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11 Tips for Building Your Online Brand with LinkedIn

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It's no secret that social media has transformed the way the world communicates. And LinkedIn specifically has revolutionized the professional branding landscape both for individuals and companies. But if you think LinkedIn is just for job seekers, think again. From keeping you up to date on industry trends, to staying in touch with someone you met at a conference, to sharing news of a big case win, to spreading awareness about a nonprofit you support, LinkedIn has proven to be multi-functional and valuable for all professionals.



With more than a half billion users on LinkedIn, having an active presence on this social media platform is just as important as in-person networking – and it's easier and more efficient. Think of LinkedIn as your digital reputation. What you put on (or don't put on) defines you in the online world. In fact, your LinkedIn profile often appears in the top 3 Google results when someone searches for you online, which is why it is important to keep your profile in tip-top shape.

While the value is clearly there, it can still be overwhelming to think about adding LinkedIn updates between your 3pm court filing and that stack of trial dates to calendar. But just like you wouldn't show up to work in your pajamas, you shouldn't leave your LinkedIn profile looking sloppy, incomplete, or worse, blank. Whether you're just starting or you've had a LinkedIn profile for a few years, but never actually really used it, it's time to put your best foot forward and start building your online brand today. Here are a few pointers to get you started on LinkedIn.

A Professional Photo is A Must

Steer clear of using casual photos (no selfies, vacation photos, etc.). If you have a firm headshot, use that. If not, don't fret. All you need is a friend, professional clothing, a smartphone/camera, and a smile.

Create a strong first impression with your Profile Summary

This is one of the first things visitors view. A good way to start is to take an inventory of all that you did last year (review the clients you worked with, the services you provided, your biggest cases/wins (keeping in mind confidentiality), community involvement, articles and blogs, awards, etc.) and then incorporate the noteworthy items in your summary. Remember to use descriptive keywords for searchability and show your personality too. This is also a great place to add photos that speak to your experience, expertise, and community involvement. Don't forget to add your contact information to your profile (surprisingly this is a common thing people forget to do).

Connections do matter

When building your network, remember that your connections are public to your friends and sometimes friends of friends (barring any specific privacy settings). Only connect with people you know and respect. Start with co-workers, former classmates, friends, and individuals within your nonprofit or trade organizations. From here, LinkedIn will suggest people for you to connect with in "People You May Know" section. Those you already connected with are also great resources. Take a peek at their connections to see if you may know any of the same people.

Always be cautious when using social media and keep in mind potential conflicts of interest. Also, do not feel like you have to accept invitations from everyone. If you receive a connection invite from someone you don't know, I suggest checking them out and even messaging them to determine if they align with your professional goals. Think quality over quantity.

Content Content Content

If you have written blogs or articles or have participated in seminars, include them into the "Publications" section of your LinkedIn profile. This content helps establish you as an expert in your field. Be sure to add hyperlinks to the content if it is live online. The easier you make it, the more likely people will take the time to read it.

Yes, I have skills

Add any relevant skills or certifications that you have acquired. These further strengthen your status as an expert in the legal profession. When you list your skills be sure to change the order of your skills to have the most important skills for your profession on the top.

Show off what you do outside the office

Add the organizations you are involved with to your profile and include some background information about your connection with them. Not only does it provide more insight about you, it also helps spread awareness about the cause or organization you are passionate about.

Take time to browse LinkedIn

Following groups, companies, or influencers that align with your professional interests and goals is a simple way to stay in the loop about industry updates or opportunities. Not sure who or what to follow? Start with the basics – your alma mater, nonprofits you are involved with, trade organizations, and news publications. Taking a peek at who your colleagues, clients, and even competitors are following is also helpful. Be aware: who and what you follow is public knowledge in the "interests" section of your profile.

Don't shy away from automatic notifications

Many people ask how they may turn off the setting that shares any profile changes you make with your network. If you are changing dated information, by all means turn off that setting, but if you are adding something noteworthy (e.g. a promotion, firm change, etc.), automatic notification to your network is the way to go. It politely pings people of your news and keeps you on top of their minds. It is also good to check the box to receive automatic notifications from your connections. This way, you won't miss a chance to congratulate someone on a work anniversary or other news.

Alexa, set a weekly reminder to check my LinkedIn

Download the LinkedIn mobile app and browse while waiting in line at the grocery store or perhaps you prefer scrolling through your feed in the morning while sipping coffee. It's up to you, but either way, it takes less than 5 minutes, so just do it.

Keep up with your firm's LinkedIn page

Follow your firm's LinkedIn page. This is the single easiest way to share news and company updates with your network.

Practice the golden rule

Visit profiles of your colleagues, clients, and friends to see what is new and interact with them. Consider sending them a quick message or sharing the article they wrote. Pro tip: clicking the "See all" in the "Activity" portion of their profiles shows you their posts, likes, and articles for the last 2 years. Scrolling through this feed may give you an idea of how to start a conversation or make a connection. Also, take time to endorse skills or write a recommendation. Your contacts are likely to return the favor.

It's time to create a LinkedIn profile or update your current profile because it does matter! If questions arise, remember to utilize your resources such as your marketing team, technology team, and good ole Google and YouTube. Not sure how to update your profile picture without sending a notification to your 500 connections? Just ask.

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