

Louise has generously offered a 50% discount to Zen readers for Podcast Pro Membership, for a limited time – use the coupon code “Launch” when registering to benefit from this discount!

Although Louise also provides a transcript, I wanted to highlight below some of what we discussed and why I feel social media and LinkedIn are excellent tools for lawyers.

On the importance of social media...

Social media for lawyers is important for three reasons:

1. Your clients are using it, so it's essential to understand the tools, how they're used, and the risks and implications so that you can effectively advise them.
2. It's an excellent place to conduct research on clients and potential clients. We all leave digital breadcrumbs on these platforms, and they'll give you tremendous insight into what your industry and clients care about, what worries them, and what the trends are.
3. You can use social media to engage directly with your clients. Depending on the platform, you share more professionally or personally, but you use them to build relationships, and add another dimension to who you are as a lawyer that makes people more comfortable in hiring you.

On the benefits of LinkedIn...

LinkedIn is a favorite of lawyers, because it is still seen as the most professional of the social media platforms available. So lawyers can feel comfortable engaging there, while remaining professional. Specifically, there are some huge benefits, including:

- The ability to conduct comprehensive research.
- To use their Publisher platform to post articles, even if you have a standalone blog.
- To see, at a glance, shared connections that may be worth leveraging.
- To stay up to date on industry trends and client news.
- To keep an eye on your competitors.

On using LinkedIn to connect...

You don't have to wait until after an event or meeting to connect with people on LinkedIn. Install the app on your mobile phone, and use it as part of your networking. Make sure you're connecting with the right person (now is the time you can get the spelling of their name correct, and ensure you've found the *right* John Smith for example), and send the connection request as you're talking.

But with any of these relationships, it's not a “one and done” scenario. So whether you connect with someone right away, or after an event, within the next week, take some time to review their profile. Look at where they went to school, where they've worked, what interests they list, what groups they belong to and seek out commonalities. It might offer you an opportunity to follow up with them.

Look also at what articles they've written and read, and consider commenting on the most recent one (as long as it's from the last few weeks). Regularly check in on LinkedIn to see what they're liking and sharing, and what might spark a discussion or an excuse for follow up. Look for mutual contacts or find out if there are contacts that you have that they may want an introduction to, particularly if you're located in different cities or have different professional focuses. LinkedIn's search algorithm will allow you to search your contacts (up to the 3rd degree) for people in those locations or industries that you may want to introduce your new connection to. Being helpful to someone else is the fastest way to become memorable.

In the meantime, don't forget to be posting your own articles and sharing and liking other items on LinkedIn to keep your profile updated and engaged.

On LinkedIn's publishing platform...

Despite its seeming success, there does still seem to be some pushback with using LinkedIn's publishing platform. I recommend it, in two cases:

1. If you don't have a blog, but you're considering increasing your level of writing to see if you could commit to a blog, LinkedIn publisher is a great testing ground. Try developing an editorial calendar, writing there for about six months or so on your topic of choice, and reviewing your progress after that time.
2. If you have an existing blog, it's also great for re-posting substantive content. I've found, and others have told me the same thing anecdotally, that they've seen an increase in readership when they also post to LinkedIn. You want to keep your content in a place that belongs to you, so it's worth continuing to publish to a standalone blog (and try to drive content there from LinkedIn). But it's only a few extra minutes to re-post it to LinkedIn. I've also found that engagement, in terms of comments and discussion, is far greater on LinkedIn than here on Zen, so it's another reason to try Publisher to add to your relationship development tools.

On LinkedIn groups...

For LinkedIn groups, I strongly believe that less is more. Find one or two groups that you really feel you can commit to, and get something out of, and if a group doesn't seem to be working for you after a while, you can leave it. The key is to be an active participant – post questions, answer and comment, share relevant information, etc. Look for groups where you might find the best opportunities for connection – those might be industry or trade groups, networking groups, or even alumni groups.

On not having time for social media...

Time is always the biggest barrier for lawyers who want to use social media. And you don't have to spend a lot of time on tools like LinkedIn to make it work for you. A couple of key things will help:

- Install the mobile app: Then you can use LinkedIn on the go. Rather than intruding on your existing time, make it part of any “wait time.” When you’re waiting for coffee, the elevator, a client meeting, etc., use those few extra minutes to scroll through the feed, like and comment on anything of relevance, and boom, you’ve engaged.
- For things that need a bit more attention (like research), you can find what time of the day might work for you and make it part of your routine. You don’t need to spend an hour on the site – if you’re worried it will suck you in, set a timer to remind yourself to stop. Give yourself 10 or 15 minutes to check what you need to, and that’s it. If you’re using Publisher, consider that part of your regular blogging routine, and not part of this “check-in” time. This doesn’t have to be daily either – since you’re already checking in during times you’re waiting on your mobile app, do this every week or every other week.
- Check your LinkedIn notifications: for groups, for example, you can set up digests that come to you by email. So if you only want to know about new discussions once a week, you can set that up and use it as your check-in time for LinkedIn. But if you want to be alerted every time someone posts to a group, you can set your notifications to do that too. It varies from “as they happen” to “never” in terms of the settings. So you can use that notification to either schedule your LinkedIn time or to help you stay better engaged.

Check out the full podcast for some additional tips and tricks, and let me know what you think! And make sure to check out some of the other content on Study Legal English as well!