



**ABA Section of Science & Technology Law Social  
Networking Survey  
Co-sponsored with the ABA Young Lawyers Division  
Winter, 2008**

The ABA Section of Science & Technology Law co-sponsored a Social Networking Survey with the ABA Young Lawyers Division. The goal of the survey was to gain an understanding of lawyer social networking preferences, so the ABA can best serve the legal community through this medium. All members of the ABA Young Lawyers Division with valid e-mail addresses on file (a total of 50,000 members) were invited to participate in the winter of 2008. By the cut-off date of April, 2008, almost 3,000 young lawyers had responded to the online social networking survey.

Most social networking services are web based and provide a variety of communication options, such as e-mail and instant messaging services. Online communities of people who share interests and activities facilitate social networking. For example, LinkedIn is a popular professional online networking tool. According to survey respondents and other sources, LinkedIn is considered more professional than other networking sites. Facebook and MySpace are online directories that connect people through social networks, such as alumni organizations.

64% of survey respondents expressed interest in joining an ABA sponsored professional networking site along the lines of LinkedIn. One young lawyer commented "An ABA site would be less of a professional liability than MySpace that makes partners cringe. This type of site dedicated to the legal profession would be very useful. Backed by the reputation of the ABA and hopefully the same level of quality in implementation, such a site would be very attractive."

Many people shared positive feedback about the potential for an ABA sponsored professional networking site. One person elaborated, "It would be an excellent opportunity to network with people in my field and provide for a centralized listing or host of events that would take place in my area or relevant to my job."

Despite its growing popularity, social networking is not for everyone. A handful of young lawyers shared disinterested comments such as, "I am not interested in on-line social networking sites. It is better to invest in real networking events rather than virtual networking events."

Since so many young lawyers engage in on-line social networking, it is insightful to understand their on-line priorities. Respondents rated various aspects of on-line networking in addition to specific sites on importance to them personally. 59% of respondents rate professional networking as important. 56% percent of respondents rate social networking as important. 34% of respondents rate bulletins as important. 32% of respondents rate blogs as important.

Respondents also rated various sites in terms of helpfulness. 27% of respondents rate LinkedIn as helpful. 28% of respondents rate Facebook as helpful while 15% of respondents identify MySpace as helpful.

Young lawyers prioritized these preferences even more specifically. 61% of respondents rate communicating with friends as an important reason to network on-line. 36% of respondents rate communicating with family as important via online networking. 34% of respondents rate networking with legal colleagues as important.

Respondents use social networking sites “to research potential clients and others involved in cases or get input on issues from colleagues in the field.” One young lawyer appreciates social networking “to keep open alternative avenues for legal networking.” A different respondent shares how social networking is a means to “staying in touch with friends from college, law school and advancing your career.” Other individuals utilize social networking for business development to “communicate with potential clients, stay abreast of current events and keep up with classmates.” A young lawyer uses social networking to “send resumes, pose questions to associates and share legal knowledge.”

Some young lawyer respondents appreciate personal functionality of social networking, such as sharing photos, “amusement, inspiration and keeping in touch.” Other individuals use social networking to “stay current with trends” and discuss and research “entertainment, music, current events and social issues.” Young lawyers find social networking helpful to “research parties in litigation; investigate witnesses and parties to lawsuits.” A respondent finds social networking useful for “self promotion and to help increase personal search engine exposure.” Others find social networking helpful for “friend birthday reminders.”

A different tool for on-line social networking is Second Life, which is a 3-D virtual world. It has grown exponentially since it opened in 2003. It is currently inhabited by millions of “Residents” from around the globe. It facilitates entertainment, experiences and business opportunities. 28% of respondents expressed interest in joining a virtual networking site, such as Second Life. 97% have no client interaction in virtual worlds and 91% never or infrequently network in virtual worlds.

The ABA Section of Science & Technology Law’s Social Networking Survey co-sponsored with the Young Lawyers Division demonstrates high interest in an ABA sponsored professional networking site. The continued success and expansion of social networking suggests ABA members ranging from students to young lawyers and more experienced lawyers would benefit from such a member benefit.