

# The Missing Link

By Sharon Berman

If you're like many lawyers, you know someone who already has a profile on LinkedIn, the social networking site geared toward professionals. You may even have a LinkedIn profile, but are wondering how to use LinkedIn as a rainmaking tool.

The purpose of social professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn, is no different in than any other kind of professional networking: It's to build long lasting relationships.

You're looking to identify and connect with those people whom it makes sense to build a relationship with, but who may not be within your existing circle of professional contacts. You can expand your network of contacts by pinpointing those people in your existing circle who are also in the network of someone you'd like to get to know further.

While marketing may be about relationships, it's also a numbers game. You have to cull through many potential contacts to find the ones where there's a real and potentially profitable fit. Leveraging your existing network's network of contacts on LinkedIn exponentially increases the number of potential business contacts you can have and develop.

Social networking is not a magic marketing bullet. It's another element in the mix of tactics you want to consider for your marketing, such as your Web site, speaking, writing, etc. However, like other tactics, you'll need to decide where it fits in your strategic priorities, and how much time to devote to it. Now is the time to explore its potential, and plant your social networking flag.

What can you do with LinkedIn? Here's an array of possibilities.

You can expand your network; you can do research on target clients or opposing counsel; you can reconnect with colleagues; you can find people who can introduce you to the people you'd like to meet; you can join groups of users who share similar interests; you can recruit; you can look for a new position; you can send regular daily updates about what you're working on — which is a powerful way to alert your existing contacts of services you offer that they may not know about. Similarly, as your existing contacts add new contacts, you're alerted by daily updates, opening all sorts of possibilities to monitor your colleagues and competitors.

Every time one of your contacts edits his or her profile, you're given notice, and the same type of notice is given to your contacts when you update your profile.

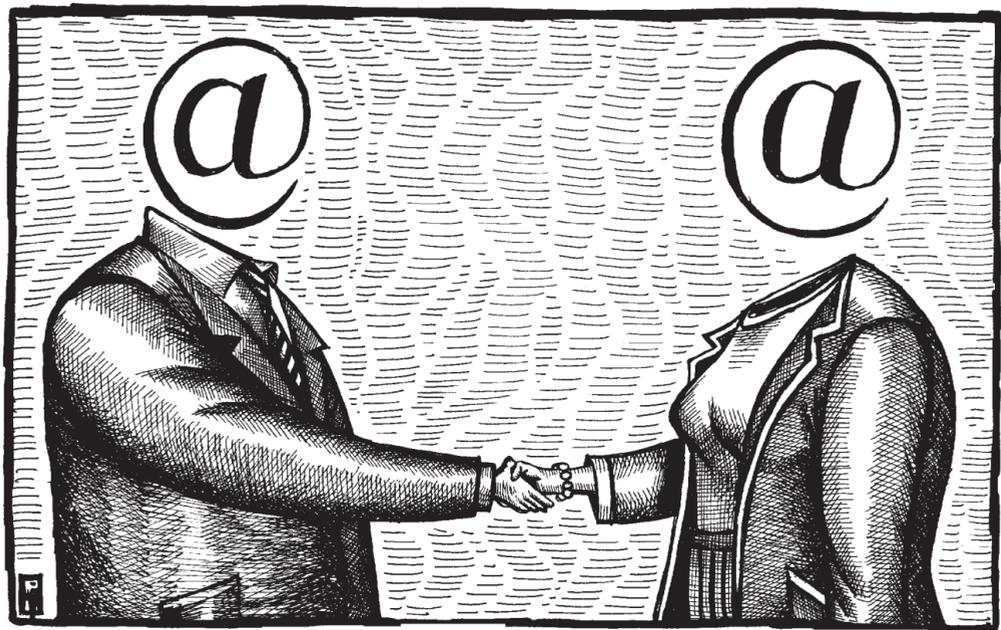
If you are already a member of LinkedIn, begin by first critically revisiting your own profile. Often, profiles are hastily posted without a lot of thought, and without a defined goal, but what you say, and how you say it will make a world of difference in your success on the service. LinkedIn keeps track for you in terms how complete your profile is. The system encourages you to make it complete as possible, which is to your benefit, so that you are all the more searchable, and more importantly, findable.

You are allowed upwards of 2,000 characters, including spaces, in your main profile. Make the most of the room by strategically describing your services and offerings. Think about keywords and phrases that prospects would use to search for someone in your practice area, then work them into your profile.

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Continue by revisiting the balance of your profile, keeping in mind what you want other professionals to know about what you do, and the search terms they might use. If you have a standalone blog, you can link it to your profile page to expand your content.

Judiciously building your network on LinkedIn is very important because following the six degrees of separation,



every connection you add expands those you can potentially connect with, and who can connect with you. Be cautious because the whole purpose is to make valuable connections, but that goes both ways. You don't want to add anyone to your network if you wouldn't feel comfortable making an introduction for them to someone who trusts you.

Joining groups is another way to extend your network and be visible on LinkedIn. In the box at the top of the screen where it says "search people," there's a pull-down menu to search groups, companies, etc. There is a myriad of groups covering every possible practice area, and you don't have to be talking only to other lawyers. But to maximize the return for you, you have to be visible. One way to do this is to post or answer discussion questions and participate in the conversation.

If you don't find a LinkedIn group that addresses a particular area you're involved in, consider opening your own group, and then inviting appropriate contacts to join. They will then invite their own appropriate contact to join, as well. The profile of every member is available to every other group member, and that's a powerful basis to suggest direct linking.

You can also maintain visibility by keeping your profile up-to-date and updating it often, especially by responding to the "What Are You Working On" box. Every one who views your profile will see your response to this question, and everyone in your network will get an update.

On LinkedIn, the system automatically determines who are the contacts of your

contacts. Where the system says that a person is a "2nd" it means that you are connected to that person by someone in your group who knows them. The "3rd" means that you are connected to someone who knows someone who knows them. As you expand your linkage, your 2nd level contacts can grow exponentially.

LinkedIn will show you contacts up to the 2nd level, meaning it will show you the names of the people who know the person you want to know. If someone in your network knows someone (Level 2) who knows someone (Level 3) who knows your contact, you will not see who those people are at the third level. You will have to approach someone you know to see who is willing to approach someone they know to make an introduction to the person you'd like to meet.

So how do you use LinkedIn to get introduced to someone in your target market? For example, let's say you want to talk with the general counsel of a target company about doing an in-house MCLE presentation. Perhaps you've already tried a letter or an e-mail, but no response. You could drop it there, or you can check to see if the GC is on LinkedIn. If the GC is a LinkedIn member, but not in your extended network, you can send an InMail - an e-mail through LinkedIn — directly to the GC. He or she may still not respond, but it's another channel of trying to reach someone.

If the GC is not on LinkedIn, but other professionals from the company may have a profile. One of the contacts could be in your network's network, or even one degree further removed, and you can tell them

about your presentation and why it could be useful for the GC and ask for an introduction. The GC may or may not be interested, but may be more likely to pay attention because of the introduction.

Let's say you have a meeting with a potential client, and you've done your due diligence on the company, but want to find out more about your contact in particular. If someone in your extended network knows that person, perhaps they'd be willing to give you a heads up on the person's likes, dislikes, etc. — information that might help you make a better connection.

No discussion of social networking is complete without the subject of privacy. You can select different degrees of privacy on most social networking sites, such as LinkedIn. For example, you can choose whether anyone viewing your profile can also view your network. Among other selections, you can also choose whether you're identified by name when you view someone else's profile.

Like all networking sites generally accessible to the public, remember that what you write can be seen by your friends, and your competitors. Consider anything you post as public information.

There's a lot of potential in social networks, and users are pushing the envelope every day. Social networking is here to stay. So plant your flag, show you're in the know and grab the opportunity to lead.

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## As Training and Mentoring Break Down, Is Being a BigLaw Associate Worth It?

By Edwin Reeser

The dual season of law school admission notices and graduations is about to begin, against a backdrop of historic terminations of lawyers, especially associates and staff, in BigLaw. Let's take a very pragmatic look at what the current crisis in the profession of BigLaw is about, and what it may mean for those who are considering a professional career as an attorney.

Law schools are degree-granting institutions. They give degrees in exchange for the commitment of a lot of your money and time. Graduate education programs tend to be robust revenue generators for such institutions. That this is so is supported by the fact that even in robust economic times there are many more graduates of law school than there are positions available to absorb them. That graduation number is many multiples greater than the number of positions available in BigLaw. Arguably in 2009, with the number of terminations being pursued, there is no real present need for anyone coming out of law school for the National Law Journal 250.

Law schools do very little to properly prepare students for being a lawyer in the real world. They don't have to with admissions being what they are.

There is limited correlation between law school pedigree, law school class rank and your ultimate success as a lawyer. Ask the recruitment teams at any big law firm and they will tell you as much. Ask yourself from your own experience in law school. There are probably more than a few of your comrades on law review that are wonderfully bright, but have the practical judgment of a hamster, and you would no more trust them with taking your garbage to the curb than you would jump out of a fourth story window ... let alone imagine them meeting with a client.

Why is it important to graduate from a top 20 law school? BigLaw firms don't want to waste time and money searching out the talent. They can demand to interview only

the top 10 to 15 percent of the top 20 schools and fill the positions they have available. Then sort the rest out over the next few years. It is gruesomely inefficient and 20 percent per year attrition is the average for BigLaw associates. To date the huge flow of talent eager to join the party has made this type of hiring the standard operating procedure.

The overwhelming majority of law students who are interested in big firms don't even know for sure that they want to be lawyers for the rest of their working careers. They do know for sure that they have student loans to pay off, in many instances more than \$100,000, and if they have the choice to work for an AmLaw 200 firm at \$160k plus benefits, three years before the mast will take care of a good chunk of that. Many associates then reassess their position and career options.

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The fact is that today, relative to lateral hires of partners by firms, very few associates ever make promotion to partner in the firm they start with. The training and mentoring model has broken down almost completely.

Why do law school career placement officers push and tout big firms as places to go to the students? They get judged on placement performance for their own jobs. Placement performance is not

based on finding the perfect fit for the students or their job satisfaction and long-term career opportunities or career outcomes. It is the number of "prestigious" firms that reached out and took cannon fodder from the law school.

For the hours worked, intellect inherent, and character imbued, lawyers can make a lot more money for themselves doing something other than law. Why do it? Why are you as a student particularly and especially suited to going to the big firm? Because you are smart? Because you work hard? Mules work hard and are very smart — try again. Because you want the money? More money doing something else with those brains and work ethic of yours is almost assured in business over even the intermediate term — bad decision. Is it the prestige? Hardly. Next to used car salesmen, what other professions are held in as much contempt in the court of public opinion? Is it the intellectual stimulation? Please, get real. It is not that hard. If you are still struggling with the intellectual parts of this profession after 10 years in daily private or in-house corporate practice, try not to let anybody else know.

What is it that is going to get your motor running, to keep you coming back every day, day after day — looking forward to the job? Think about it hard and what makes you tick, because if you don't know, this could be a long journey either without end, or a sudden and painful end.

Perhaps you conclude that it is because you will be an important decision-maker and power broker. Let us test that with one question. Do you have in your purse or your pocket the equivalent of one hour of your own time at standard billable rates? Associate or partner? If not, then you are what the rest of us in the profession truly are. You are a servant. An "on call 24-7" servant. Oh, you may think you are better placed than a plumber, but there are two material differences you need to recognize: You dress a lot better than the plumber; and plumbers get to take their vacations.



The decisions and power you wield are lent to you, entrusted to you by the wealth and power of those who engage your services. But they are not yours, and the lawyers who confuse and lose sight of that important fact are condemned to some very ugly endings and travails.

So, let us get back to a core issue. What exactly are you training to do as a lawyer in BigLaw? What are you going to have to learn to do to be successful, apart from the obvious political and organizational abilities to keep from getting slashed along the way by your "comrade" partners in the quest for ever higher profit shares?

Solve problems, of course. Problems that are imbued with two

fundamental characteristics. It is a really big problem economically, because otherwise the billing rate structure of your firm would render it not practical to be called on to address it. This means there are high stakes and pressure escaping from every seam like an overheated kettle. And, it is a really complicated problem, because otherwise the very bright people in the legal department of the client would have resolved it themselves and not subjected the company to paying high fees to your firm to do so. These are the "bet the company" cases, or in some situations for the in-house lawyers and execs the "bet the career" cases that their professional lives rest on the outcomes for. That is what you will learn to do, and become so consistently good at doing it that you develop a

personal reputation for excellence in getting results that spreads through enough of the business and legal community that it keeps you very busy. This builds your book of business such that the law firm determines on balance it is financially worth keeping you around, where you will be a net contributor to the profit pie for perhaps the first 10 to 15 years of your partner status.

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