

LinkedInGUIDE



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Why use LinkedIn in your job search?

LinkedIn is the largest professional networking platform and the most powerful job search tool today. There are more than 300 million LinkedIn users worldwide, and nearly 45% of those are considered decision-makers. An estimated 130,000 recruiters and many of the largest employers use LinkedIn to recruit candidates for employment. Many employers feel job seekers are unprofessional or unprepared if they do not have a LinkedIn profile. Your LinkedIn profile represents your professional online image – in other words – your personal brand. Use LinkedIn to position yourself as a professional in your field, so the right people and opportunities find you.

There are both free and paid LinkedIn membership levels. The free version is recommended for most users, as the premium and jobseeker packages are costly and provide very little additional functionality.

A networking strategy that combines face-to-face and social interaction is consistently cited as the #1 way to land a new job. Networking is effective because many open positions are not advertised and those who make the hiring decisions would rather speak to job seekers with whom they are familiar. Developing an online presence allows hiring managers to get to know you. They see you engaging with others in your industry, which provides social proof that you can be trusted.

Some people are wary of sharing their personal information on social media. While online privacy should never be taken lightly, you have complete control over the information you share on LinkedIn. You are intentionally populating your LinkedIn profile with work-related information to establish your professional online image.

In a social media job search, search engine optimization (SEO) is crucial. LinkedIn profiles rank high in Google search results. Be sure to include the keywords for your field throughout your profile for search engine optimization, this will allow recruiters and hiring managers to find you.

College students and other Millennials need to show prospective employers that they have transitioned from “college kid” to “young professional”. A professional-looking LinkedIn profile on the premier networking tool for business professionals can do just that.

PART 1: YOUR PROFILE

While LinkedIn is a great social network, it is not perfect. For instance, members cannot have more than one profile. Some job seekers have a varied skillset and may have different versions of their resume, each targeting a different job function or industry. Unfortunately, LinkedIn does not allow you to do that. If you are pursuing a job search in more than one direction, it is best to target only the primary job function in your LinkedIn profile. If they are similar job functions, you may be able to emphasize their commonality and combine them in one profile. Typically, this approach is not as effective as a focused job search targeting one specific role.

Before building your profile, or making multiple changes to an existing profile, it is recommended that you turn off your activity broadcasts. Otherwise, your connections' newsfeeds will be updated every time you hit the Save button. Keeping your activity private is also recommended for job seekers who do not want their current employers to know they are looking for another position. **Be sure to turn your activity broadcast setting back on when you are done.** You can easily access your privacy controls on the Privacy and Settings page.

Your resume and LinkedIn profile should complement one another. While they share most of the same information, the tone and overall feel of your profile should be more personable. Your LinkedIn profile should be a 3-dimensional picture of you. Since most profile sections are searchable, be sure to include keywords that a recruiter or hiring manager would use to search for someone like you. Use those keywords in context to demonstrate your expertise and the value you offer employers.

According to LinkedIn, users with 100% complete profiles are 40 times more likely to receive opportunities than job seekers with incomplete profiles. To achieve complete status, you need to include information in each of the Summary, Experience and Education sections and a headshot. You will notice that until you have achieved complete profile status, LinkedIn will remind you every time you log in to complete your profile. A complete profile is beneficial because potential employers and recruiters want to find out as much as they can about you. When a potential employer looks at your profile, they will be forming an opinion based on the information you provide, so be creative with your tag line, summary and skills.

LinkedIn Profile Sections

Basic Sections:

- Headline
- Photo
- Summary
- Skills
- Experience
- Education
- Recommendations
- Groups
- Public Profile URL

Additional Sections:

- Presentations, Photos and Videos
- Honors and Awards
- Courses
- Projects
- Languages
- Volunteer Activities
- Certifications
- Licenses
- Publications

Profile Section Character Limits

Each profile section has a maximum number of characters (including spaces) allowed. Experts recommend that you compose your profile in Microsoft Word, so that you can check character count, grammar and spelling as you edit. Keep in mind – one typo might cause a recruiter or hiring manager to dismiss you.

As LinkedIn frequently enhances system functionality, you may see these fields change over time. (Information current as of March 2014)

Headline (120)	Education/Fields of Study (100)
Summary (2,000)	Honors and Awards (1,000)
Position Description (2,000)	Skills (65)

Your Headline

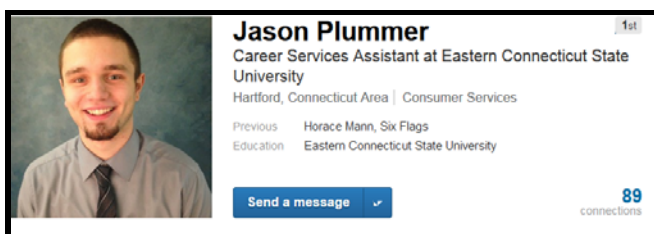
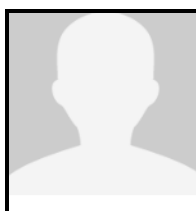
A catchy headline is important. Your headline is the slogan for your professional brand and it is visible to other members when you are active on LinkedIn. It should not simply match your current title (LinkedIn will default to your current position title). It could include your area of expertise or the value you offer an employer. Best practices dictate that for maximum SEO the optimal headline length is 3-5 words. Be creative and include the search terms someone would use to find a person with your skillset.

[Example: Graduating Visual Arts major offers expertise in UI/UX design and animation]

Your Photo

Always include a professional looking photo. People want to see with whom they are connecting. You should use a headshot of you alone, but no selfies if you want to be taken seriously as a job seeker! Your attire should be professional, and appropriate for your industry. You want to look smart and approachable. Some job seekers are afraid to show their photo because of perceived ageism in the job search. But, it is not worth trying to hide your age - they will find that out eventually. It is best to present yourself as a professional who will add value to their organization.

Which looks better to a potential employer?



Your Summary

Your profile should include a well-written summary that includes your experience, interests and where you would like to go in your career. The Summary Section is your elevator pitch – your Unique Value Proposition. The tone should be conversational, but not too casual. This is where you can get some of your personality across and incorporate some of your soft skills that would generally appear in a cover letter.

Write your summary in the first person, in narrative form rather than bullet points. Share your enthusiasm for your field and demonstrate the benefits your next employer will realize when they hire you. You do not need to use all 2,000 characters, but it typically takes 2-3 paragraphs to tell your unique story. Your goal is to provide a snapshot of you as a professional that makes the reader want to get to know you better. Again, one typo can eliminate you from consideration.

Skills & Endorsements

List 15 to 20 of your acquired skills, concentrating on those that are the most highly sought after within your industry. You can include up to 50 skills on your profile, but at this point in your life, you may not have 50 to add. Don't waste space with the basic skills that everyone has; include the key qualifications for the job you are seeking, including proficiency in specific software applications like Microsoft Excel or QuickBooks. Remember to include the search terms someone would use to find a person with your skillset as well as the key skills included in relevant job postings, throughout your profile. Don't just stuff your profile with keywords. Use the words properly, in context, to show potential employers that you have the skills they value.

As you type, LinkedIn will autocomplete the skill and show variations in a dropdown, if they already exist in the system. If one does not exist, you can add it simply by clicking the Add Skills button. You should always put your best, most relevant skills at the top of your list. You can reorder the skills by dragging and dropping.

Once you have skills included in your profile, your connections can endorse your mastery of these skills. These endorsements mean little when compared to an actual LinkedIn recommendation, but, they are still nice to have. Frequently when you sign in to LinkedIn, a blue box will appear offering you the opportunity to endorse some of your connections for skills included in their profile. All it takes is one click of a mouse to endorse someone, which is why they are not very significant.

Recommendations

LinkedIn's recommendation feature allows people who have worked together in an organization to endorse one another. LinkedIn recommendations are powerful! They provide social proof that hiring you is a good decision. Showing that people like to work with you and respect your work increases your "know, like and trust" factor, which is crucial to job search success. This third-party validation can encourage potential employers to contact you. Request recommendations from current and former supervisors, clients, coaches, faculty members and academic advisors.

It is easy to get recommendations – all you have to do is ask! On your profile page, click on the 'Ask to be Recommended' link and follow the steps. LinkedIn makes it easy to request recommendations with a template message – but many people are insulted if you do not take the time to customize your message. It only takes a minute to personalize your request. Remind the person where and when you worked together and a few of your major accomplishments. Depending on the individual, you may want to request that they comment on a specific skill or quality that you possess, i.e. project management expertise, customer service excellence, or an instance when you solved a big problem. This way, you can show a variety of different recommendations supporting the depth of your experience.

[Example: Hello Mark, I really enjoyed working for you at XYZ company, and appreciate all that you taught me during my spring 2013 Marketing internship. I was hoping that you would be kind enough to write me a LinkedIn recommendation based on the strong project management expertise I demonstrated working on new product rollouts. Thank you for your time and consideration.]

Using proper LinkedIn etiquette is important. Do not let your first interaction with someone be a request for a recommendation or an introduction. Establish your relationship on LinkedIn before asking for a favor. Remember that networking is a two-way street. Be sure to provide recommendations to others as well. Writing a recommendation for someone else frequently results in him or her returning the favor.

Experience

In your Experience section, list the exact same jobs that appear on your resume. Make sure your job titles and dates match exactly. Most hiring managers will review your LinkedIn profile when considering you for an interview. You would not want any perceived discrepancies to hurt your chances of landing a job.

You can copy and paste from your resume into your Experience section, adding each job one at a time. When pasted into LinkedIn, bullets generally come over as dashes. Note: you may have to add paragraph breaks between your paragraphs, and a space or two after your bullets, as these frequently get lost when pasting into LinkedIn.

When adding a company name, LinkedIn will autocomplete the name if it already exists in LinkedIn. If that is the case, select it from the dropdown and the logo will appear after you save the entry. You can add any company you wish, but you do not have the ability to add a company logo yourself.

Education

When including your education, list in reverse chronological order with your highest degree listed first. Refer to all institutions by their common name, as school names are frequently used as search terms to locate alumni. Be sure to include honors, internships and significant projects as well as your clubs and activities. As a college student or recent graduate, you can include your GPA if it is higher than 3.2. Once you have been out in the workforce for a few years, your GPA will lose significance and you can delete it from your profile.

Courses

List college coursework that is relevant to the job you are pursuing. Again, once you have been in the workforce for a few years, your coursework will begin to lose significance. Employers will want to see how you apply this knowledge on the job.

Include your high school as well, even if you have advanced degrees, so that your high school classmates can reconnect with you. Consider everyone you know a potential job lead. You never know who may have the perfect job for you.

Personalize Your Profile

You can reorder the various sections, to emphasize different aspects of your profile. Select a section by hovering your mouse over the section name until your cursor changes to a 4-way arrow resembling a snowflake. Then, you can simply drag it up towards the beginning of your profile or further down the page. Let go when it is in the right location.

You can add new sections to your profile as needed using the “Add Section” link between the bottom of the gray box and your first profile section.

Note: You cannot add sections that are not already predefined in LinkedIn, but there are workarounds to add just about any type of information that is appropriate.

Your Public Profile

Your public profile is what appears to people with whom you are not connected. This is the version of your profile an employer would typically see. You can control how you appear when people search for you online by indicating what information you would like to make public. Your LinkedIn profile is not only searchable on LinkedIn but on all online search engines. LinkedIn profiles generally rank within the top 3 results when your name is searched. To be searchable, your public profile must be visible, so check the “Make my public profile visible to everyone” option.

Customize your URL: Your default public profile URL has a series of numbers, letters and dashes after your name. Make it easy for people to find you, and not someone with the same or similar name, by customizing your public profile URL to remove those extra characters. It only takes a minute. If your name is already taken, you may be able to add your middle initial or designation after your name.

URL Customization Directions:

Scroll down to the “Your public profile URL” section. Click on the “Customize your public profile URL” link and enter your name the way you would like it to appear. Your custom URL must contain 5 - 30 letters or numbers without spaces, symbols or special characters. If your name is taken, the system should suggest some similar alternatives. If you do not like those, then enter what you would like until you find a version that is available.

Your customized public profile URL is what should appear in the contact information on your resume. You can also use it in your email signature to let people know that you have a LinkedIn profile that highlights your marketability.

Once your profile is ready, open up your privacy settings to make it discoverable through online search engines like Google, Yahoo!, Bing, and on LinkedIn.

Best Practices:

Update your profile weekly if you are actively looking for a job. This will raise your ranking in recruiters’ search results. Examples of profile changes include a new headline, recent training you have taken, professional associations you have joined or a project you have completed. You want to show that you are continually adding to your skillset to increase your marketability.

PART 2 – USING LINKEDIN

Make Connections

Once you have created a strong profile, the next step is to start building your network of connections. As the main reason to be on LinkedIn is to be found and to find other people, you should build a wide network based on past and present relationships. Colleagues, alumni, friends and those you have met through face-to-face networking can all be valuable connections. Network with recruiters and others in your field to expand your reach. You never know where these connections may lead. Basically, the larger your network the better your odds of the right people finding you. You never know who may have, or know, of an opportunity that would be perfect for you.

A major advantage of being connected to someone is that you can message them for free instead of having to pay for a LinkedIn 'InMail' message. You do not need to wait for an invitation to connect. If you believe someone could be beneficial to you in your job search or you would like to get to know them on a deeper level, send them an invitation to connect. Don't be afraid to accept an invitation from someone you do not know. Keep in mind, however, that someone who lives halfway across the globe probably cannot help you in your job search, unless you are looking for an international position.

Your goal is to build real networking relationships on LinkedIn – not only to make connections. Be transparent and open about who you are and what you are looking for. A network full of contacts you know and trust can be utilized for introductions to hiring managers or potential informational interviews. Use LinkedIn as your contact database – it will never go out of date. As your contacts update their profiles, you will be kept current on their latest jobs, projects and contact info. You can tag your connections to help categorize your contact list.

There are 2 schools of thought regarding connecting on LinkedIn. Some people are cautious and only connect with people they know. Others connect with everyone possible. Since you are using LinkedIn to expand your reach, best practices recommend that you connect with anyone who could potentially aid you in your job search. For college students, this could include your friends, your friends' parents, your parents' friends, professors and supervisors. As you meet people at face-to-face networking events, you may want to connect with them on LinkedIn.

When sending an invitation to connect to someone you do not know personally, it is bad form to use the generic template message LinkedIn provides. Many people are offended when people they do not know do not take the time to customize your message to them. It only takes a moment to remind the person where you met or worked together, and ask them to join your network. Keep in mind, you are trying to build or expand upon a relationship. Start a conversation before asking for an introduction or referral.

[Example: Hello Mark, I enjoyed meeting you last night at the Chamber of Commerce event and would enjoy continuing our conversation over a cup of coffee at your convenience. I'd like to add you to my LinkedIn network. Thank you.]

The LinkedIn network is structured like the spokes of a wheel. The people with whom you connect directly are your first-degree connections. *Their* connections are your second-degree connections. If you are looking to connect with an individual you do not know and see that you have a mutual connection, you can request an introduction from that person. Since LinkedIn is a relationship-building platform, you will generally find that people are generous with their introductions and referrals.

Join Groups

One of the best ways to maintain a visible presence on LinkedIn is to join groups and then take part in discussions. There are more than 2 million LinkedIn groups, categorized by industry, role or area of interest. Some groups are open to all LinkedIn members; for others you must ask permission to join. As a job seeker, you want to join 4 kinds of groups: where your competitors are, where your hiring managers are, groups that will help you keep up on your industry news and events, and college/employer alumni groups.

[For example, if you are a graduating Marketing major, you may want to join groups such as Product Marketing Managers and Jobs Social Media Marketing.]

Be sure to look at each group's statistics to make sure it is an active group, populated by the right type of members in terms of seniority, geographic location and primary language. If a group does not have a lot of members or few discussions, it may not be worth joining.

You can join up to 50 groups and 50 subgroups. One word of warning - the default email setting for groups is to send you one email per day. If you do not want to get daily emails from every group you join, you can change your setting for each group to daily or weekly group digest emails or no emails at all.

Be active in group discussions to build rapport with other members and to display your expertise and enthusiasm for your field. Groups are a great forum for asking career-related questions such as recommendations on training programs or advice on the best professional associations to join. Groups are also a great way to find out about local networking events within your industry. Some groups list jobs as well, but do not limit yourself to jobs listed in your groups. You can search jobs directly on LinkedIn, which will be covered later in this guide.

Be Active

You must be an active participant on LinkedIn to attract the attention of hiring managers and recruiters. Use LinkedIn's status update feature to publicize updates to your profile or share helpful content so that your activity will appear in your connections' newsfeeds. Keep your connections up to date on additions to your skill set, whether acquired through formal training, significant projects or learned on your own. Ongoing professional growth shows employers that you are committed to your career development.

With frequent activity, your LinkedIn profile will continually work for you keeping you “top of mind”. A hiring manager may not have a job for you today, but if they see your name often, they just might think of you when an opening presents itself.

Sharing content with your network is a subtle way to reach out to your network and share your knowledge in your field. Many people find it easiest to begin by “liking” or sharing other members’ articles. As you become more comfortable with LinkedIn interaction, you can progress to commenting on shared articles and then sharing your own content. Not sure where to find sharable content? On your LinkedIn homepage, you should see your Pulse newsfeed. You can customize your newsfeed to include only information of interest to you by selecting your preferred industries and topics and following leaders in your industry. Each time you log into LinkedIn, quickly scan your newsfeed for interesting content that you can like, comment on or share. Every time you like or comment on content in your newsfeed, that content is promoted to your network along with a link to your profile. It is a great way to attract attention to your profile.

You are not limited to a specific number of updates per day, but don’t get carried away. Best practices recommend no more than one or two a day. You do not want to be annoying to your connections. Status updates are limited to 700 characters, so most people write a sentence or two about a link to an online article. Images only show in status updates if there is an image associated with the article.

You should honor LinkedIn etiquette and be mindful of the information you share and how you say it. Your tone should be less formal than a resume and more like a professional elevator pitch. The quickest way to lose an employer’s interest? Using bad grammar or poor spelling. As LinkedIn does not currently have a spell check feature, you may want to create your content in Microsoft Word and paste it into LinkedIn after performing the spelling and grammar check.

[Example: Here is a great article on steps college students can take to jump start their career. <http://www.careerealism.com/job-search-before-graduation/>]

Searching for a Job on LinkedIn

LinkedIn has a large dedicated Jobs section. On an average day, there are more than 200K open US positions posted on LinkedIn. When you click on the Jobs tab at the top of the homepage you will be taken to a keyword search box as well as a list of suggested openings for you based on information included in your profile. Using the advance search feature on the left-hand column, you can focus your search on specific job titles, company size, industry or proximity to your zip code. You can also filter the results by companies with current job postings on LinkedIn or by relationship. Choose second-degree connections to increase your results. When viewing these search results, look for the number of people in your network for each company listed, and contact anyone who may be able to help you in your job search. But remember, people will generally respond more favorably if you ask for their opinion or information rather than asking directly for a favor.

LinkedIn also has a portal for internships and entry level jobs. www.linkedin.com/studentjobs.

You can apply for jobs directly through LinkedIn, but it is better to apply directly through the company website so that you can tailor your resume and cover letter to the position. This effort will greatly increase your chances of winning an interview. Following companies via their LinkedIn company page is another great way to show your interest.

LinkedIn is a great way to research a company to make sure it would be a good fit for you. You may already have connections who can provide you with information on working for a particular employer. If not, you can search through the member database for previous or current employees and ask them specific questions about the company culture. Sometimes they can provide tips on how to get your foot in the door, or how to ace a job interview. In some instances, they may be able to make a warm introduction to the hiring manager.

This guide is intended to provide you with the basic information you need to get started on LinkedIn and we hope you found it helpful. After you have drafted your profile, feel free to make an appointment with one of our career counselors for 1:1 assistance on how to use LinkedIn to its fullest capacity and best market yourself to potential employers.

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