

LinkedIn – how to get the most out of it



LinkedIn is the primary networking site for business. But it is so much more than just about a social network.

It is a place to give and receive information, to connect with new people, to source job opportunities, to research companies, to connect with like-minded people in interest groups and more.

In this day and age, it is very important for most people to have a LinkedIn profile. Not all professions or industries are high users of LinkedIn but it is better to be safe than sorry. LinkedIn is also a two-way street – you can be a passive participant but you can also be an active contributor to your own and others knowledge.

You can control the amount of visibility and information you share if you have any concerns. Be aware that LinkedIn often changes its features and ways of finding things. The best way to get the most out of LinkedIn is to explore all of the different sections and be a regular visitor.

Before you begin to add content, it's a good idea to review "Settings & Privacy" which can be found by clicking on your photograph. Initially, turn off activity feeds and notifications to your network until you get your profile just right.

Some important tips for your profile are:

- ▶ **Professional head and shoulders photograph.** The key word here is "professional". Don't choose the same photograph you would have on your Facebook page or a photograph that shows you enjoying some social behaviour. Your photograph should portray the sort of image you want a prospective employer to see.
- ▶ **Your name** – use the name that you wish to be known as and searched on. Include information about how people can contact you if you like. They can contact you throughout LinkedIn or you might add a personal email address or telephone number.
- ▶ **Your headline** – what are the professional characteristics that you wish to be known for – your professional title, your key strengths, your target role? You have up to 220 characters so think creatively about what you wish to be known for – this is the first thing people read and the words are used in the search algorithms that LinkedIn uses.
- ▶ **Experience** – this is content that traditionally people cut and paste from their resumes. Please don't do that. This is an opportunity to write short, succinct content that whets people's appetites and doesn't waffle on with a lot of detail. It isn't an online resume so it should be different. Try and come up with a descriptive paragraph about your work experience that highlights strengths and achievements. The same principles apply in terms of how many years to include – 7-10 years or the last three jobs is the general rule of thumb. This content is also used in the search algorithms that LinkedIn uses to match you with potential job opportunities.
- ▶ **Education** – this section is where you should include your formal educational qualifications. Start with the highest level of qualification you have achieved. Consider the relevance of including your high school. Not only does it give away your age, but there might be some intentional or unintended discrimination from where or when you went to school.



- ▶ **Licences, accreditations and certifications** can be included under “Accomplishments”. These are different from formal educational qualifications so should be included separately.
- ▶ **Volunteer experience** – if you have undertaken any community or volunteer work, this adds a lot of value to your profile so make a point of including details of this.
- ▶ **Endorsements** – these are an opportunity for people in your network to “endorse” you for possessing particular capabilities and experience. You can choose the categories but it is very easy for people to “tick and flick” and may not really know your capabilities. You can also do the same for others.
- ▶ **Recommendations** – now this is where the real value of LinkedIn comes in. This is an opportunity for you to give and receive written statements describing your great qualities and traits. These are a gift to both give and receive. Remember that being on LinkedIn is a two-way street – the more you give, the more you will receive.
- ▶ **Jobs profile** – if you are currently seeking new opportunities, you can include this in your headline and/or you can make yourself visible to recruiters in your profile under the “Jobs” heading.

Check out the other available categories in your profile and decide if you wish to include any additional information.

Once you have your profile at a point that you are happy with it, have someone else give you some feedback on it before opening it up. Then it’s time to start thinking about who you wish to connect with.

People in your network fulfil many roles. They might be people who:

- are in the same profession as you
- you wish to hear what they have to say
- can give you advice, information, support or introductions to others
- you have done business with and rate you highly
- you would like to have a future relationship with
- you would like to learn from



Remember to consider what can you give to others in your network?

LinkedIn is a powerful tool for your career development and can be of tremendous value to you. Remember to keep your profile up to date and always look to enhance it at every opportunity.