



By Rich Friedman

# The One Social Media Tool You Must Master

Let's take a closer look at a question that often comes up during our training workshops and client engagements: What should we be doing with social media?

Many A/E/C and environmental firms remain skeptical about social media—and that skepticism can be well-founded. While some firms have jumped in with both feet and even mastered this area, too many are overwhelmed or simply not sure where, or even if, to focus their efforts.

For most firms, creating a sustainable, realistic, and effective social media strategy means starting small and mastering what we call Marketing 101 before moving on to more.

The social channel you need to master? LinkedIn.

## Why LinkedIn?

LinkedIn has carved out a clear niche as the world's largest social media platform for business. Starting out as a top recruiting tool, it quickly became the place to network. Now, with its publishing, sharing, and connecting features, LinkedIn is also an ideal visibility and messaging platform for marketing and business development, especially in the B2B sector.

This is where professionals and companies go to network, find jobs, build thought leadership, and share expertise. It's the most-used social platform among Fortune 500 companies. B2B companies continue to flock there, with 94% of B2B firms sharing content and 65% saying LinkedIn has brought them new customers or clients.

Who's there? (Source: LinkedIn)

- 87 million are millennials—a top target for recruiting
- 61 million users are senior-level influencers
- 40 million are decision-makers
- 45% of article readers are management-level and up

While I can't tell you all that you need to master LinkedIn in one article, we'll start with a solid foundation.

## A Well-Branded Company Page

According to LinkedIn data, companies with fully completed profiles have twice as many visitors as those without. Communicate your brand message with visual appeal and a strong, cohesive message. That means your company profile should include your logo; a branded cover image

(you can change this periodically); a succinct and clear "who we are" message; information about your size, industry, location(s); and a link to your website. Find a way to work your firm's guiding principles or core values seamlessly into this message. Check out these well-branded profile pages: Sasaki (Watertown, MA), Murraysmith (Portland, OR), and David Evans and Associates, Inc. (Portland, OR).

If recruiting is a primary focus for your firm, LinkedIn offers career pages. This is a paid add-on of dedicated space to give viewers a deeper look at what it's like to work at your firm. You can add company photos, leaders, employee testimonials, and more, as well as create a Jobs tab of open positions.

## Post Consistently and Strategically

Before coming up with a content plan, it's important to know how you want to use your page. Who are you trying to reach? What is your message to that audience? Some firms have a clear recruiting focus. To get the most out of this versatile tool, though, let it do double duty as a recruiting and marketing/business development tool. For good examples, visit Haley & Aldrich (Burlington, MA), TreanorHL (Lawrence, KS), and EDSA, Inc. (Fort Lauderdale, FL).



Your company page offers many ways to share your recruiting, business development, and thought-leadership messages. Create a consistent, sustainable posting schedule of once or twice a week to gain traction, followers, and traffic. This doesn't need to be a mammoth undertaking. With a little tweaking, content that you've already developed can be easily broken down and repurposed. And you can preschedule some of it using one of the many social media scheduling tools out there.

Not sure what to post? Here are some ideas:

For recruiting:

- Post all open positions
- Show as well as tell. Short videos can provide an inside look at the culture of your firm. Think about posting brief interviews with employees, a message from leadership to potential employees, events and community outreach, or a day in the life of your firm.
- What's your sell to new talent? Translate that into a SlideShare presentation or video and share it to your page (especially when you're actively recruiting)

For marketing and business development:

- Regularly share project innovations and success stories
- Create and share information that clients want to know, in the form of short articles, videos, stand-alone SlideShares based on informative presentations, infographics, and interviews with your in-house subject-matter experts
- Share industry insights, quotes, and statistics
- Offer news about high-profile or interesting projects and awards
- Post announcements of new market sectors, services, and offices

- Share tips and how-to articles
- Publicize events you're attending and how to find you there
- Promote events or webinars you're hosting and how to participate
- Highlight staff accolades and awards that showcase expertise and industry participation
- Share clients' updates, and successes (be sure to link to your client's page)
- Share articles of interest to your client's business
- Share any blog posts or email content you've already developed

### Use Best Practices To Engage Readers

Ideally, your content mix will address recruiting and marketing objectives to maximize the ROI of the time spent. It's also a good idea to switch up the format of your content (videos, blog posts, articles, infographics, slides) and include a few key elements to make your posts stand out:

- Use attractive, clean images wherever possible
- Hashtags can categorize and increase visibility for your posts
- Short (150-word or less) captions provide context. Include links to any clients or organizations mentioned
- Consider using popular social media elements such as questions, bullet points, stats, and even emojis (the latter only when it's appropriate for your audience)

Embrace the "social" part of social media and follow the 4-1-1 rule of sharing four posts from other sources and one update from someone else for every one post you write about your firm. Respond to comments. You can also occasionally reshare posts that perform well or have evergreen appeal. Just don't overdo it and become a newsfeed spammer.

### Enlist Your People

In addition to having a robust company page, you can magnify your efforts by encouraging your employees to be active LinkedIn users by:

- Completing a personal profile that showcases their expertise and links to your company page
- Engaging with and sharing company posts with their networks
- Joining industry and market-focused LinkedIn Groups to interact with clients, participate in discussions, and share relevant content
- Following industry or market influencers and organizations and sharing their content when it's relevant to your clients
- Publishing any (vetted) relevant content they've written on their personal profiles and including links to your company page
- Using LinkedIn search and recommended contacts functions to grow their professional network and connect with prospective clients and partners
- Adding a LinkedIn button to their email signature

Once your firm has mastered these basics, you can move onto Marketing 201 tactics (or your next social platform). At that point, you might explore creating Showcase Pages for individual markets, business units, or initiatives, or building out a comprehensive Career Page. You can increase your posting frequency and target your posts more selectively. You might also use Sponsored Content and InMail for targeted advertising and outreach if that serves your business goals. ■



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