



Building A LinkedIn Presence Guide

Introduction

Social Media is a broad term and there are many different types available each with different roles, purposes and audiences. This guide is deliberately focussed around 'LinkedIn' as a specific social networking tool for professionals and particularly beneficial for people with valuable work experience and who have built up a network of contacts. It also explains how recruiters use LinkedIn to identify potential candidates.

Using LinkedIn

Many people will have used LinkedIn as a tool for networking and have maybe even been drawn into the job hunting areas. However, when it comes to making the most of it as a valuable tool in a career transition scenario the key is to make your profile accessible and attractive to the recruiters/employers you want to work for in the **future** not just those from your past.

These FOUR key tips have been developed with input from professionals working in the recruitment field.

1. Develop an impressive personal profile

The most important consideration when developing your profile is to make sure your profile is targeted to your **future** career and not just a replication of a CV.

Just like your CV, it is imperative that you consciously develop and refine your profile to meet the needs and interests of the people you want to see it. Therefore you need to highlight your most relevant experiences and skills which can mean removing or minimising everything else.

LinkedIn provides a number of areas where you can refine or develop your profile to make it as effective as possible to your target audience.

Firstly, refine your **'headline'**. This means ignoring the pre-populated role the website adds and creating a more personalised headline which best captures your own Unique Selling Point (USP). Having a clear and enticing headline makes it far easier for the employers you want to attract to find you and make your personal profile stand out.

One simple technique is to check how distinctive your headline is by searching LinkedIn for people working in a similar profession or business area to you. The less people you come across the more distinctive your headline is.

Secondly, develop your **'summary'**. The focus of this section of your profile is to keep the people who your headline has attracted reading the rest of it. Advice is to try to offer a compelling and interesting story that will engage your intended audience. The most effective summaries provide a cohesive narrative that explains your career journey to date and leads them to your next obvious career move.

The LinkedIn summary section actually provides a lot of space to highlight past accomplishments and connect them to what you want to do next so make the most of it.

Thirdly, tailor your '**experience**'. In developing this section of your profile the key is to focus on what you have achieved and your main accomplishments over and above the key responsibilities that came with any role you might have had. This sells more effectively the offer or benefits you can bring to a future employer and ultimately why they should want you.

As with the starting point for this section, make sure these are relevant to the specific area of work that you are seeking to move into. It is important to consider how you 'frame' your experience both in terms of it being accessible and easily understood. Different industries/organisations use different terms for similar jobs so it is useful to be as clear as you can about what the job entails. In any explanation it is important to:

- Break down the job into its elements e.g. Project Manager; project planning, managing resource, overseeing progress and timescales, managing risks and issues etc.
- Consider the accessibility of your explanations, e.g. as a Control Room Inspector, responsibilities include managing call handlers or a call centre environment. The more you can highlight skills that are transferable into other sectors/jobs the better.
- Numbers are an excellent way to denote duties and results. Not only are they measurable, they provide a recruiter with real evidence in regards to your skills. So, a result along the lines of: "Created a new company website, which led to a 15 percent increase in Web traffic," clearly indicates your experience but also the result.

It is useful to invest time in getting your profile worded effectively as any recruiters search LinkedIn in the same way as you would use an internet search – using key words and phases. It is useful to bear this in mind when writing your profile.

Finally, select an appropriate photograph to complement your profile. In some instances, the photo used may be the only visual representation of you presented through your LinkedIn account. General advice is to use a professional-looking headshot.

2. Build a network of influential connections

Once you have developed your profile to attract interest from potential employers, the next step is to build your connections. The most important consideration here is to connect not only to the people you know but also the **people who work in your area of interest and you want to know**.

The whole purpose and role of LinkedIn is based on professional connections so understandably making the most of this is a huge part of effectively using the site. Connections can be an invaluable tool in searching for jobs or identifying the key people relevant to hiring decisions in your field.

A big decision is around **who** to connect to and this is something that many people have different views on. From one perspective, you never know who your connections might know and whether they may lead to other useful connections. As your primary connections serve as introductions to the people they then know.

On the other hand there are very legitimate concerns about connecting with just anyone and LinkedIn itself even says that you should only "connect with those you know and trust". One way of looking at it is that connecting with someone on LinkedIn is like you vouching for each other's professional experience and skills. Therefore if you don't know

someone at all and have zero connections in common it is probably best to remain unconnected.

Some other simple tips in developing your connections include:

- Make use the “people you may know” feature on the site.
- When making connections try to make them personalised (i.e. when you worked together).
- Invest in cultivating and building connections (e.g. by responding to messages in a timely manner).
- Spend time searching through your connections and see where people are working to investigate potential employers.

3. Build up targeted recommendations that support your experience

A key function within your LinkedIn profile is recommendations and endorsements. These are both examples of how LinkedIn can offer so much more value to both job seekers and recruiters than a CV. Both recommendations and endorsements can strengthen your LinkedIn profile by demonstrating external validation of you and what you can do. There are some key differences between the two.

Endorsements are generally not quite as impressive as recommendations because users are simply checking a box and aren't actually providing any details or direct testimonial. Endorsements are welcome additions to your LinkedIn profile and give an indication of your abilities in certain areas.

You can't request an endorsement but you can set up your profile to make it easy for your connections to endorse you. Under 'edit profile'; you can select to 'manage your skills and endorsements' settings. Here you can add and remove areas of expertise and select that you want to be included in endorsement suggestions to your connections.

Recommendations are generally more powerful, mainly because they are a written testimonial of your abilities and work from one of your LinkedIn connections. The production of a recommendation naturally takes more time and effort than an endorsement and therefore carries more weight. Another key consideration is who the recommendation is from. Recommendations from former managers and impressive clients tend to carry the most influence with potential recruiters.

General advice is to try to add targeted recommendations to selected positions especially those most relevant to the work you are seeking. The easiest approach is to invite one or two people to recommend you although you may have to accept not everyone will be able to spare the time or show the commitment to do so especially ex-colleagues/managers. It can be helpful to be direct about what type of roles you are now targeting and the skills you would like them to highlight. This not only ensures you get what you want but can actually make it easier and faster for them.

4. Join relevant LinkedIn 'Groups'

The most exciting people to hire are the people who are the most excited about what they do. Show your enthusiasm by joining and participating in groups related to your field of expertise.

Also comments from industry insiders is that some recruiters actually use job sector specific groups on LinkedIn as ways of seeking potential talent pools for upcoming roles. For this reason, LinkedIn groups can be one of the most important activities to get involved in.

It is easy enough to become a member of a group on LinkedIn but this will not necessarily be enough to make you stand out to prospective employers. The advice is that you need to be an **active participant in groups** in order to make yourself known and respected within your chosen area of interest. Being active in a group can also have an in-direct benefit in helping you make new connections.

How Recruiters Use LinkedIn

Understanding how recruiters use LinkedIn can help influence the content of your profile also.

Many recruiters have access to LinkedIn's Advanced Search. This Search is made up of LinkedIn's two core results: people and jobs. Advanced People Search allows recruiter to find people based on where they live, where they used to work, and their interests. Advanced Jobs Search, on the other hand, narrows down results by things like job functions and experience level.

As many employers' searches are dependant on the principles of 'Boolean Search' (similar to searching on an internet search engine – e.g. Google) it is useful to avoid using slashes between critical keywords, for example, "sales/marketing", as LinkedIn search technology may not always recognise the two words separately.

Review of key points:

- **Build an impressive profile but make sure you keep this up-to-date as a core part of your job searching process.**
- **Target your profile and activity towards your specific sector and key employers.**
- **Keep yourself visible by connecting with people in your specific area of interest, join relevant 'Groups' and actively share or comment on content where appropriate.**

Next Steps

Having researched the job sector, built a network, and identified specific roles to apply for, our next guide focusses on how best to apply for a role and most importantly get your application noticed.