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## Facebook 101: why lawyers should be on Facebook

by [Leora Maccabee](#) on April 23, 2009



Lawyers who are not on [Facebook](#) are missing out on critical opportunities to network for referrals, research defendants and potential jury members, market their law firms, and vet potential legal hires and current associates.

Lawyers who use Facebook solely for personal reasons should reevaluate their use to consider the site's possibilities for marketing and the development of professional relationships.

For those lawyers who still need persuading, here, in no specific order, are the top six reasons why lawyers should be on Facebook:

1. Facebook can bring you referrals and clients by helping you to reconnect with old classmates, colleagues, and friends through direct contact both formal (messages) and informal (wall posts), events, and interest groups.
2. Facebook can help you strengthen relationships with colleagues, both those at your firm or organization, and others. Facebook does this by fostering open communication about shared interests, activities and family life, and by offering opportunities to connect through groups and events.
3. Facebook Pages are great marketing tools. Pages allow you to post videos, photos, notes, blogs, and other interactive and community-building applications. Once you have created a Facebook page, you can promote it through Facebook's Social Ads, although you should make sure to stay within the ethical rules for client solicitation in doing so. For more information about how lawyers can market themselves and their businesses on Facebook, read [3 Things All Lawyers & Attorneys Should Do to Market More Effectively on Facebook](#) and [10 Things All Businesses Should Do to Market More Effectively on Facebook](#).
4. Facebook is often used by jury consultants to evaluate potential jurors before and during trial. This internet vetting can disclose juror's associations, interests or past statements that may make a lawyer want to strike them from the jury pool or prioritize keeping them on the case, and can provide a lawyer with insights into specific jurors which may be beneficial in crafting effective closing arguments. See [Social Networking Sites Help Vet Jurors](#).
5. Facebook can be an effective tool for investigating defendants, witnesses, and prosecutors. Evidence revealed from Facebook searches has been used to prove that a defendant had no remorse after committing a crime, to prove a defendant's motive, as evidence of the crime itself or of an individual's participation in a crime, and to show the extent of plaintiffs' injuries after an accident. See [MySpace and Facebook Becoming Evidence in Court](#).
6. Through Facebook you can research potential job applicants' public statements, photos and questionable social activity. A search of the site may also reveal statements by current employees regarding your firm or their workload. However, since Facebook may also reveal otherwise unknown protected information (race, religion, political affiliation) about job applicants or employees, be careful not to take adverse action based on that information.

Most likely you want to use Facebook for more than professional networking, marketing, recruiting, and branding. You may want to show pictures of your children to your friends, comment on your best friends' night on the town, or publicize to an upcoming political event.

Just because you want to use Facebook for professional reasons does not mean you should stop using the site for personal reasons. The second article in this series (stay tuned next week) will discuss Facebook's privacy risks and opportunities, and several ways that you can tailor Facebook's privacy controls to your personal and professional needs.

Join [Lawyerist's Facebook group](#) to meet other lawyers, learn about upcoming Lawyerist networking events, and more. -Ed.

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04.24.09 at 4:58 am

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[Eric Cooperstein](#) 04.23.09 at 1:03 pm

Certainly any lawyer who needs to market their practice should figure out what Facebook is and how they can use it. FB certainly has the potential to serve all of the uses outlined in your post. But I think there's a delicate balance between social networking and marketing. Pushing one's business too hard on FB is like going to a wedding with a stack of business cards and handing them out to everyone you see. Instead, one goes to a wedding, talks to people with genuine interest, and then has a business card ready if the other person asks for it. I think FB users want to connect, not sift through their friends' sales pitches. There's more art to it than some people might appreciate.



[Leora Maccabee](#) 04.23.09 at 3:07 pm

Eric - Thanks for your comment. I agree in many ways. I have a lot of fun on Facebook on a personal and community-building level and hope that the site does not evolve to be too professional in nature. However, I think that there is nothing pushy in putting a link to your company's website on your Facebook profile, describing the type of law that you practice, and then using occasional Facebook status updates to talk about work projects that get you excited. I think that most people do not take enough advantage of their Facebook friends for professional networking, especially if they built their Facebook network with hundreds of childhood and college friends. Yet the social networking dance should be made with care and class - more like product placement in a movie than a full-blown advertisement on a bulletin board. But how do you teach that art?



[Tim Baran](#) 04.24.09 at 11:08 am

Timely article! I'm a month-old infant on Twitter and Facebook played a prominent role in my decision to combine (mostly) the personal and professional on Twitter - quite frankly, I don't think there's any other way to have a meaningful Twitter account.

So, I decided that FB would remain (mostly) personal and slowly integrate networking aspects of my professional life as an entrepreneur in the legal profession. First move, besides placing a link in my profile to my site/blog, was to join the Lawyerist FB group.

The experiment is a work in progress and always will be. And although the decision making process of marrying or separating the professional and personal is unique to each individual and entity, discussions such as this go a long way in making those decisions well informed.

So, thanks for a provocative piece!

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