

How can solicitors get the best possible value
from social media?



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Firstly,
let's dispel
some of
the **myths**
around
social
media ...



What are the myths when it comes to social media?

1. "Social media will not help me win business"



Actually, yes it will.

If you are going to win work consistently you need to be well connected, stay visible, be likeable, stay well informed of market activity (both to spot opportunities and be more credible in conversation) and be prepared to share valuable, practical information with your clients and contacts.

Social media - and LinkedIn especially - will help you to achieve all of this and more.

Social media is not a replacement for face-to-face contact or the more traditional marketing approaches but, if used correctly, it is a highly effective way of supplementing your other initiatives.

2. "I don't have time"

Yes you do.

This is purely a mind-set issue. We can all find time to do the things when we understand the value. Equally we can all waste a lot of time on things that don't achieve much but things we do through inertia (e.g. how much time do you spend at the same old networking events that you know yield little if anything?)

Once your LinkedIn profile is set up (and this only takes 15 minutes or so) and you are connected to a meaningful number of the people you know (we'd suggest 100 minimum) you can spend as little as 60 seconds a day and still get real value from this tool.

The same is true of Twitter and once you're up and running you can link the two to save even more time. Better still, if you download the free LinkedIn and Twitter apps onto your smart phone you can improve efficiencies further by using them in 'dead time', e.g. waiting in a client's reception, while waiting for a train or even in front of the television at home.



What are the myths when it comes to social media?

3. "LinkedIn is just for recruitment companies, my clients don't use it"

Yes they do.

More than 80% of your clients are on LinkedIn ... though admittedly there are a few recruitment consultants too!

In-house and private practice solicitors, barristers, accountants, tax advisors, patent and trade mark attorneys, company directors and administrators all use LinkedIn.

You simply cannot risk not being visible just because a handful of people you don't want to engage with are using the tool.

Research indicates that many potential buyers of professional services search online and review a person's LinkedIn page before or even *instead* of visiting a company website.

Like it or not, your potential clients are already making purchasing decisions about professional advisors based on what they see and don't see on the personal profile pages of LinkedIn.



4. "I don't want my clients and competitors to see my contacts"

Why not?

Simply seeing your contacts doesn't mean competitors can take your relationships.

Your clients are not only likely to know but are probably also connected to your clients anyway. More than that if you are connected to your clients' competitors, you will be gaining industry knowledge and insight you can use to benefit your clients.

And it's important to remember that if your firm has a strict policy forbidding sharing certain information, you can always hide your connections from the public by using the security options under 'My settings'.

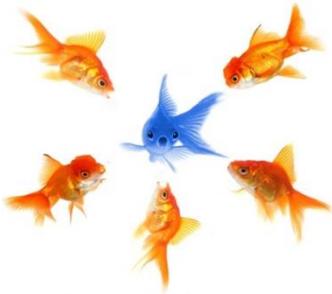


What are the myths when it comes to social media?

5. "I stay visible at networking events and conferences so I don't need to use social media as well"

Err, yes you do.

Yours is a noisy, increasingly competitive and increasingly crowded market. More than ever you need to do everything you can to stay visible. Shaking hands and making small talk at the occasional formal event is not enough to win business.



You need to stay front of mind which means increasing the number of 'touch points' with clients (existing and lapsed), referrers, prospects and new targets. One of the many benefits of social media is how easy it is and how little time it takes to post content and engage people in between face-to-face meetings to ensure you stay visible.

Too many solicitors still underestimate how much of winning work is simply about making it easy for people to buy from you and all that means is staying front of mind. If your competitors are using channels to market that you are not, it's all the more likely they could be winning work you are missing out on.

6. "LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook...it's all the same"

No, not really.

LinkedIn is the 'must use' for all solicitors, irrespective of your client base. LinkedIn is widely used and regarded by most as an essential tool for staying connected to all of your contacts whether they are clients, referrers or recognised figures in your sector or local area.

Twitter users are more skewed more towards the media, creative and technology sectors and tend to have a younger profile.

Twitter is more about immediacy and has a more informal, even irreverent style.



What are the myths when it comes to social media?

Facebook is the tricky one as research indicates its use and profile of users is changing.

If we'd written this report two years ago, our advice would have been professionals don't need to use Facebook at all. However, the picture is changing. Older people are adopting Facebook as teenagers' progress to newer alternatives like Instagram and Vine.

The advice today is if you have clients in the retail, food, fast moving consumer goods or private individuals, you may want to consider Facebook as another channel to market.

You can use different social media tools in different ways for different markets. LinkedIn is the priority, Twitter follows and Facebook is relevant for smaller groups or perhaps for more community-focused projects or for high-volume consumer based marketing campaigns.

6. "I am a professional, people don't expect me to show informality and personality"



On the contrary, they do.

Social media gives you the opportunity to show your contacts and followers the person behind 'the suit'.

Your technical legal competence should be implicit but people buy from people so show them the person.

Unless you are selling a very specialist service you will be competing with many other advisors who – to the lay-man's eye at least – will appear to have very similar capabilities. If you have the confidence to open up and add a bit of personality, it will be easier for you to find and engage with likeminded people.

The benefit of becoming more visible to likeminded people is that they will be easier for you to build rapport with and, by extension, easier to convert into clients. They should also be less focused on price so you may also be able to charge a premium for your services.

And always remember it is not unprofessional to share your interests, in fact it will positively amplify your value and the way you do business and manage your client relationships.

What else
do you
need to
know to
get
started?



Social media FAQs

1. What are the real benefits of using social media?

1. You can stay visible to clients, referrers and prospects during the gaps between seeing them face-to-face. This is essential as the majority of the instructions you will win will be because you are front of mind when an opportunity arises
2. You can get closer to the new people you meet quickly and easily simply by inviting them to connect on LinkedIn. This is now viewed as an acceptable way to follow up and will give you a mutually comfortable foundation from which to build a professional relationship
3. Being on LinkedIn makes it easier for others to find out more about you and the more people know about you, the more credible you will become to them. Your LinkedIn profile is now more than likely the first place buyers will go to find out more about you, your skills and your history – perhaps before or even instead of looking at the profile on your firm’s website
4. LinkedIn is very helpful when it comes to preparing for meetings or networking events. The more you know about the people you are going to meet, the more confident you will be. Moreover, the more business intelligence you have, the easier it will be to direct the meeting toward the outcome you want. Similarly following Twitter posts will make sure your finger is always on the pulse, first to find out about things as they happen
5. Posting interesting and relevant content on LinkedIn and Twitter will help you position yourself as an expert and allow others to pick up on your thoughts and broadcast them to a much wider audience via their own social media networks. As a result is you can dramatically boost the efficiency and effectiveness of any campaign whether it’s promoting an article or special report you’ve written, an award you’ve won, a new signature client or promoting a talk or workshop you’re about to give
6. People will form an impression of you based on what they see or don’t see on LinkedIn. Having a complete profile, a professional business photograph and a large and diverse network underlines your credibility
7. Conversely an incomplete profile that houses a handful of connections to a few colleagues in your firm will not peg you as a ‘go to’ professional
8. Having a large number of connections on LinkedIn will make it easier for you to get access to your personal business targets and will save you from having to try and ‘cold call’ strangers. If you see someone you know is connected to someone you want to know, ask them if they’ll make the introduction for you

Social media FAQs

2. How do I start?

The first social media platform to use is LinkedIn.



There are just 3 easy steps to get started on LinkedIn. Firstly, complete your personal profile by filling in the information on www.linkedin.com.

1. Upload a professional business photo (not one of you with your children or in your wedding dress or playing cricket) and provide all the information requested.
2. Invite everyone you know professionally - clients, referrers, colleagues, prospects you are in conversation with and any contacts you have at networking forums/trade bodies/trade journals/magazines/local papers. This is easy to do as LinkedIn provides a template invitation and all you have to do is follow the instructions.

3. Post content. The easiest way to post content is to use the 'Shared Update' feature. You will find this feature on the home page, indicated by a pen and paper icon. You only get 140 characters per post so make content succinct. You might, for example, share a hyperlink to an article of interest or comment on a topical business issue or promote a talk you're about to give.

3. How do I get better results?

Success on social media hinges on a number of different factors, here are some important ones:

- Post relevant and interesting content regularly. On LinkedIn one or two items a day is ideal, between 7-9 am and 5-7pm on work days is best. Twitter can be used more regularly and time of day is less critical
- Have a large and diverse professional network. You should have a strategy to achieve 500+ contacts. This is easier than it sounds if you build your network over time. Set yourself goals to connect with x number of people each month



Social media FAQs

- Ask clients to provide recommendations. Prospective new clients will have more confidence in you if they can see that you have clients just like them who have been happy with your services. Having 20+ recommendations demonstrates strong credentials and will help you attain that all important 'go to' status



- Use your profile to explain the results of what you do for your clients rather than just posting a long list of service lines. For example say you ease the pain of divorce, that you protect the personal assets of private individuals or that you help solve the complex problems that arise from disputes over property or shareholdings. It is better to focus on 2-3 areas of specialisation than try to attract everyone through a long list of interests. This approach is not only more credible but also makes it more likely that people will actually find you through social media
- Contribute to discussions on LinkedIn groups, especially those visited by your clients, referrers, prospects and targets. This approach both gets you into conversations with new contacts and helps you position yourself as a 'go to' professional in that area
- We've already mentioned how nervous some professionals are about outsiders seeing their LinkedIn profiles and connections. Again, while we'd say this is unwarranted, you can hide certain information by ticking the boxes in 'Settings' if it a concern but, the truth is you will get more value from LinkedIn if you adopt a more transparent approach. After all, how can competitors steal your relationships simply by seeing who you are connected to? In the same way when it comes to clients seeing you're connected to their competitors, there's also no need to worry – they probably are too!
- LinkedIn allows you to share the news you post via the 'Shared Update' facility with Twitter. If you choose this option in your 'Settings' all of your posts will automatically appear as tweets. This has a dual benefit; it allows you to broadcast to a wider audience and it saves you the time of managing two feeds on two sites
- When using Twitter, follow the people you want to influence. This approach has two key benefits; they will probably follow you back which will help you create initial engagement and their tweets will provide you with valuable intelligence you can feed into your marketing and business development strategy

Social media FAQs

What should I do if someone I don't know invites me to connect on LinkedIn?

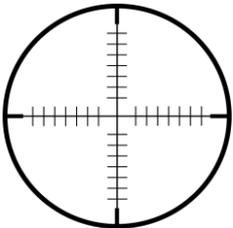
The overarching rule is *"only connect with people you know"* (and, by extension, this also means you should only accept invitations from people you know).

If someone invites you to connect and you don't recognise the name, respond with a polite note saying:

"I don't recognise your name and only accept invitations from people that I know. If we have met before and I have forgotten please accept my sincere apologies and put the error down to old age."



Can I, and should I, approach cold targets on LinkedIn?



No, there is a better alternative:

1. Search for your target using the 'Search' and 'People' options to see if your target is connected to anyone you already know
2. If the outcome is positive contact the person you know and ask them to make an introduction

If we've given you food for thought and you'd like to discuss how you could be using social media (or any other aspect of your marketing or business development) to better effect please email douglas@tenandahalf.co.uk or call phone Bernard on 07771 897772



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