

# Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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### Webinar Re-cap: LinkedIn for Lawyers with Nathan Egan Part III

On Wednesday, December 8th, the ILN offered a webinar with [Freesource's Nathan Egan](#) on "LinkedIn for Lawyers." Because of all the great information in the webinar, I have broken this up into a few posts, with [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) being published last week.

#### If You Build it, They Will Come

Nathan said that one of the common objections for lawyers using LinkedIn is that they're too busy to do any of this, let alone "build a network." But he assured the audience that they already have a network, built over their careers. They don't need to build a new network on LinkedIn, just capture the existing network.



He said that LinkedIn does their best to automate this process, allowing users to upload their contacts from an email program. Users can have very few connections and in as little as an hour, send out 100 meaningful connection requests to their network. In the next day or so, those people will connect with you and you'll have a nice network.

Nathan said that once users have built the network of people they know, continuing to develop it becomes a case of management over time. It should integrate with your work flow, if you've set LinkedIn as your home page, and as you see new connection opportunities, you can pick them off one at a time.

Nathan said that as a best practice, they encourage their clients to upload their email contacts about once a quarter, so that every three months they're connecting with potential clients. He added that connecting with people on LinkedIn is a good way to solidify a relationship and make sure that you're top of mind. For example, if you emailed someone three months ago, but reconnect on LinkedIn, it may turn out that they have a referral opportunity for you and wouldn't have thought of you otherwise.

#### Groups - Another Way to Connect

Nathan said that in terms of leveraging groups for business development, they've found that for lawyers, alumni networks for universities or institutions where they've gotten their law degrees can be tremendous opportunities to get referrals and conflict business. Inside of LinkedIn, there is an incredible number of groups (almost 800,000), and they're all their own niche communities.

He used the example of someone who went to Temple Law School, saying that if you type in Temple Law in the search box, you'll see several groups being populated that have Temple alumni networks. Nathan also suggested typing in Temple University to find their group, which may have a sub-group specifically for lawyers.

By going into these groups, users reconnect with classmates, can update people on what they're up to and what their practice is. Groups also present an opportunity to connect with people in your target market. Nathan used Philadelphia as an example, and said that small business owners in Philadelphia wouldn't be joining legal groups - they'd be joining small business groups.

So a user could search for Philadelphia and see all types of groups, such as the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. By joining a group like this, a user who has developed his or her profile the right way is embedding their profile, with rich context, relationships, previous successes, into the group. Now group members can see this and potentially help that user or ask for their help.

Nathan added that joining groups also allows users to send messages to other group members for free. One of the limitations of LinkedIn is that users only have the ability to communicate with certain sectors of the LinkedIn community unless they upgrade. But if Joe Smith is someone you'd like to talk to, and he's out of your network, you can join a group that he's in, go back to his profile once you're in the group, and send him a message for free internally. Maybe offer to grab coffee the next time you're in a mutually agreeable area. Groups are a very powerful communication platform.

Nathan recommended coming up with a game plan for what groups to join, and said that as a best practice, join groups of your professional affiliations and alumni networks, as well as your target markets. He advised not just associating with other lawyers, but associating with the economic buyers who could potentially be using your services.

In terms of the webinar, this was all that Nathan could cover in a short time, so he suggested that the attorneys explore groups on their own as well. He said that they should look both at other lawyers and at those outside of the industry to see how they're using LinkedIn in order to help them find the style that works for each of them.

## **Account Settings**

Nathan then went into the Account Settings in LinkedIn, saying that this enables user to control their own experience with LinkedIn, as well as what the world sees. He said that the settings button is in the top right hand corner, under your name.

Once you click on it, it takes you to a comprehensive dashboard of settings - Nathan said that when he started working for LinkedIn, there were only five settings, including "Delete Your Account." Now, it's become very comprehensive.

One of the settings that might be useful to the audience is the ability to control how you receive messages. Nathan said that often people join groups and aren't happy with the amount of email they get from them - maybe they're just looking for access to the group members. So they have the option to shut off the group's ability to send emails to them.

There might be other groups that send valuable information by email, so LinkedIn offers the ability to customize delivery options by group.

There are also important privacy settings in terms of controlling the experience, such as profile views. This controls whether another member of the LinkedIn community knows if you've looked at their profile. Nathan said that for some lawyers, this would be an attractive feature, because you want people to know you've looked at their profile. It can trigger a page view back to your profile.

For example, if you look at a small business owner in the Philadelphia area, they might click to see who's viewed their profile. If they see that a lawyer with a certain core competency has looked at their profile, and the timing is right for them to need this type of lawyer, that can result in a business opportunity. Nathan said that looking at someone's profile can be an opportunity for a conversation to start.

He said that it's also possible to control your profile and status updates, and suggested that when working on updating your profile information, you shut off the status update feature. He recommended shutting this off, then updating specialties, core competencies, etc. to make your profile shine, and then turning the setting back on. That way, when your status is updated, it's with meaningful marketing updates that go out to the world.

Nathan said that if you build your profile first, then build your network, you'll drive page views to a meaningful profile. But if you do it in reverse, you'll be sending a lot of traffic to a sub-optimized profile that doesn't have good marketing information on it or the ability to create a referral.

There are a number of other settings that the time constraints of the webinar kept us from getting into, but Nathan suggested the audience read through them and decide what works for them. He noted that contact settings allow you to decide whether you want people to be able to look through your first degree connections - he said for his settings, the answer is yes, because that has value. But for some lawyers, they might not want other lawyers to see who their connection is at a big company. Nathan said this is an individual decision.

Right now, though, this is set up to be an "all or nothing" feature on LinkedIn. He anticipates that LinkedIn will customize this down the line, so that users can dynamically show people only certain components of their personal networks, but right now, it's all or nothing.

Nathan said that they also get a lot of questions about whether or not upgrading your account is necessary, and what they suggest is first maximizing your usage of the free account before upgrading. He agreed that there are certain situations where upgrading for a month might make sense, perhaps if you want to get access to a potential decision maker inside of an account and you can't or don't have the time to use your network to triangulate on an economic buyer.

There are workarounds for upgrading, as Nathan previously mentioned, such as joining a group so that you can communicate with someone without upgrading. However, considering the lives of a busy billing lawyer, who's also tasked with business development, upgrading might make sense - Nathan said that he couldn't make a universal recommendation here, but generally speaking, there is so much value in the free version that they encourage people to start there.

## **Company Pages**

The last thing Nathan showed the audience was company pages, saying that LinkedIn recently completed a tremendous overhaul of these pages. He said that under "companies," LinkedIn sorts your network based on your connectivity to companies. You can see your first degree connections to all of these companies, which you may not realize you have.

This first degree can be very powerful, but Nathan said if you've already tapped out your first degree contacts for business, you could then go to your second degree list. He said if he was calling Bank of America, for example, it's much better to use his LinkedIn connections there than to cold call them.

He added that it also acts as a great marketing opportunity for the audience's firms, particularly since LinkedIn overhauled the pages to give away access and functionality that they were originally charging for. Nathan said that you can really position your firms here - use keywords, tell the story of the firm and what you're good at, include the firm's logo. He showed his company page, and pointed out the tabs at the top that allow you to add careers (a feature that requires a paid upgrade), services, and see rich and deep analytics on who has been viewing the page.

Nathan said that if you can classify core practice areas as services or products, you have the ability to market them here as well - you can add them as an actual product, and even put a logo for that specific product or service. When you click on it, you then have the ability to associate the right product and service with the right contact at your firm.

He showed how his co-founder, Patrick, had associated the members of Freesource to their company page, so that when people click on it they can see who they should be connecting to. Nathan said this is a powerful opportunity to connect a potential economic buyer to the right contact within the business.

Nathan also showed that you can use keywords in the company description, and said that using the marketing keywords that you're already using on your corporate website can help you meet your business objectives because LinkedIn has high credentials with Google and other search platforms who are looking to social media as a way of validating expertise.

## **Question & Answer**

Alan mentioned to the audience that the ILN does have a [members' only group on LinkedIn](#), which he invited them to join. There was one audience question from [Michael Slan](#) of [Fogler Rubinoff](#), who said that he tries to protect the people in his network from his competitors. He said he sometimes gets requests from lawyers in other firms to connect, and he

typically refuses them because he wants to keep his client contacts confidential. He asked Nathan whether this was common, or if he should be handling this another way.

Nathan said that he agreed that if there is concern over this type of activity, it makes sense not to connect to them at all. He said if they do accept these contacts, they have the ability to allow that competitive lawyer into their network while shutting off their ability to browse their connections.

Michael said that there is value for him to allow his contacts and clients to see who his other contacts and clients are, so that they know they aren't the only ones who he has a relationship with in his area of practice. However, he doesn't want to leave it open to competitors.

Nathan said in this case, because it is currently all or nothing, his advice would be not to make the connection. He suggested instead joining groups that could give the same community connectivity without allowing those contacts to see your list of connections.

Alan asked whether Nathan knew the breakdown of LinkedIn users for the geographical regions around the world and Nathan said that of the 86 million professionals on LinkedIn, about 50% of them are in the US, and 50% are abroad, with high growth in Europe, Asia, Australia and South America. LinkedIn is opening offices in those regions to drive this growth and their goal for 2011 is to have 200 million professionals in the community, which would be a truly international presence.

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