

How to Use LinkedIn: Developing a Great Profile and Effective Connecting

LinkedIn is a professional networking site with over 500 million users that continues to grow very fast. It is a tool where you can start developing your personal brand and market yourself with an online, interactive profile.

LinkedIn includes individual profiles of people from all over the world in almost every type of career. In addition, there are many professional groups in all types of careers that you can join and expand your network. Many jobs are being posted through these group networks. Furthermore, companies have individual pages that you can follow and learn much about them. Finally, there is an alumni tool

(www.linkedin.com/alumni) that helps you find alumni of your college/university in an easy to use format. In today's job and internship market, LinkedIn is the most important resource in which you should be fully engaged. We will start with how to build the best profile and then discuss how to most effectively use LinkedIn in your job or internship search.

How do You Build the Best LinkedIn Profile?

Think of your LinkedIn profile as an interactive portfolio. It is a summary of your work experience, school projects, leadership experiences, interests and capabilities that is designed to attract recruiters, networking contacts, and grad school officers. Your profile must be well written and complete to get the best results. Below are some important tips on how to do this.

Craft an informative headline: Do not use "Student at Husson University". Your headline gives people a short way to understand who you are in a professional context. Use something like "Psychology major seeking human resources position" or "Honors Biology major seeks a laboratory research position". Research profiles of other people you admire for ideas and inspiration. The main goal is to use career related keywords that people might use to search on LinkedIn.

Include an appropriate photo: LinkedIn is not the place to include a photo of you and your dog. Your profile photo should be a high quality, professional head shot of just you. Research shows that people with a profile photo are viewed 70% more than people without a photo.

Show off your education: LinkedIn has added the ability to include projects that you have worked on in school and actually upload presentations and other media. If you don't have much work experience, this is a very important addition that will help you. Be sure to include information from all the institutions you have attended. Include your concentrations and minors and highlight your activities while in college. The more keywords you use throughout your profile, the more you might be found by people who are searching on LinkedIn.

Develop a strong professional summary: Your summary statement should be a concise and confident representation of your goals and qualifications. It should resemble the content of your best written cover letter. Include relevant internships, volunteer work, and extracurricular activities. Tell people what you are interested in pursuing. Present your summary in short blocks or bullet points for easy reading. Your profile should be no more than 10-20 seconds of reading.

Optimize your profile to be found: When people search for others on LinkedIn, they use keywords and phrases for the type of people in which they are searching. That is why in your "Summary" and "Skills and Specialties" sections you want to use key words and phrases that a hiring manager might type to find someone like you. Recent research shows that 94% of HR and hiring managers are using LinkedIn to source talent. The best place to find relevant keywords is in the job listings that appeal to you or in the LinkedIn profiles of people who have the type of job you are searching for.

Claim your unique LinkedIn URL: To increase the professional results that appear when people are searching, set your profile to "public" and claim a unique URL for your profile (e.g., www.linkedin.com/in/yourname). You can use this URL on your resume and cover letter.

Join some professional groups: Joining groups and displaying the group badges on your profile are perfect ways to fill out the professionalism of your profile. This shows your desire to connect with people with whom you have something in common. Start by joining the Husson Alumni LinkedIn Group, but also join larger industry related groups related to the career that you want to pursue.

Get some recommendations: Recommendations are very brief statements from people with whom you have worked. The best profiles have one or two recommendations associated with each position the person has held. Think about getting recommendations from professors, internship supervisors, employer supervisors, and professional mentors.

Share your work: Finally you can add examples of your writing, design work, or other accomplishments. You can include a URL to your website, blog or Twitter feed. In addition, you can share PowerPoints, Prezi's or store a downloadable version of your resume.

100% Complete: Doing all the above should give you a profile that is 100% complete. Don't be shy about your profile: users with complete profiles are 40 more times likely to receive opportunities through LinkedIn.

How do you use LinkedIn in the job/internship search and for networking?

Personalize your connection requests: As you build your connections on LinkedIn, always customize your connection requests with a friendly note and, if necessary, a reminder of where you met or what organization you have in common. If you are being referred by a mutual friend, write a brief intro of who you are and why you would like to connect. People will be impressed with your personal touch.

Use the power of LinkedIn groups: Many people on LinkedIn have taken the initiative to create professional groups in their industries. These groups exist in almost every industry and this is where the real sharing on LinkedIn is happening. People are sharing ideas, articles, questions and much more in these groups. In addition, you can also view the profiles of all other members in the same group without being connected. Start with your school group, then find volunteer organizations, and organizations by industry area. As a group member, you can comment on discussions, find exclusive job listings, and find people who share common interests. The more you share in these groups, the more you show up on LinkedIn.

Follow and research companies: Many companies have LinkedIn pages that you can follow. You can research organizations, often see new hires, and follow what people are saying about the company. You might be able to network with those new hires and ask them how they got their jobs. At the very least you can

analyze their backgrounds to surmise what made them attractive to the employer.

Do some homework: Before an informational interview, job interview, or networking event, use LinkedIn to learn about the background and interests of the people you are scheduled to meet. You can often find tidbits or common interests that you can talk about in an interview or social setting.

Do an advanced search of people with your background: In an advanced search you can find companies that employ people with your skills. For example, if you are looking for art therapists in Phoenix, search profiles in that zip code using keywords like art therapy. You can also research people's profiles to see their career path and how you might proceed in the field.

Get to the hiring manager: Human Resources generally does not do the final hiring. LinkedIn's job search engine will show you your connections to a particular company and job. You may be able to find someone currently working in the division or department you are seeking. Pay close attention to the ones where you have a 1st or 2nd level connection and try to network for the opportunity. Finally, on LinkedIn's job search page you can find companies that you have ties to by looking at the "Jobs in Your Network" section and "Jobs you may be interested in". If you don't have an inside connection, look at profiles of people who work at the company to get an idea of their backgrounds and important skills.

One final note: LinkedIn will not be useful if you just sit there and stare at the screen. You need to make live connections with people for your job search to be successful.



Check out this video on how to use the new alumni tool in LinkedIn

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