

Business & Careers

Finding a connection in an unlikely way



Luigi Benetton
Hi-Tech

This is the second article in a two-part series that explores how Canadian lawyers use LinkedIn. In part one from the January 16, 2015 issue, we looked at the profile page of lawyers, company pages and what a daily LinkedIn routine should include.

Now we'll look at some more ways LinkedIn can help lawyers.

In real life, lawyers may want to congregate with their colleagues, prospective clients and other people who might help them professionally. Such groups exist in LinkedIn, and they can interact with real life in interesting ways.

Several years ago, Mark Hayes noticed a message in a group on one of his infrequent LinkedIn visits.

"A lawyer in New York City had posted a note (in LinkedIn) about looking for a technology lawyer in Toronto, and he asked for a recommendation," he says. "The first response on this question was from a lawyer in Rome, Italy, whom I had met once at the iTechLaw conference in the U.S. the previous year. He advised the New York lawyer to call me."

Hayes, managing director at Hayes eLaw, reached out to the lawyer in New York. "That turned into a very nice file," he says, adding that "in the past, without LinkedIn, it is extremely unlikely that this lawyer in Rome would have ever heard of a lawyer in New York looking for a lawyer in Toronto."

"I look for groups that interest me and my existing and potential clients," says David Tait. (To shorten the search, you can see what groups your connections have joined and investigate them to see if there's a fit.)

"When I post on my company blog, I send updates to my groups with links to the full posts," adds the partner at McCarthy Tétrault. "If people pick up the phone to call you to discuss what you blog about, that's a big deal. It can lead to work."

Don Cameron gets Tait's logic. "There

are about 864 full- or part-time intellectual-property law professors in the United States," says Cameron, a partner with Bereskin & Parr.

His interest? "Schmoozing with adjunct IP professors who are day lawyers like me and can refer cases," he says.

The association is largely made up of Americans, "but it also has foreign associate members like me who try to get work off American attorneys."

"We invited them all to join the law school professor subcommittee of the AIPLA education committee (a LinkedIn group created in November 2012 to "mirror" the pre-existing group) as a way to communicate ideas or exam questions or interesting articles.

"We got about 140 people to sign up for the LinkedIn group," he recalls, adding that the group may have to reach out personally to other prospective members to get them to join the LinkedIn group.

"If you have a pre-created group, LinkedIn is a nice resource to connect group members," Cameron adds. "You don't need a mailing list."

Stuart Rudner created the Canadian HR law group in June 2009. Now numbering 10,000 members, this group consists largely of HR professionals, employment lawyers and business people.

For the first six months, Rudner, partner at employment law boutique Rudner MacDonald, admits he spoke to himself on the group: he'd post a topic, respond and conclude the discussion. Other members lurked but didn't participate.

"It got to the point where I was going to give up on it. Then people started to post and respond, and the group took on a life of its own."

Omar Ha-Redeye has started several groups, among them the 20,000-member law-students group in 2008 while he himself was in law school.

Like Rudner's and Cameron's groups, it's a "private" group. This means Ha-Redeye, a legal advisor with legal incubator Fleet Street Law, must approve people's requests to join. Ha-Redeye "polices" the group, going so far as to remove people if they do things like post irrelevant commercial content. Each group

consists only of people who can benefit and contribute to the group's goals.

Jana Schilder suggests attorneys consider several factors when allocating time to spend online. The managing director of First Principles Communication figures family lawyers might benefit from a strong Facebook presence, for instance, and criminal lawyers need strong referral networks. "People don't go online to say they've just been arrested, caught with a stash of cocaine," she quips.

You might want to find companies that need expertise in your practice area, then seek people who influence the hiring decision.

Tait once learned of an ongoing patent case. He knew it was in his wheelhouse and "through LinkedIn, I saw that I was one connection away from the president of the defendant," he recalls. "I was able to connect with that president by going through people I knew in my LinkedIn network who are directly connected to him."

He was retained for the case, a success he credits in part to receiving an introduction instead of "making a cold call or sending a blind e-mail that might get read by a spam filter or thrown in the trash."

Ha-Redeye conducts an Internet search opposing counsel before he meets them in court.

"I tend to be collegial (in litigation), to build a relationship with counsel," he says, adding that he builds rapport by noting people the person might have known in law school or at other firms. "It gives me conversation fodder to help develop that rapport, to build a professional working relationship to better serve the client."

Ha-Redeye paid \$300 for a 30-day LinkedIn job posting for a content developer. Hundreds of people viewed the ad. Over 60 people applied for the job and he found the person he needed.

The person doing the hiring can see who views the ad, who they're connected to, whether applicant qualifications match the ad and other data that provides insights into prospective job candidates.

"If you need to, you can make discreet inquiries about people to figure out if they're the right fit," he adds.



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