

Vandenack Weaver - S1-E22 – Allison Shields – LinkedIn for Lawyers

Speaker 1: [\(00:03\)](#)

Welcome to the Vandenack Weaver legal visionaries podcast brought to you by interactive legal here's your host Mary Vandenack.

Speaker 2: [\(00:12\)](#)

Welcome to today's episode of Vandenack Weaver, legal visionaries, a weekly podcast discussing updated legal news, evolving methods of providing legal service and law practice issues. My name is Mary Vandenack founder and managing partner at Vandenack Weaver, LLC. I'll be your host. As we talk to experts from around the country about closely held business tax trust and estates, legal technology, law firm, leadership and wellbeing. Before we start today's episode, I want to thank our sponsor. Here's a message from interactive legal.

Speaker 3: [\(00:51\)](#)

There's always a resistance to change, particularly with attorneys, attorneys like to look back at what's worked in the past, and that makes a lot of sense. But when you realize that with a good automated drafting system, you can do a better job for your clients. Deliver documents on a more timely fashion in a more consistent and a more costly manner. If you are not a subscriber to interactive legal, I urge you to go to interactivelegal.com and click on requested demo. And you'll be contacted about having a demo of interactive legal for you, which can be done right over the internet. Don't have to leave your office. No salesperson will call. We can arrange it at a time and convenient for you. So please go to interactivelegal.com and click on request

Speaker 2: [\(01:39\)](#)

Today's episode, Allison Shields. Allison is the owner of legalese consulting, and we're gonna talk about LinkedIn for lawyers, and you've done a lot of writing and, and presenting on LinkedIn. Correct. Allison, can you give us a little on that background?

Speaker 4: [\(01:58\)](#)

Yeah, absolutely. You know, it's funny, I got into really writing and, and training and teaching on LinkedIn because of a webinar way back. I don't even know what year it was with the, with the ABA law practice division. Somebody thought it was a good idea to, to do a webinar on LinkedIn. And I got volunteer along with Dennis to do this webinar and both of us were on LinkedIn, but I don't think either one of us had really used it very extensively at that point in time. And so I was really forced to learn it in order to do the webinar. And it turned out to be one of the, at the time, most well attended webinars ever. And after that, they also us to write a book. So Dennis and I wrote a couple of books for the ABA law practice division on LinkedIn, which unfortunately at this point are out of print because they're, out of date. So we recently wrote another new book called "Make LinkedIn work for you".

Speaker 2: [\(03:02\)](#)

So is that book gonna be available fairly quickly?

Speaker 4: [\(03:05\)](#)

Well, when I, say new, it's on Amazon. It's available on Amazon. It is available in paperback and the Kindle version. And actually if you have Kindle on LinkedIn I think it's, it's part of Kindle unlimited, which means it would be free if you have that.

Speaker 2: [\(03:22\)](#)

So, I have to tell you, I think you do an amazing job on LinkedIn. So I find that background kind of easy. So I started this kind of interesting when I started the podcast, you know, I was like really paying a lot more attention to LinkedIn, myself thinking about and so there's Allison went, oh yeah, she's perfect for LinkedIn, but not only do you know it, you know how to use it. You're showing up every day in my feed with some really interesting topic. So I was like, this is, and that's so important because I can tell you that recently I've been doing more on LinkedIn. I just been so busy that I had not been, but I brought others into my firm. And so kind of me being more present was important to them and I've actually had clients call me because they said, oh, I've noticed you're more present on LinkedIn. And so it really does matter that you use LinkedIn. So a lot of lawyers have LinkedIn profiles, but none, a lot of them are not. And I would admit to being one who hasn't historically done that they're not using link as effectively as they could. So what do you think, what do you see as the biggest mistakes that lawyers make when they're using LinkedIn?

Speaker 4: [\(04:27\)](#)

Well, I think probably the biggest one and the most common one is just participating haphazardly with no strategy or plan. So you know me at all, I'm all about strategy and planning, right? right. Everything. I always talk about a little, what's the strategy? Why are you doing that? What is the reason, what do you want to get out of it? You know, so Dennis and I, when we talk about LinkedIn, a lot of times, we'll say, what are you hiring LinkedIn to do for you? What is the reason that you're there? And it may be different even, even for lawyers, one lawyer may be using it because they want their reputation. They're fairly new. Maybe they just started their own practice. Maybe somebody else has been in practice for a long time and it's more about staying connected with people that they've known for years and years through their practice.

Speaker 4: [\(05:12\)](#)

Somebody else maybe wants to get media exposure and, and LinkedIn is a good way to do that. So the haphazard participation is one of the problems is not on understanding their audience, even not understanding who it is that they want their audience to be. So that could be referral sources as well as potential clients. You know, not every lawyer is going to be able to get business directly from LinkedIn. It may be more, they're reaching their referral sources who are then going to send them business. I think the other mistake is thinking about LinkedIn as a separate entity or a silo, as opposed to a part of everything else that you're doing for marketing and business development in your firm and just not being consistent, which I guess kind of goes back to the haphazard participation. As you just mentioned, the consistency makes a difference. If people keep seeing, even they don't necessarily even have to, to read everything you write or see, they just see your name on the headline of whatever it is

that you're posting. And it's a reminder, you know, in marketing, you always say, you have to say top of with people. And so if you're only on there once a month and you're not posting very much, it it's not gonna be as useful for you.

Speaker 2: [\(06:23\)](#)

So in your LinkedIn books and trainings, you talk about that. There's three building blocks for LinkedIn. Can you briefly describe what those are?

Speaker 4: [\(06:32\)](#)

Yes, there are three building blocks. I always have trouble saying your profile, which obviously we all know what the profile is, but that to me, that's the foundation because if somebody gets interested in something that they see you do on LinkedIn, or if they do a search and you come up in a search and they click on you, they're gonna get to your profile. So your profile, you want to be the best possible representation of you that it can be. So LinkedIn is a networking platform, right? So if you think about your profile stands in as you to network for you when you're not physically there and so that's the first building block. The second one is connections. LinkedIn is a networking profile. So it's all about a networking platform. It's all about who you're connected to and how you stay in contact with your connections and then the third building block is participation, which is everything from actually posting yourself to joining groups, to liking or commenting on what other people are posting on LinkedIn.

Speaker 2: [\(07:45\)](#)

So let's break down your building blocks a little bit. And I just have to tell you my personal stories after listening to you and Dennis at one particular thing. I think you talked about that, how, you know, every lawyer will just put, Hey, I'm an employment lawyer and there's no distinction between the other thousands of employment lawyers out there. So you talk about, I, I think that's in the headline, but so what opportunities do you think lawyers are missing with their profiles?

Speaker 4: [\(08:13\)](#)

Yeah. So that's a big one. Is, the headline because that follows you around LinkedIn. I mean, when you show up on LinkedIn, other than when people are looking at your profile, they're only seeing a very limited amount of information. So they see your name, they see your picture and they see your headline. They may also see where you're located geographically, but the headline, as you said, a lot of people when they went through, because origin only when they were creating a profile, they're thinking, well, what's my title. Okay. So my title is partner or my title is lawyer or my title is associate, you know, and I joke a lot of times when I do LinkedIn training and I say, well, you know, Walmart calls their greeters associates. So if you just say associate, I don't even know that you're a lawyer. Not that being a Walmart greeter is bad, but if your whole point is to make business connections, you want to be as specific as possible.

Speaker 4: [\(09:06\)](#)

So even, employment lawyer may not be enough. I don't know what side even are you on management side or are you on the other side? So if I'm looking for somebody and I'm gonna choose between a whole bunch of different people who show up in a search, the one who has the most, specific headlines gonna win, you're about section a lot of lawyers neglect that falls right underneath that very basic

information on your profile. Only the first couple of lines show up. So you want to make those first couple of lines really hit people between the eyes so that they want to read the rest of it, because they have to click on the little, read more button. So there's a lot of opportunity there. I talk about that as being almost like the cover letter to the rest of your LinkedIn profile, which is like your resume.

Speaker 4: [\(09:55\)](#)

So that's your opportunity to really synthesize all of your experience and talk about, you know, why you do what you do and why you may be the best person for that person to connect with. There's a new featured section now, which really highlights certain accomplishments. I think people, a lot of lawyers are not using that section. Most lawyers don't have enough detail in their profile in general, whether it's in about or the experience section, they're just not giving enough. It's just very general and so even if I click over to your profile, if your headline is not that specific, the rest of your profile is isn't that specific. So I can't really tell you're making me work too hard. In other words, by not giving me all the information you could give me. I think there's an opportunity to show and not just tell on your LinkedIn profile and that in part goes back to the featured section. Also, there's so many opportunities to, add things to your profile like presentations or images or videos or documents, you know, PDFs. That will really demonstrate that, you know what you're talking about, not just that you're saying that, you know, what you talk about.

Speaker 2: [\(11:12\)](#)

We are going to take a brief break from our episode for a word from one of our sponsors, Carson Wealth.

Speaker 5: [\(11:17\)](#)

Carson wealth planning focuses on liquidity management and charges you a fee based on a percentage of your assets. But entrepreneurs typically invest in their business resulting in light liquidity. That requires a unique strategy at Carson private client. We provide a proactive and hold holistic strategy for building and protecting your wealth. Our mission is to alleviate the stresses and the burdens of coordinating all of those financial strategies. Carson, private client will work with your current team of advisors to customize a strategy that manages all aspects of your life and wealth, giving you back the time to focus on what matters most complex needs require sophisticated solutions. Reach out to our office at 4027798989 to schedule your consultation. Investment advisory services offered through CWM, L L C an S E registered investment advisor.

Speaker 2: [\(12:18\)](#)

Let's continue our episode. Well, let's talk a little bit about connections and I'll have to tell you, I found interesting. We had at a business development meeting at our firm and we just listed everybody's number of connections and some of them you know, had four or five and it's like, okay, do you only know four or five people in the business networking world? So then we made it into a little contest to increase your connections, which helped a little bit. You talked a little bit about the importance of connections and how you can get the most out of that?

Speaker 4: [\(12:52\)](#)

Yes so, I mean, if you're trying to maximize LinkedIn that sort of the ideal number to, to get to is 500

connections because that's sort of the number that is optimized for LinkedIn in terms of you you'll show up more in search and you'll get more visibility. If you've got more connections, if you don't of very many connections, LinkedIn thinks that you're not gonna be of that much value, right. Or you're not really using the platform or potentially you could be not even a real person. So that's the number to kind of strive for if people are looking for a, a threshold and it seems like a lot of people 500, but when you start thinking about all the people that you've known in your business, connections, even family connections, neighbors, you know, children, you know, parents of children in your neighborhood, there's all kinds of people who could be potential referral sources for you that you might not necessarily think of as business connections, but that might make sense for you to connect with on LinkedIn.

Speaker 4: [\(14:00\)](#)

Plus you've got all the people that you went to college with and you went to law school with but you also want to have a strategy for connecting. So yes, you want to get to that threshold number, but you also want to think about who does it make sense for me to connect with? And that goes back to what I was saying in the beginning, it ties into your strategy for LinkedIn. So if I'm looking for media attention, I may want to look for journalists in my area who have the legal beat. That might be somebody I want to connect with. If you are trying to get small businesses, then you want to connect with other people who are, who have in with small businesses or who are, you know, in positions with small business that might be able to send you business. Things like that and personalized invitations to me are really important.

Speaker 4: [\(14:48\)](#)

Some people, Dennis did an experiment on time where he sent out a whole bunch of invitations that without personalizing them and, got a lot back. I just feel like if I'm trying to make it as easy as possible for the person on the other end to accept my invitation, then I want to make that as personalized as possible. This I'm trying, I'm not just trying to have a connect. So to equate this, to what we do in real life, I'm not just trying to collect the business cards. I'm trying to establish a relationship because I want to, be able to give the other person something I want to help them and I want them to be able to help me and so the more personalized you make that relationship, the easier that's gonna to happen. I think people sometimes forget that they can, depending on the, how people have their settings on LinkedIn, you can often look at somebody that you're connected to and see who their connections are.

Speaker 4: [\(15:42\)](#)

That's an easy way to get an introduction. If you're trying to meet people, group members, if you belong to a group on LinkedIn and I recommend that you, you know, we'll talk about it more in a minute, but look at groups that you belong to in real life and, and join those groups on LinkedIn and then connect with those group members. It's easier to connect with somebody that you are a member of a group with than, just connect with them separately, outside, you know, you can often connect with people that you wouldn't be able to get to. Otherwise alumni is another good place. All the schools have LinkedIn pages and there's ways to find people that you went to school with the same years, or even not even the years that you were in school. Then the other piece of the connection strategy that they people forget is that you want to keep a conversation going. So we just talked about, we're trying to establish a relationship, so we don't want to let it go with just the, the connection. Then we want to have a conversation and we want, to take it offline, right? LinkedIn's not a silo. So we want to take that to a telephone conversation or a zoom meeting, you know, maybe one day we'll get back to having lunch or

coffee with, with business connections and to try to just advance that relationship.

Speaker 2: [\(17:03\)](#)

Well, I found an interesting thing is we are in this virtual world the last period of time. So, like you mentioned that taking it offline and while, sometimes while we were we're virtual, I'd be on zoom meetings and there'd be somebody that I would just reach out to who would then email me afterwards, you know, just a little, send a little chat here, which then reminded me that LinkedIn has a whole chat and there you can send messages through LinkedIn and to do that a little more often, some of the things in LinkedIn, I think actually gives you suggestions. Like maybe you want to acknowledge this person's been at their business so many years and things like that. I do think that, you know, participation is probably when you go through your building blocks, one of the hardest things for lawyers. So what can you suggest to lawyers to increase their participation?

Speaker 4: [\(17:49\)](#)

I think this is one of the hardest also because we're also strapped for time, right? And everybody thinks, oh, how much time am I gonna have to spend doing this? This is gonna be, you know, it's another thing on my plate that I have to do, but you don't necessarily have to, it doesn't have to be that hard and it doesn't read that time consuming. So if you are looking to post your own content, one of the great things that you can do is to repurpose what you already have most and of us are doing things, even if you're not doing things like writing articles that you would want to post, you're probably coming across articles that would be sending to clients, right? You, so post those same articles on LinkedIn for your audience, if it's interesting to a segment of your clients, it's probably interesting to a segment of your LinkedIn contacts as well.

Speaker 4: [\(18:42\)](#)

So you're providing value but you also may just have things like, little explanations that, you typically give to clients or answering questions for clients or frequently asked questions that may be on your website, that you could kind of rework to post as an article or as a post on LinkedIn. You can just be a content curator and, and collect information, share other people's stuff. You don't have to be creating your own and stuff all the time. As I mentioned, joining groups is a great way to get in front of people on LinkedIn. You might not be able to get in front of otherwise. So the easiest place to start is with groups you belong to in real life but if you do searches for different topics, you'll find all kinds of groups on LinkedIn who might be interested in what you have to say.

Speaker 4: [\(19:30\)](#)

So the same content that you're posting to your feed, you can post to appropriate groups and, and get more mileage from that, that same content and maybe the easiest way to participate is just being generous with liking, commenting on and sharing what you're seeing in your newsfeed. Your connections are doing and especially if you make a thoughtful comment or try to start a, a conversation based on what somebody else is posting and not just to say, Hey, this was a great post, but to say something a little more, more thoughtful that provokes a little bit more of a back and forth so again, that you can do those things probably in, in 30 minutes a week and be head and shoulders above a lot of other lawyers who, who are using LinkedIn.

Speaker 2: [\(20:21\)](#)

I think those are really great tips and I particularly like the last one about being generous, I think that's really meaningful and really has a positive effect and is that relational aspect that you talked about? You've also talked about the consistency, how can lawyers get themselves to participate consistently and how much time do they need to really take every day and devote to LinkedIn?

Speaker 4: [\(20:44\)](#)

Yeah. So I, as I said, I don't, you don't even really need to be on there every day. Although for a lot of people, when you're having your cup of coffee in the morning, you kind of scroll through your newsfeed and you can, you know, do those likes and comments at that point in time, or maybe on your, on your lunch break or you can take schedule 30 minutes every week where just gonna sit down and, and work on LinkedIn stuff, whether that's sending or accepting invitations, making those little likes and comments, maybe posting something every once in a while. You can create posts and batches. I like to do that where I'll, think about a whole bunch of different topics that I want to post on and then I'll create them all at once and then just post them when I want to post them or use a scheduling tool, like something like buffer, or if you have your own blog or a website that, that has an RSS feed.

Speaker 4: [\(21:40\)](#)

I use a tool called missing letter. So when I create a blog post, it creates a whole social media, you know, LinkedIn campaign for that stretches posts out over several months. So I only have to do it once and then use a calendar or an action plan where you say, okay, I'm gonna spend this much time and incorporate it again into the rest of your marketing plan. So look at what you are already doing and then think about how you can repurpose that and use that same content or talk about those same things on LinkedIn. If you're giving a presentation, talk about it before post on the day that you did a post after you did it, maybe take a piece of the presentation and add that to your LinkedIn profile or post it as a slideshow. I mean, there are so many different things you can do if you just incorporate it into all the other things that you're doing to say, okay, well, how can I then what can I do on LinkedIn with that piece of marketing that I've already just done? Any announcements that you have, it's great to talk about your employees, new people, when you bring somebody new into the firm, that's a great thing to brag about on, on LinkedIn. You can connect that person and it, it's not just necessarily about you, but again about being generous with your connections and, and what they're doing and incorporating that into just a regular weekly or monthly plan.

Speaker 2: [\(23:14\)](#)

I know that LinkedIn, when you get on there always is trying to get you to sign up for the premium account and I'll acknowledge that I finally did it after all these years and I'm finding a lot of value to having signed up for the premium account. So can you share with us some main differences between the free and the premium accounts and when it's of value to lawyers to potentially get a premium account?

Speaker 4: [\(23:38\)](#)

This is one of the most popular questions that, I get so it's great to hear your feedback that you're finding value. I'd love to hear what, value found from it, but, you know, there are some very basic things that are different between a free account and a premium account. So on the premium account, you get

a lot more search filters. So if you're searching you, get better results because you can refine it more. You've got a lot more filters that you can add on there. In mail messages, which are sort of the messaging piece of LinkedIn, you get a certain number with a free account. It's very limited. I mean, it's like three or five or something, very small and with a premium account, you get many more depending on which you have, you may have unlimited InMail messages, which means you could send a message to anybody on LinkedIn, whether you're connected to them or not now, even with a free account, as long as you're connected, you can send as many messages you want to the other person.

Speaker 4: [\(24:39\)](#)

It's just, when you're trying to reach out to somebody who you're not directly connected to where that becomes a limitation so it's much easier to connect because you can message and you're, not as restricted by not only the messaging, but the how far removed you are from a person to actually send them an invitation to connect. If you're hiring or you're looking for a job are special premium accounts for those for recruiters and for job seekers that are really valuable. If you're in one of those two positions, especially if you will be posting or looking for a job through LinkedIn you kind of get more visibility in those job searches as a job seeker and as a recruiter, there are a lot of options there for you that can help you to find candidates on LinkedIn. So those two types of premium accounts are great if you're in that position.

Speaker 4: [\(25:36\)](#)

LinkedIn, if you've never used a premium account has a, one month free. So that's a great way to try it out before you have to pay for it and you can see if does it really make sense for me or not and the other thing to think about is you could sign up for one of the premium accounts and keep it for three months and then decide to cancel it. You're not, you know, locked in at least at this point in time to, to any particular, you know, you don't have to pay for a whole year in advance and, and get stuck with it as to whether lawyers need a premium account, I think it really depends on how much you use it for most lawyers that I've encountered the free account is going to be 90% of the time. Plenty for them because they're not using the features even on the free account but I tell people, look, if you start bumping into problems, like I can't connect with who I want to connect with. I'm trying to message people. I can't find what I'm trying to find. Then it might make sense to say, okay, let me try out a premium account for a month and see if that makes a difference but if you're using the free account and you're able to do all the things that you want to do, you're probably in most cases, just fine with the free account.

Speaker 2: [\(26:49\)](#)

You know, and a lot of the things you've mentioned are among the reasons that I've found the premium account valuable and so I've been doing, we've been doing some brand enhancement, we've been trying to do a little more recruiting and working on some of the things. So those features have been really helpful. Also when you're looking for somebody, you can see, you know, you can access if they've marked the little box that they're actually looking for a job and that their employer can't see that they are. I've found that a lot of value, but I do agree that probably all of the lawyers in my firm don't need to have the premium. So Allison, do you have any last thoughts on LinkedIn?

Speaker 4: [\(27:27\)](#)

I would just say, you know, just not to be afraid of it because it doesn't have to be that hard and it

doesn't have to be that time consuming and I'll throw a little, another little plugin for my book. If you really want some more tips of the out using LinkedIn again, you could get the book it's called, "Make LinkedIn work for you", and you can find it on Amazon pretty easily and that has more tips than I could possibly do on a podcast.

Speaker 2: ([27:58](#))

Having read your books and listened to some of your presentations, I would totally vouch for the concept of what you can include in your book. So I really appreciate you joining us today, Allison, as we get to the end of our episode, I want to thank our sponsors, interactive, legal, and Carson, private client. That's all for now. Thanks for listening to this week's episode and stay tuned for our weekly releases,

Speaker 6: ([28:27](#))

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