

LinkedIn: Facebook for Lawyers

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WHY LINK UP ON LINKEDIN? LinkedIn is the social media site of choice for professionals in general and lawyers in particular (www.Linkedin.com). As of November 2010, LinkedIn had over 85 million users with executive representation from every Fortune 500 corporation. As a law student, you can build your professional reputation while still in law school by maintaining and managing your LinkedIn profile. Ever wonder what to do with those business cards you collected at a networking event? LinkedIn can help you manage your connections, enabling you to keep in touch throughout each step in your career — from job search, to career development, to client development, and more.

The power of LinkedIn comes from being able to see and connect with your connections' contacts. On LinkedIn, six degrees of separation become reduced to just three degrees of separation. Thus, being introduced to a potential employment lead is as easy as connecting through a friend of a friend.

GETTING STARTED. Considering several important factors can help you create a social media strategy that can apply to all your social media tools, including Facebook and Twitter. These include *Profile*, *People*, and *Presence*, some of the factors Amanda Ellis outlines in-depth in *The 6Ps of the BIG 3™ for Job-Seeking JDs* (Something Different Publishing, Inc., 2010).

- **Profile:** Create a strong profile. Make sure your profile is 100% filled out. A professional photograph, preferably a close-up head shot, is a must because profiles without one are easily overlooked. Then personalize your vanity URL with your name (key if you have a common name). Write a summary statement that sells your skills. For guidance check out profiles of lawyers you admire in the jobs you want. Draft a summary full of key words in your industry. For instance, if you want to be a litigator, your headline might say: "Advanced Moot Court Team Member and Certified Law Clerk Advocating for the Rights of Others." A key step toward 100% completion is to obtain recommendations from others. This becomes important when applying for jobs listed on LinkedIn; some of them require you have LinkedIn recommendations in order to apply. For more

on how to obtain 100% profile completeness see: <http://tinyurl.com/26z9zug>

- **People:** Once you've filled out your profile, start connecting! Connect with fellow law students, professors, undergraduate classmates, high school, family, friends, former co-workers, anyone in your email list, and professionals in and outside of the law. Be sure to personalize your [LinkedIn invitation](#). The default invitation, a generic, "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn," says nothing about you or how you know the connection. Instead, write a few words reminding your contact of how you connected or who introduced you, or sharing another similar memory trigger. You can also grow your network by joining "[Groups](#)." Most undergraduate institutions, law schools, and corporations have groups. As a group member, you are allowed to see full profiles of group members and contact them directly. Additionally, you can search specific practice areas, employers, cities, or other parameters within the group.
- **Presence:** Stand out by creating a [personal brand](#) for yourself. How? Take an active role on LinkedIn! Update your [Status Bar](#), found on your LinkedIn home page, at least a few times a week. Post items of interest to the legal profession, events you are attending, cases you are reading. Use it to announce good news such as winning your moot court argument. With the LinkedIn and Twitter [integration](#), you update your status on LinkedIn and Twitter at the same time. Become known in your "Groups" by submitting or answering questions, helping others by posting job links or industry articles, or by joining discussions. Make it a point to engage your connections at least once a week. For instance, when you receive the weekly (or daily) update about your connections, comment on links posted, send out congratulations for promotions or other career successes, or use it as a reminder to email a colleague.

ONLINE ETIQUETTE. In addition to the excellent online etiquette guide created by [LinkedIn](#), here are a few guidelines particularly applicable to the legal profession.

Do:

- **Be Honest.** Your online reputation will follow you in real life. Thus, be sure your online information matches your offline resume as employers often check the consistency and accuracy of both.

- *Be Responsible.* Oren Michels, CEO of Mashery.com, explains, "People tend to interpret having the 'right' to express themselves online as implying a lack of consequences when they say stupid things." As a lawyer, you need to take responsibility for what you write, and exercise good judgment and common sense.
- *Be Professional.* LinkedIn is geared toward professionals, so put your best professional e-footprint forward. Be a forward thinker — consider the lawyer you want to be and start acting like one now. Thus, unlike Facebook where you can share links to your favorite funniest YouTube videos, think twice before adding such a link to your LinkedIn Status Bar.
- *Be Ethical.* Along the lines of professionalism, remember that as a member of the legal profession, you are subject to a code of ethics such as keeping attorney-client secrets. So before sharing successes online about current cases or other client matters, make sure the information is public and is not confidential or proprietary. This also means respecting copyrights and fair use, giving credit where credit is due, and citing to original sources and references directly.
- *Be Private.* Keep personal thoughts and private information private. Discussing private issues on a public forum could jeopardize your personal and work relationships. For instance, commenting publicly about how you feel about a certain judge or a ruling could be viewed as unprofessional by employers for demonstrating a lack of judgment. If you show lack of judgment online, an employer may extrapolate this to your behavior in person. Note that [forty-five percent](#) of employers now screen social media profiles.

Don't:

- *Get Fired.* It has [happened](#). LinkedIn is not Facebook, so remember to keep your audience in mind; employers are watching. You don't want to be "[dooced](#)" (an Internet expression meaning to lose one's job for something you've said on a blog or online) so think before your post and consider whether it can be said publicly or is better off not being said at all. Additionally, if you are using LinkedIn while at work, your productivity may be called into question if it looks as if you are spending more time "social networking" than you are actually "working."
- *Be Controversial.* This is not the venue to express political opinions, religious views, or other items that a career counselor would advise you to refrain from posting on your resume.

- *Abuse Your Network.* This is the fastest way to lose friends and colleagues, as well as to stain your professional reputation. For ten great tips on how to network on LinkedIn as a professional, read this [article](#) regarding online etiquette.

JOB SEARCHING ON LINKEDIN. The power of LinkedIn stems from your ability to connect with others who may be in a position to help you find a job, obtain a client, or simply get a referral to a good doctor or restaurant. LinkedIn as a job-search tool can offer you access to people who may be able to get your resume in front of decision makers and to get the inside scoop on the company culture, the job, and even interviewers. How? When searching for a job, use the "[Advanced Search](#)" tool on LinkedIn to discover who in your network knows someone at that company. You can also type in the name of the firm, along with the name of your law school, to locate alumni who might be able to assist you. You may find that you are directly connected to someone in the company, or connected via a 2nd or 3rd degree. If you are not directly connected, you can ask for an "[Introduction](#)" from your mutual connection to forward your introduction to the 2nd or 3rd degree connection.

For additional resources on using LinkedIn for a job search see:

- [10 Ways to Use LinkedIn to Find a Job](#)
- [YouTube](#): How to Find a Job Using LinkedIn

LEARN MORE. LinkedIn's Learning Center offers excellent online tutorials on how to use LinkedIn professionally — see <http://learn.linkedin.com/>. The Learning Center contains user guides tailored to specific audiences such as job seekers, lawyers, and those interested in developing business. Additionally, [free webinars](#) are offered with advanced registration required. An excellent book for learning more is *The 6Ps of the BIG 3™ for Job-Seeking JDs* (Something Different Publishing, Inc., 2010).

MOVE FROM ONLINE TO FACE TIME. Remember that LinkedIn is a tool that can help you connect, help you develop clients, or help you find a job. But the best way to use LinkedIn is to move relationships from online to in-person. Fostering connections in person is still the best way to get a job. A great way to build and connect with your network is to have lunches with at least one or two of your LinkedIn connections on a monthly basis. In other words, cultivate your relationships and your networks before you need help. Keep in touch with holiday cards, birthday notes, and by sending articles of interest. This way, you are less likely to feel that you are "using" people only when you need them!

If you are on Facebook, you already know how to network on a personal level. With LinkedIn, you can take your social networking skills to the next level and join the world of business professionals.