



It's the Intellectual Capital™

LinkedIn for Laggards

How to approach social media for the not-so-guru.

With so much hype surrounding social media, it's easy to become overzealous or indifferent. For early adopters, notoriety is enough of a reason to join the newest social media platform. For laggards, it's easy to be hyper critical of the worth to be gained by investing in these new marketing tools. Neither of these are a good strategic response for a business interested in staying relevant, while keeping lead generation and marketing costs in check.

Many articles and blogs are written about why you should use social media, why you should use a specific platform (of which there are many) and what you should do when you get there. Frankly, many of them are written by folks more versed in social media than we are.

However, we recently invested a little time, energy and minimal dollars and made a commitment to LinkedIn. This isn't a 'how to' or 'top tips' – it's simply our own experience and what we discovered. Our goal is to help small and midsize business owners dip their toe in the water just like we did. If you're still waiting on the sidelines like we were a few months ago, we hope this helps or provides some inspiration to get started with your own plan of action.

Your employees are probably already there.

Like us, you may find that many of your key personnel are already utilizing LinkedIn. We decided key personnel to drive our LinkedIn presence included our sales/relationship management staff (lenders), senior management and marketing. Out of sixteen people, only two did not already have profiles on LinkedIn.

What company are your employees linked to?

Does your company have a LinkedIn page? If not, many of your employees could be linked to companies other than your own just like ours were. After realizing we did not have a company page, we simply used our current branding to update a LinkedIn page that identified us. It didn't cost us anything and was relatively easy to do. We then notified our employees so everyone could be linked up correctly. One of the flaws of LinkedIn is that there is no "Human Resources feature" – people who've never worked for your company may link up to your company without realizing it isn't the one they were looking for. Perhaps a respectful LinkedIn message to correct could remedy any linking mishaps.



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A short-order session might be in order.

We learned a local marketing agency we knew was providing training to professional service firms on social media. We asked them to come in and give our key personnel an overview of LinkedIn. They focused on why social media is increasingly important in the business world, basic do's and don'ts, as well as the basic functionality of LinkedIn. The session was well-received and motivated Fidelity employees to engage themselves with clients, referral sources and prospects via LinkedIn.

Assisting employees and consistently encouraging use can pay-off.

After our group session, we met with employees one-on-one to help answer questions about how to bulk up their profile (or start one if need be), how to use functions that were discussed in the group session and talk about building habits around LinkedIn (like conducting pre-call research or linking up after making a new contact). Our marketing department now seeks out opportunities for our LinkedIn employees to use in their status updates – maybe it's a good piece of press about the bank, a client or someone they know or maybe it's a new piece of content on our website, geared toward helping business owners. Whatever it is, it's an easy way for them to stay in front of their contacts. In fact, an attorney one of our lenders knows recently responded to a status update of his saying that he had a client seeking a loan for an acquisition. It may never be your biggest lead generator, but being relevant today can't hurt.

Does your business run a group? Could it run a group?

We organize the third largest sushi-networking group on LinkedIn (we're talking globally – right here in the Twin Cities!). If your organization supports or organizes a group, no matter how large or small – you could put LinkedIn to work for you. Think of your contacts and their contacts and their contacts... well, you know. Word of mouth can be so 20th century. Check us out on LinkedIn by searching under "Groups" for "Sushi Society".