

BUSINESS & CAREERS

Use LinkedIn to attract new clients



THE COACH

**GARY
MITCHELL**

A little over a year ago, I wrote an article on using social media. I wanted to update some of that content and focus on more on LinkedIn, which has changed the way lawyers can network and has made it far easier to reach out to people in your target market.

LinkedIn has become a business development game-changer. If you don't have a profile there, I strongly suggest you put it at the top of your to-do. This column will provide you with what you need to know to set up an effective profile and how to use it to start attracting clients.

Why LinkedIn?

Did you know that your prospects and clients are going to look for you on LinkedIn even before they visit your firm's website? This has been trending over the past year. The reason is simple: There is far more potential information and activity on your LinkedIn profile than there is on your firm website profile. They can see who you know, who is in your network and what people are saying about you and your work.

Setting up your profile

The first step is to go to LinkedIn and follow the instructions on how to create your profile. Make sure your profile is complete with what you have done, clients you have served, education, experience, etc. Upload your most recent professional photograph.

Be sure to follow the instructions until the point at which it shows you your profile is 100 per cent complete.

Connecting

Search for people you know, starting with current clients. Simply type their name into the search window to find out if they too have a profile, then invite them to join your network. Once you have added all your current clients to your network, go back and do a search of your past clients, colleagues, law school friends and other professional contacts.

Make sure you have invited everyone from your professional contact list to join you on LinkedIn. Once you are connected, it's a great way for you to keep up to date with what your clients and prospects are doing moving forward in their careers.

Asking for recommendations

Once your current and past clients have joined your network, ask them to recommend you and

your work. There is a link on your home profile page that you can direct them to, to recommend you. It's simple takes only a few minutes.

You should have a couple of recommendations each for past roles, including volunteer work, writing and speaking engagements, then focus on adding as many recommendations as possible for your legal work. There is no better business development or marketing strategy than having your clients publicly rave about you and your abilities.

Raising your profile

Next, look for groups to join that are applicable to your practice area, and where appropriate, join the conversations and offer valuable content to get noticed. When appropriate, start conversations or even your own groups. Talk about news, facts and events relating to your target audience. There is an application to add JD Supra (exclusive to the legal industry) to your LinkedIn. When you have written an article, you can post it to your JD Supra profile and it will automatically show up on LinkedIn as well. This will give you more exposure to

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Gary Mitchell, On Trac Coach

a broader audience you may not have been able to reach previously.

Research your target audience

Begin searching for people using the names of the companies you want to target as the keyword. It will show you the list of people at those companies that have a profile. This is a great way for you to identify the people you need to build relationships with. Find out what groups they belong to and join them and begin to offer valuable and appropriate content to get noticed.

Leveraging current contacts

When you have found the people you wish to target on LinkedIn, look at who is in their network. Are there people you know who know them? If there are, and if you are already targeted and strategic in your approach, you likely know at least a couple of



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people who know them. Ask them for an introduction. The person you are looking to meet is far more likely to accept the introduction because he or she knows the person. Once you have the introduction, you can invite the person to join your network and set up a meeting.

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Connecting all the dots

Add your LinkedIn address on your law firm profile and in your e-mail signature to provide greater exposure. If you're a blogger, you can add an application so that when you post a blog it immediately appears on your LinkedIn profile. If you are on Twitter, you can connect that account to LinkedIn as well so that when you post on LinkedIn, it also posts on your Twitter account. If you aren't on Twitter, or blogging or getting published, you may want to incorporate those strategies into your business development plan.

Once you have made the initial effort into creating your profile, making the most of this investment will require you to spend at least 10 minutes a day managing it. Continue to add connections, join and participate in groups and discussions and link together your other business development and marketing strategies.

LinkedIn means networking, raising your profile, building relationships and attracting clients, all without leaving your office. What are you waiting for? ■

Gary Mitchell is a business development coach working exclusively with lawyers. His first book, "Raindance: The Business Development Guide Book for Lawyers" will be published in July.

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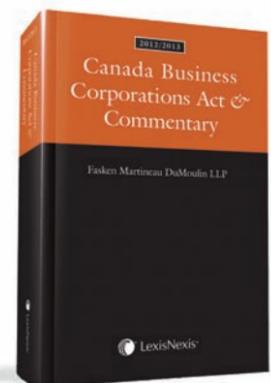
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Canada Business Corporations Act & Commentary, 2012/2013 Edition

Consulting Editors: Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP

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\$30 + tax
Approx. 800 Pages
Softcover | June 2012 | Annual
Standing Order Terms Apply*
ISBN: 9780433469285



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