

Basic Information:

Company: Buchanan Public Relations

Email: megank@buchananpr.com

Phone: 610-228-0404

Entry Category: Social Media Platform

Title of Entry: Optimizing a LinkedIn Presence

Client: Pepper Hamilton

100-Word Description: National law firm Pepper Hamilton made the decision last year to update its entire online presence. It set a goal of strengthening – or, in some cases, creating – the LinkedIn profiles of its 500-plus attorneys. It turned to Buchanan Public Relations to create a training program and customized optimization guides that would help attorneys take advantage of the most powerful online networking tool for professionals. Ten training sessions and 192 customized guides later, Pepper Hamilton attorneys have enjoyed higher rankings in search results, increased visibility, along with new business inquiries.

Program Overview/Objectives

Situation Analysis

Having a clear and complete online presence is imperative for professionals in all industries. But it is especially true for those in professional services, where potential clients frequently search online for service providers.

Buchanan Public Relations was engaged by client Pepper Hamilton, a national law firm of 500-plus attorneys, to optimize the LinkedIn profiles of its individual attorneys. The forward-thinking law firm knew that better optimized profiles would rank higher in search results. The initiative was timed to coincide with the firm's launching of a new website, which would link attorney bios to their newly strengthened LinkedIn pages.

Goals

The goal of this initiative was to optimize attorneys' LinkedIn profiles in order to strengthen their ranking in an online search, helping to boost their individual brand and position them as leaders within their practice group.

Target Audiences

The primary audience of the LinkedIn optimization training were Pepper Hamilton attorneys. Partners, associates, paralegals and legal staff attended general training sessions, while Partners also received customized LinkedIn guides and one-on-one training.

The secondary audiences were current and potential clients of the individual attorneys.

Objectives

The objectives of this initiative were to:

- Train at least 250 of the firm's 500 attorneys in best practices of LinkedIn

- Create customized LinkedIn guides for at least 150 Partners of the law firm
- Influence a jump in search results for at least 85 percent of the firm's Partners
- Ensure that a LinkedIn profile was the first or second result for at least 70 percent of attorneys in a Google search

Planning

Through research, Buchanan PR and Pepper Hamilton discovered that:

- Searches for attorneys were typically conducted by practice area, such as "Commercial Litigation" or "White Collar."
- Searches for "attorney" ranked higher than did searches for "lawyer."
- The professional headline and descriptive summary of a LinkedIn profile carry higher value in SEO than any other part of the profile.

From this research, Buchanan PR developed a training program, which included:

- A one-hour, interactive introduction to LinkedIn supported by a PowerPoint presentation
- Customized LinkedIn guides for Partners that were complemented by one-on-one training to help them complete their profile.

Execution

Rationale for LinkedIn Tactic

LinkedIn is the most powerful social media tool for professionals, but it is also very under-utilized.

In addition, attorneys are often hard-pressed to step away from billable work and invest in their own marketing.

For those reasons, Pepper Hamilton made the LinkedIn training a high priority for all attorneys and built in one-on-one training for Partners.

The general training introduced attorneys to LinkedIn, its importance in helping an attorney grow his or her practice, and best practices in completing and fully optimizing a personal profile.

Buchanan PR developed consistent firm messaging that was used in all of the attorneys' individual profiles.

Since September 2014, Buchanan PR has led 10 training sessions and developed 192 customized LinkedIn guides, which address all the elements of a complete LinkedIn profile:

- Professional headline, which includes title and practice area at Pepper Hamilton
- Professional profile photo
- Moving any previous positions from "current" to "previous"
- Updating current position to include accurate time period for current title only, along with a brief description of practice group(s), teams and committees at the firm.
- Adding and/or updating previous positions, including earlier positions within the same company
- Customized public profile URL
- Adding/updating a summary to include key words about his or her specific area of expertise
- Adding/updating the skills section to include those relevant to his or her practice area, and removing any that do not apply
- Managing recommendations
- Adding or updating the education section to include all higher education history

- Adding contact information and company website(s)
- Ensuring the full and public profiles are completely visible
- Adding sections to highlight work and achievements, including, but not limited to honors and awards, publications and organizations
- How to post meaningful status updates
- Making use of Pulse
- Adding a background photo and multimedia

While training the attorneys, Buchanan PR also addressed privacy settings, questions about frequency of use, with whom to connect, and related issues.

Evaluation/Results

This initiative was deemed an overwhelming success by the client. To date, Buchanan PR has:

- Led 10 training sessions that have been attended by almost 300 attorneys, 50 more than originally expected
- Developed 192 customized LinkedIn guides, 42 more than originally expected
- Achieved 100 percent optimization of LinkedIn profiles by the 192 attorneys who adopted the steps in their customized guides
- Witnessed an immediate jump in search results by 80 percent of the attorneys who optimized their profiles
- Achieved a return of first or second result in a Google search by 91 percent of the attorneys who optimized their LinkedIn profiles

Pepper Hamilton also reported that 11 attorneys received direct business inquiries via their newly robust LinkedIn profiles.