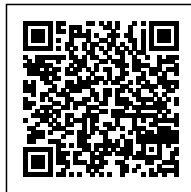


# SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE LEGAL SECTOR, IS PORTUGAL IN OR OUT?

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**Iberian Lawyer received the input of the marketing experts behind the brands of Portugal's most social media savvy and influential law firms. We uncover which tools are most widely used and share a ranking of the top ten firms by LinkedIn followers, whose communication is managed from Portugal. This valuable insight demonstrates where law firms can excel. But how committed are law firms to the task, and are there missed opportunities or alternative ways to reach and influence audiences?**



In 1999, the English singer, songwriter and actor David Bowie made a bold prediction. During an interview with the broadcaster Jeremy Paxman, he accurately foresaw the impact the Internet would have on society. Bowie declared to a sceptical Paxman, "The potential of what the Internet is going to do to society, both good and bad, is unimaginable." Paxman replied, "It's just a tool, though, isn't it?" "No. It's an alien life form," responded Bowie. "The actual context and state of content is going to be so different to anything we envisage at the moment. Where the interplay between the user and the provider will be so in simpatico, it's going to crush our ideas of what mediums are all about."

Richard Susskind, the author, speaker, and independent adviser to professional services firms, was nearly laughed out of the room in 1995 when he predicted in front of the Law Society in the UK that all solicitors would soon be using e-mail to communicate with their clients. Law firms are sometimes, fairly and unfairly, accused of being slow adopters to change when compared to other business sectors. The way they now market themselves, however, and communicate to their audiences, has changed dramatically. From physically mailing contracts to using fax machines, from sending e-mails to pinging WhatsApps and from Facebook to Twitter, Instagram and even TikTok.

## LINKEDIN IS THE CHANNEL OF CHOICE

"In the case of **PLMJ**, LinkedIn is the social network we favour for contact with our clients and other followers", says **Alexandra Ferreira**, head of Brand and Communications. She adds: "LinkedIn is a communication and knowledge exchange platform that can bring immense value to our clients and partners. To achieve this, we have three rules: always relevant content, a message built on the needs of our clients and truly digital delivery of content. This is why we focus on podcasts and videos, which dominate our communication."

**Ana Pinelas Pinto**, partner and head of Marketing and Communications at **Miranda**, agrees with Ferreira: "For Miranda and Miranda Alliance, LinkedIn is the "go to" social media network, allowing us to share professional initiatives including events/webinars promoted by the firm or involving our lawyers. This platform is still perhaps the best communication channel to reach our target audience: clients and potential clients, business partners, law students and all the Legal community."

## MEASURING THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**Ana Craveiro**, director of Communication & PR at **Morais Leitão** is in agreement but emphasises the importance of measuring the results. "It is possible to measure the engagement of our effort through the shared content. We have seen greater demand from our audience. Their reaction and interaction with our materials is proportional to the effort spent on the content published. The more sophisticated and clear they are, the greater the reach and engagement achieved. The Business Academy for Lawyers, an intensive training created in partnership with Nova SBE, or the announcement of our lawyers' promotions are perfect examples of content that have boosted our target's engagement – people tend to relate to this type of content."

**Vera Teixeira da Costa**, Marketing and Communication director at **Raposo Bernardo**, agrees with Craveiro, when it comes to measuring:

"We measure the return on our communication through LinkedIn in several ways, whether by the generated leads, which result in contacts and then new clients or by the network of partnerships we have established. The success of our presence on LinkedIn is notorious, we currently have more than 13,000 followers."

## TAILORING THE MESSAGE TO EACH PLATFORM AND AUDIENCE

**Lourenço Ovídio**, head of Brand and Communications at **Abreu**, acknowledges LinkedIn as the most popular social media platform for law firms but recognises the importance of choosing the right message for each platform/target audience, "At Abreu, we look at each social media channel as a chance to get in touch with our audience but carefully select the content that better suits each channel and main target, as we do on Instagram, Twitter and even the Google Corporate profile. With this personalised content perspective, we are happy to see our LinkedIn and Instagram pages improving every day."

**Pedro Sá**, chairman of the Board at **PRA**, agrees that each social media platform requires a different approach. "We are present on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. All of them take time and effort, but all the work related to it, is conditioned by the content we want to convey. If, for instance, an Instagram's stories content needs a bit more thought to be catchy, as it is more ephemeral (maybe), the LinkedIn posts are more formal and professional." He adds: "The coexistence of all generations and the rise of so many social networks entail a process of constant adaptation and analysis to understand where we can add more value and better unlock our potential and relevance - without ever losing track of our values and the need to have fun."

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY?

**Nuno Galvão Teles**, managing partner at ML, points out the importance of guiding the lawyers in terms of best practice, but that everyone should have the freedom to express themselves. "Morais Leitão has been building its very own social media culture which includes specific guidelines for our lawyers, in the strict obedience of the Bar's Statute and our own ethical principles. If anyone wants to share something on a personal level, they can absolutely do so, using the materials created by the firm; after all, it is a business development strategy that builds on an individual effort. This is why we encourage everyone to be present on social networks, communicating in the light of the respective target that usually is more circumscribed."

Vera Teixeira da Costa adds: "We do not have a social media policy for lawyers to follow, beyond the usual practices and general firm's procedures, which apply to communication on social networks or through any other means. The difference of firms on social networks can only be done as it is outside social networks: with genuine action, which reveals the culture of the firm itself, which is manifested in the content of its publications, in the language used, in the subjects or in the frequency of publications."

PLMJ also are careful to manage their social media output. "We hold periodic training sessions on best practices when using LinkedIn for all our lawyers. We also run awareness campaigns on the use of professional profiles and the PLMJ page for the more than 400 people who work here", says Alexandra Ferreira.

Ana Pinelas Pinto also uncovers a collaborative culture of supporting and training the team while recognising individuality. "In general, all lawyers and professional staff are considered as 'ambassadors'. We frequently organise training sessions to help our lawyers and other professionals to create and/or improve their individual profiles and share content. Some lawyers are more active and particularly appreciate this social network and in that sense, can somehow be seen as 'influencers'.

## **HERD MENTALITY?**

While it may seem that law firms can sometimes adopt a herd mentality when it comes to their marketing efforts, not everyone agreed. When asked about whether this mindset exists, **Sofia Godinho**, head of Communication at PRA, candidly yet openly responds:

"We hope we are using it (social media) well, and that we reach our goal and that our message is clear. Is that always achieved? No. Do we keep on trying? Yes. No herd mentality here! We want people to know us better and to see a different side to the job. If we let you know that a lawyer has won a swimming competition or that we are having a motorbike ride on a given weekend, we want the ones who follow us to connect and see beyond our great Legal skills. We want to create an emotion and a bond. Of course, the same model does not fit all. The only thing that differentiates you is being you. No one else can do that for you - in the end, it is your essence and your authenticity that sets you apart.

Nuno Galvão Teles agrees: "We do not believe that there can be such a thing as a herd mentality due to the difference in the respective cultures. Trends and target may indeed overlap, but the approach should always be diverse."

## **INFLUENCING THE YOUNGER GENERATION**

Lourenço Obídio highlights the importance of promotion and preparation. "Our greatest influencers are all the lawyers and management teams, at every level. To promote it, we included at the onboarding process, when entering the firm, a complete course and manual pointing the best opportunities and the tools they may use, not only to communicate with their clients and peers but especially to interact, hear from them and choose the content that best suits their needs."

He adds: "Law firms are, in general, taking the best advantage of the social media tools, and it is great to watch how the sector has been improving in the best usage of the specifications for each channel." While Abreu may be leading the way on Instagram, showing they aren't afraid to experiment with tools other than just LinkedIn, what can we learn from these conclusions and is the Legal market missing a trick?

According to stats provided by Hootsuite, one of the leading social media management platforms, from a population of 10.18 million, there were 7.8 million social media users in Portugal as of January 2021. There were 5.39 million Instagram users in Portugal as of April 2021, which is nearly double the

number of LinkedIn users. There are now nearly 2 million users of Tik Tok in Portugal. All of these platforms, with the exception of LinkedIn, are being dominated by Gen Z, young people aged between six to 24.

**Ana Rumschisky** is one of Spain's top Marketing experts. A former brand manager of Gillette, Kraft, Grupo Cortefiel, and a current Professor of Marketing at the renowned IE Business School in Madrid, Ana shared with us what really makes the infamous Generations Z and Alpha (aged zero to ten) tick and how law firms can engage with them, as their future clients, employers and partners.

She explains, "Gen Z spend most of their time online, watching videos on their mobile devices. Therefore growing your law firm's reach with channels such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram Stories will be key if you want to capture their attention in the near future. These platforms have become part of their lives, as they provide them with entertainment and information that is relevant to them. This familiarity has also made them trust these platforms.

She adds, "LinkedIn still dominates as a professional network, helping millennials find a job or a contact. But one should bear in mind the language and type of message the younger generations, Z and Alpha, are used to: straightforward, short and visual. Therefore, I personally believe there is an opportunity for the "entertainment" platforms to consider professional content and for LinkedIn to make sure they adapt to a future client that has grown up in this specific digital environment."



# TOP TEN PORTUGUESE FIRMS RANKED BY LINKEDIN FOLLOWERS

N	LAW FIRMS	Total Followers	New Followers (last 30 days)	Engagement Rate%
1	VdA	21,579	241	3.72
2	PLMJ	19,151	261	5.18
3	Morais Leitão	19,090	233	6.46
4	Abreu Advogados	17,013	273	4.92
5	Raposo Bernardo	13,101	430	10.59
6	Sérvulo	10,227	135	6.26
7	SRS Advogados	10,192	131	5.22
8	TELLES	9,990	100	4.84
9	Miranda	9,726	106	4.23
10	PRA	8,134	180	5.48

\*\*\*Ranking data from LinkedIn and Instagram as of 22nd June 2021

## CONCLUSIONS

While LinkedIn clearly remains the preferred social media tool among law firms in Portugal, there is a sense that the tide may be turning. Those users of Instagram and even TikTok that are looking to join firms from Law school, as well as owners of start-ups and indeed even older users that could be current or potential clients, may need to be influenced in a different manner.

Over twenty years have passed since that infamous Bowie/Paxman interview. Bowie's crystal ball was scarily correct, but not even he could have imagined the impact the digital age would have on the way we communicate, interact with each other and consume content. Bowie died in 2016, still wondering whether there was life on Mars. He probably would have been the first to acknowledge that the Internet is not quite an alien life form yet. The idea of watching a managing partner perform a meme on TikTok may sound ridiculous now, but the quicker law firms familiarise themselves with the tools and platforms available, the closer their younger audience will feel, and that they are indeed from the same planet.

By Michael Heron.

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