

The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES 1843-2021

PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, JULY 22, 2021

VOL 264 • NO. 15

An **ALM** Publication

Young Lawyers: Get to Know (and Love) the Digital You

BY JAMIE K. MULHOLLAND

Special to the Legal

I have always enjoyed meeting a potential client in person for the first time. In the past, if someone requested a proposal before the opportunity to sit down together I typically declined. Outlining rates and capabilities is one thing, but it is just as important to determine how you gel with someone. A good working relationship is equally as essential as the work itself. So, like many people, 2020 was a jolt to me in that I couldn't have those in-person opportunities. When attorneys reached out to me last year to see if I was a good fit for what they needed to be done, they had only to rely on my digital presence. There was Zoom, of course, which was helpful, except for the times my daughter had been on the laptop before I got there and the potential client was greeted not with my headshot, but my kid's cat with sunglasses icon (unfortunate, but at least I didn't have the same cat filter experience as that poor lawyer in Texas).

Ironically, not only did these attorneys have only "electronic Jamie" to evaluate, every single one came to me specifically for advice related to the digital realm. Lawyers who had relied forever on their reputation and word-of-mouth referrals were suddenly realizing their websites hadn't been updated in years, or their LinkedIn profiles listed them at the firm before their last firm. It was a digital awakening for all of us, for sure.

But what a wonderful experience in that we all now have an opportunity to focus on an area we may have ignored. So, let's dust off the profile, kick up the social presence a notch, and take a little better care of digital you.

• Where to start.

First and foremost, a question: when was the last time you read your bio on the firm's website? Sure, you've seen it, you probably share the link with people, but have you really looked at it recently? Most people claim it has been a year or two since their last review when it has actually been much longer. Very recently, I pointed out to a partner that her bio said something along the lines of "almost 20 years" of doing something when it is now over 25. So go ahead, print it out, read it, mark it up, go away for a few days, come back, read it again. Better yet, read it not as yourself, but as you would have a prospective client see it. What should they know about you? Last year, I had the opportunity to offer a friend a few attorney options to respond to something on his behalf. I emailed him links to online bios of three different attorneys. One guy was eliminated immediately. "He didn't sound scary enough," my friend said. "I want [the other side] to see who is representing me and say, 'maybe we shouldn't mess with him.'" As a final step, calendar a reminder to do this activity again next year, and every year after that.



JAMIE K. MULHOLLAND

has served as a marketing consultant to law firms for over two decades. Learn more at mulhollandmarketing.com.

• Next: make a list ... of lists.

Think of the ranking and listing sites that are important to you or your practice (meaning where clients or referral sources might search). Martindale, Avvo, Super Lawyers, wherever. Make sure you are listed correctly on each one with current contact information, so people know where to find you. Note—you need not "claim" profiles and set up passwords and accounts to do this. Most sites have a "contact our editors" link where you can simply provide the correction or update.

• Boost your social standing.

There are so many social media outlets you can embrace, and we can spend a full article on each one. For purposes of this column, we'll focus on two outlets that are a "must" in terms of social media for professionals. Notice that I said "for professionals." They are not the top sites in terms of number of users, but they are powerful platforms for attorneys: LinkedIn and Twitter. LinkedIn claims 756 million users in 200 countries worldwide and is wholly geared toward networking and developing connections digitally. Twitter, with 353 million users, is also no slouch. But, aside from the size of the audiences, let's talk about how they can be valuable to digital you.

• LinkedIn.

The best place to start on LinkedIn is your headline. Many people just add their job title, but why would list yourself as an "Estate Planning Attorney," when you can be an "Attorney offering personalized strategies for asset protection and estate planning and administration"? This is not just jazzing up your profile. This is an opportunity to set yourself apart in 120 characters that will appear at the top of your profile, on all suggested connections, all messaging, everywhere. It's an immediate oomph of impact.

Of course, the other elements of your profile are equally as important:

• **Your branded background:** This is your billboard, your marquee. Maximize the use of this space.

• **Your headshot:** This is actually a photo (meaning do upload one), it is professional (not from a social event and not with someone next to you obviously cut off), recent (if your hair color is different ... or not there anymore ... get a new pic).

"...what a wonderful experience in that we all now have an opportunity to focus on an area we may have ignored."

• **Contact info:** Make sure this is current. Some people attach a Gmail or generic account to this, but don't risk missing an important message because you added a secondary email account on there you don't check regularly.

• **About:** Consider something conversational and compelling. Think of the first few minutes of a lunch meeting. "Here's who I am, here's the main gist of my background and what I do now. But, more importantly, here's how I can help you and how you can engage me."

• **Experience:** This is not a resume. It is roles and experiences—even volunteer ones. If it contributed to who you are today professionally and can connect you to other people, it matters.

There are other areas of course to complete your profile—licenses, certifications, awards, etc., but LinkedIn will remind you what needs to be completed when you log on. What I recommend doing is—so that you complete this thoroughly and thoughtfully—consider visiting one area each week. Take your time in creating the beautiful cumulative picture that is you. Then ... you guessed it ... calendar a reminder to review this annually for updates.

Once you have your profile complete, don't stress about building your network, as LinkedIn will automatically offer you suggestions of people to whom you can send invitations to connect regularly, based on your background and associations. You will, in turn, receive invitations yourself from others who LinkedIn suggests as a connection to them (with that amazing headline you created, of course). A word of caution: there are, unfortunately, plenty of lurkers on there looking to connect so they can sell you stuff. So don't feel like you need to accept every invitation.

From there, your day-to-day presence can involve as much or as little interaction as you are naturally inclined to do. You can post regularly, or you can simply like and respond to your network's news and announcements. If you choose to post, it can be anything that inspires you or something you'd share with a colleague: a thought for the day, a holiday message, a shared link, a video, an article or

book, or even details on an event you are attending. As you pay more attention to what you see in your feed, you'll learn more about the posts you like and find helpful or interesting ... and those you do not. This can truly help you develop your own style. By paying attention to how others respond and engage, you learn more about what you can do to contribute your own value.

• Twitter.

Twitter is vastly overlooked, especially by young lawyers. I can't tell you how often I move to post an article or speaking engagement that involves both partners and associates from a single firm, and while the partner can be tagged, the associate doesn't even have an account. To those who would say that Twitter isn't worth it because it isn't the biggest or most popular social vehicle, I would ask this: Why would you miss an opportunity to be promoted alongside a shareholder? Especially when you consider that when that tweet is posted, the publication or event host organization tagged will more often than not retweet it. If the partners are on there, shouldn't you be? If you create an account just for that professional use, isn't the extra promotion worth it?

Because, when you think about it, LinkedIn and Twitter are about more than just posts. They are messages that promote you and your firm and invite people to become engaged. They are discussions. Like all strong business relationships, they are about give and take. Your followers appreciate your support and will return the favor. Your network contributes to your success and gives you exposure to a larger audience.

• The big picture.

"Carrying the Fire" is a book by NASA astronaut Michael Collins. If his name is not familiar to you, perhaps the names of his crewmates will ring a bell: Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. Together, they traveled to the moon in July of 1969. Collins flew the Apollo 11 command module while Armstrong and Aldrin landed on the surface.

In the preface of the 2019 edition of the book, Collins talks about sitting quietly in the spacecraft watching Earth, so small he could "blot it out with my thumb," yet moved by it. He felt the presence, he said, of every being on it. "Gaia," he recalled, referring to the theory that all beings are interconnected as one. He could have been sitting in that ship congratulating himself on being a part of one of greatest technological advancements ever, yet he was thinking about other people.

So, as you consider "digital you," consider this: Yes, this is technology. Yes, it can be overwhelming and complicated at times, but when all is said and done, however you choose to use it, when it helps to connect you to others, it is a very good thing. •