connections is another. But ultimately you need to engage your connections with content. Content can be created easily by putting a LIKE on things which arrive in front of you and are useful, thought-provoking, or funny. Keep in mind, that the viewpoint as to what is actually useful, thought-provoking, or funny should be from the perspective of your clients and prospects.

Joining discussion groups provides yet another opportunity to stay on top of issues you're concerned about or involved in, and provides opportunities to comment and share, e.g. create more content.

Commenting on and sharing news articles which are relevant is another easy way of providing content. The best, of course, is original thought. If you can write short to-the-point content, this medium was built for you. No one wants a novel. Everyone is looking for a sound bite that educates, elucidates, or entertains, without taking too much time.



Much of my content starts on my blog, and then is reposted efficiently and simultaneously on my FaceBook, LinkedIn, Google+ and Twitter profiles using Hootsuite.

**Your profile matters.** One thing my experiment has revealed is that many of you don't realize that your profile is the first and most memorable impression you make. First, you need a picture. Yes, I'm sorry, you do. LinkedIn statistics reveal that a profile is 7 times more likely to be viewed if it has a photo. In other words, that blank square next to your name just doesn't cut it. After so many "professional" photos were taken of me over the years which friends and family said were terrible, I have finally realized that the current picture on my profile, which was taken by my husband on his cell phone, is far superior. So it doesn't have to cost you a bundle, or even a penny, to get a decent profile picture.

As I perused thousands of PA attorney profiles, I found so many typos and grammatical errors, it was actually horrifying. Your profile is and should be constructed with the same care and diligence as your business card, web site, or letterhead. Even more disturbing were the large number of blank profiles. Literally blank. Just a name, and maybe a firm name. And the vast majority that looked like a bare-bones c.v.

This isn't rocket science, folks. You don't need to hire an expert to create a great profile. (Although there are definitely advantages to be had from having someone really good at it help write your descriptions.) LinkedIn provides all the structure. You just need to fill in the blanks. The SUMMARY at the top should be utilized to its fullest by you in describing the extent and depth of your experience and practice. Remember that the R.P.C. apply to your profile. Be careful about using words like "expert" "specialize" and so forth unless they qualify under the Rules.

For so many of you, the EXPERIENCE section is barebones, when it doesn't have to be. You should show more than a firm name and dates. Describe what you did there. If you worked with particularly talented or well-known people, mention it. If you handled particularly noteworthy cases, mention them. At a minimum, describe what areas you practiced in.

Don't forget to expand on your CERTIFICATIONS and/or EDUCATION, where appropriate. Don't just list where you went to school and when you graduated. If you distinguished yourself, share it. Remember, this is not a place to be modest. While the Rules don't let you mislead or be untruthful, they do not restrict you from blowing your own horn with objective facts.

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Think about clients and prospects. When you have a chance, take a look at Kevin O'Keefe's *Real Lawyers Have Blogs* post entitled "7 ways for lawyers and law firms to use LinkedIn more effectively." Lots of good stuff, but in particular his introduction which states in part:

*For law firms and lawyers an effective LinkedIn presence is as important as a telephone. Don't buy that? Well, it's more important than a Martindale-Hubbell listing was, something we all believed critical and for which we paid big dollars for decades. Big meaning over \$200,000 in the case of large firms. With its almost 200 million professionals, LinkedIn is the largest professional networking environment in the world.*

At one time you weren't a "player" if you weren't in Martindale-Hubbell. And that created an incredibly unlevel playing field for mid and small-size firms. Whereas, a solo attorney is on a level playing field in LinkedIn. It costs you nothing but some time and diligence to have a superb profile and content.

**Clients, prospects, and the rest of the world on LinkedIn.** LinkedIn boasted over 187 million registered users in more than 200 countries as of November, 2012. Membership grows by approximately two new members every second. About half of its members are in the United States. LinkedIn also supports formation of interest groups, which provides a topic-based moderated discussion area. There are over 1,248,000 such groups. LinkedIn is growing rapidly as a resource for employers and job seekers. There are over 100,000 jobs currently listed. Sophisticated recruiters purchase search packages to hone in on the most qualified candidates.

Here are a few interesting statistics for you to ponder:

- there are over 25 million LinkedIn profiles viewed every day
- over 69 of the top 100 Fortune 500 Companies search for services and people on LinkedIn
- virtually all Fortune 500 executives are said to have profiles on LinkedIn, and most of the Fortune 100 executives as well
- 80% of LinkedIn users influence business decisions at their company



- consumers tend to trust information received from social networking sites over other forms of advertising, with LinkedIn being the leader in consumer trust; being trusted by as high as 82% of consumers according to one source
- over 40% of members hold a title of Manager, Director, Owner, Chief Officer, or Vice President
- according to one reliable source, (Quantcast), in 2011, PA ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among all states in number of unique searches. CA is first, followed by NY, TX, IL, and FL.
- Demographics on industry breakdown is 18.7% higher education; 13.9% information technology and services; 11.8% financial services; 10.9% retail; 8.9% computer software; 8.4% marketing and advertising; 8.2% hospital and healthcare; 6.5% telecommunications

Here's another interesting fact I've discovered during my experiment. LinkedIn is a 24x7 medium. I find that people are reviewing my profile and responding to my requests to connect literally around the clock. However, for the highest level of attention, re-posts and LIKES, you want to add content first thing in the morning.

Some of you definitely "get it" and I am proud to know so many of you in PA who do. For example, LinkedIn has a place where you can show your expertise by answering questions. That's a frequent starting point for someone seeking legal services. Yes, I know that answering questions can create landmines concerning UPL, inadvertent formation of client relationships, etc. But for the wary, a simple one-sentence disclaimer can't take care of the risk. The "up side" of answering questions is that the more you answer, the higher your ranking, similar to Avvo. Under the topic "Law and Legal Experts" the top 5 names returned to me included, in this order:

Nancy Lanard  
Lisa Solomon  
Sharmill McKee  
Ann Begler  
Frederic Wilf

All except Lisa Solomon ("The Billable Hour Co.") are PA lawyers. All are 1<sup>st</sup> tier connections of mine. Out of over almost 1,300 connections, most of whom are

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attorneys, only 5 appeared as experts when searching a legal topic area. Which further illustrates how LinkedIn enables the cream to rise to the top. Who knows, your ideal future client may be posing a question or searching for certain words in a profile as we speak. Will your name rise to the top?

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