

How to Network Professionally Online

You've heard it a million times (so it wouldn't hurt to hear it again): "Success is not just about what you know; it's about who you know." With LinkedIn, the world's largest professional online network, the "who" is at your fingertips. Follow these easy steps to get connected now—and to turn those connections into opportunities.

☐ 1. 100% complete = 100% more likely to get noticed

You can't build connections if people don't know you exist or see what you have to offer. Your LinkedIn profile is your online business card, your resume, and your letters of rec all in one. Don't be shy: users with complete profiles are 40 times more likely to receive opportunities through LinkedIn.

☐ 2. You're more experienced than you think

Complete profiles are so important because the more information you provide, the more people will find reasons to connect with you. Think broadly about all the experience you have, including unpaid internships, volunteer work, and organizations. You never know what might catch someone's eye.

☐ 3. Use your inbox

Contrary to popular belief, networking doesn't mean reaching out to strangers. The best networks begin with those you know and trust, and then grow based on personal referrals. Start building your LinkedIn network by uploading your online address book and connecting to friends, relatives, internship colleagues, and professionals you know in the "real world."

☐ 4. Get personal

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're being referred by a mutual friend, write a brief intro of who you are and why you'd like to connect. You'll impress people with your personal touch.

☐ 5. Join the "in" crowd

Another way to form new online relationships is to join LinkedIn Groups. Start with your university group—alums love to connect—and then find volunteer organizations or professional associations you already belong to. As a member, you can comment on discussions, find exclusive job listings, and meet people who share common interests.

☐ 6. Lend a (virtual) hand

As you build connections and group memberships, think about what you can do to support other people. Comment on a connection's status update, forward a job listing that fits the criteria of a friend, or write a recommendation for a colleague. You'll find that your generosity is always rewarded (and, of course, it feels good to help someone!).

☐ 7. Update your status #early and #often

Networking is not just about who you know; it's about who knows you. Stay on other people's radar screens by updating your LinkedIn status at least once a week—you can do this directly on LinkedIn or by linking your Twitter account and marking tweets with #in. Mention events you're attending, projects you've completed, and other professional news.

☐ 8. Question (and answer) everything

LinkedIn's Answers feature is a great place to seek advice from a wide variety of people all around the world. You can also show the world what you have to offer by answering people's questions about a topic where you have some expertise. The more active you are in Answers, the more people will view your profile and want to connect with you.

☐ 9. Do your homework

Before an informational interview, a job interview, or a networking get-together, use LinkedIn to learn about the background and interests of the people you're scheduled to meet. Access Company Pages to research organizations and their employees, and use Advanced Search to find things you have in common with people you're meeting.

☐ 10. Now step away from the computer...

There's a perception that some people are only comfortable communicating online, so be sure to support your online networking with real human contact. Set up phone calls, attend live events, and send snail mail notes to people you interact with on LinkedIn. Remember that online methods should supplement, not replace, in-person relationship-building.

Checklist: 10 Online Job Hunting Tips

Want to increase your chances of landing a great job online? LinkedIn can help you find -- and attract -- the best opportunities. Here are some tips:

☐ 1. Make time

It's easy to let job hunting fall to the bottom of your to-do list, but you can't afford to let that happen. Schedule at least 15 minutes a day in your calendar to work on your resume, update and check online networking profiles and search job listings. Opportunities come and go quickly, so you need to be in the game on a daily basis.

☐ 2. Get noticed

What better way to impress a recruiter than to have a professional networking profile appear as the first search result for your name? Completing your LinkedIn profile to 100% with your education, experience, recommendations and group memberships will increase your search ranking and give employers a strong impression before you ever meet in person.

☐ 3. Be keyword savvy

Make sure your profile is chock-full of keywords that will attract a recruiter's attention. Look through job postings and LinkedIn profiles that appeal to you and incorporate some of the same words or phrases. In addition to job- and industry-specific words, recruiters also love leadership terms (captain, president) and action words (managed, designed).

☐ 4. Reach out

Connect on LinkedIn with everyone you know -- friends, family, neighbors, professors, family friends, internship colleagues and others. Once you're connected, send each person a friendly message on LinkedIn, asking if they would keep an eye out for the particular kind of job or jobs you're seeking or if they can introduce you to other helpful contacts.

☐ 5. Spread the word

To build your credibility and stay on people's radar screens during your job hunt, regularly update your status on LinkedIn and other social networks. You might share links to articles you think would be relevant to people in your field (to show you are up on the news), announcements about events you're attending (to show that you are actively networking) and good career news (to show that you're headed for success). Just remember to keep your updates clean and appropriate.

☐ 6. Get into groups

Beyond connecting to individuals, join LinkedIn groups related to your alma mater, professional associations, volunteer organizations and industries you want to join. Every discussion in which you comment is an opportunity to market yourself to people who might be hiring, and every group contains a "Jobs" tab where members post opportunities to one another.

☐ 7. Search high and low

What makes LinkedIn's job postings different from others is that they don't just tell you who is hiring, they tell you how you are personally connected to that company through your network. Even when you see a job listed on another site, LinkedIn can help you research people at that company and tell you how you are personally connected through your network. No matter where you look for jobs, cast a wider net by altering your search terms and location criteria from time to time.

☐ 8. Follow companies

When you see a job you like on another job board, use LinkedIn as a company research tool. Check out the LinkedIn Company Page of any organization where you'd like to work and click "Follow company." Activities of that organization on LinkedIn (job postings, hires, announcements) will appear on your homepage and alert you to potential opportunities.

☐ 9. Persist (without pestering)

While you don't want to be a pest, persistence is a very important component of the job search process. Sending follow-up messages through LinkedIn can help you stand out from other candidates. Every time you send someone a message through LinkedIn, the recruiter or hiring manager can easily click over to your profile and check out your credentials.

☐ 10. Consider Job Seeker Premium

Once you have a strong LinkedIn profile, you want to make sure it gets to the top of recruiters' inboxes when you apply for jobs. LinkedIn offers an upgrade feature called Job Seeker Premium that, among other benefits, places your profile at the top of the list of applicants to the jobs you apply for on LinkedIn. Premium subscribers are twice as likely to be contacted by recruiters and 80% more likely to be found in search. Check it out at <http://www.linkedin.com/jobseeker>.

Checklist: How to Find Your Career Passion

Everyone tells you to "Do what you love!" It's great advice, but what if you don't yet know what kind of work will be most fulfilling? Check out the ways that LinkedIn can help you find your professional passion.

□ Search high and low

Pick absolutely anything that interests you and type that word or phrase into the "Advanced Search" box on LinkedIn. For instance, let's say you love basketball. Just type "basketball" and your results will include the profiles of anyone on LinkedIn who mentions the sport in his or her profile. Review these profiles to discover the professional and educational experience, skills and qualities needed to land various positions related to basketball and see if any organizations, job functions or groups in these peoples' profiles catch your eye as potential options for you. Don't love what you find? Try searching on a different term!

□ Be a joiner

You can join groups on LinkedIn related to any career interest that even vaguely appeals to you. Go ahead and explore! If you like cooking, join a group for professional chefs. If you've fantasized about starting your own business, join a group for entrepreneurs. Then, if you find yourself really engaged in the content, start contributing to discussions and connecting with other members. Your interest may be an indication that this is a career path you should pursue. On the other hand, if you lose interest after receiving a few updates from a group, then that profession might not be the best choice for you.

□ Eavesdrop on employers

You might have a few organizations in your mind that sound like good places to work -- organizations you've seen around campus or heard about through your friends or family -- but you're not sure exactly what kinds of jobs exist at that company or even what that company actually does. LinkedIn Company Pages will give you insight into any organization's employees, divisions and types of jobs. Plus, by "following" any company on LinkedIn, you can "listen in" on their news, events, announcements and more. Company Pages provide a window into a company's culture as well as alerting you to available positions.

□ Be curious

Once you've explored some things you know you're interested in, start expanding your horizons. Scan the discussions in your college's LinkedIn Group and read about something new and different. Click on the "Jobs" tab on LinkedIn and start searching through thousands of unique possibilities. You can limit your job search to positions within 10 miles from home or broaden it to include cities around the world. Finding job openings in Paris or Sydney is just as easy as finding a job down the street. Play around. Experiment. It's quick, it's easy, and it's free. You never know what might ignite a passion.

□ Connect with passionate people

Look around your life for other people who share your passions -- or any passion. Just as you should connect on LinkedIn with people who share your alma mater or a past internship employer, you should also connect with people who share your personal interests or hobbies. Look for people who inspire you in groups and send them a connection request asking for a few words of wisdom. Most passionate people are happy to share their excitement about what they do.

□ Don't be afraid to fail

It's unlikely that you'll find your passion just by sitting at your computer. You have to go out in the world and try new things. Do more volunteering, take on part-time work, sign up for a class in something you've never studied. Use LinkedIn to discover your passion and find opportunities, and then get out there and take action! Your path is out there, just waiting to be discovered.

How to Conduct Essential Employer Research on LinkedIn

One of recruiters' biggest complaints about entry-level job candidates is their lack of knowledge about an employer's organization. Before attending a career fair, networking meeting, or job interview, you must do your homework. Here are some tips on how to use LinkedIn to research effectively and gain an advantage over your less-prepared peers.

☐ 1. Be open to new opportunities

While you may have some idea of the company you want to work for, there are lots of opportunities at organizations you've never even heard of. Keep an open mind as you conduct your research and remember that the wider you expand your search, the more likely you are to find a great job.

☐ 2. Just start searching

LinkedIn's Advanced Search is a powerful tool for job seekers like you. Simply type in any keyword -- "marketing," "accounting," "theater," "baseball," "Seattle," "India," anything -- and you'll see the LinkedIn profiles of people whose careers include that keyword. This is a great way to explore potential career paths and to learn about companies or job titles that might be a perfect fit for you. Save your searches to keep a record of careers and people that interest you.

☐ 3. Put yourself in good Company (Pages)

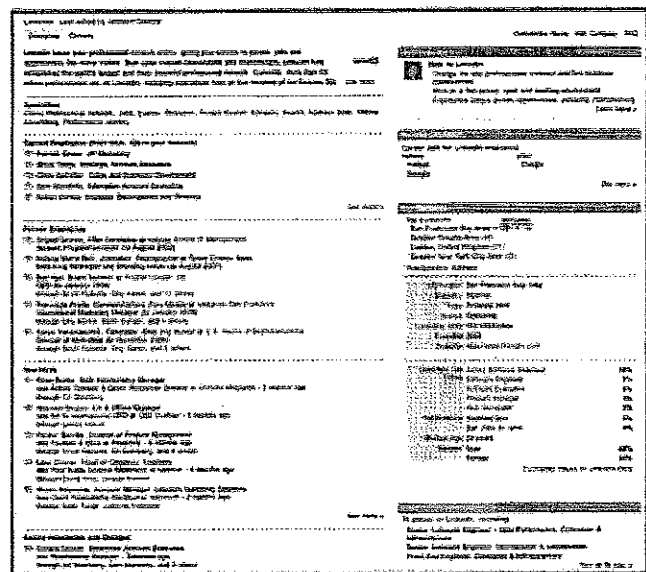
As you find employers you might want to work for, check out their LinkedIn Company Pages. Each page provides a wealth of information about an organization's operations, employees, locations, available jobs, and more. Plus, when you visit any of the 150,000 Company Pages on LinkedIn, you'll see how you are personally connected to people at that organization. Then you can reach out for advice or to request informational interviews and referrals to open positions. Not connected to anyone at your target company? Join a university alumni, industry, or interest group.

☐ 4. Know before you go

It's the night before a big career fair, informational interview, or job interview and you're feeling really nervous. Calm those jitters by using LinkedIn to research the person or people you'll be meeting. You can discover facts about someone's education, work experience, interests, group memberships, and connections you might have in common. This will make you feel more prepared and confident and provide you with some good conversation starters.

☐ 5. Follow the buzz

Want to keep up to the nanosecond with a particular company's news and image? Add the LinkedIn Company Buzz application and you'll be able to view a constant feed of everything people are saying about that organization on Twitter. This is an absolute must the night before a big job interview!



How to Build a Professional LinkedIn Profile

Think of your LinkedIn profile as an interactive business card. It's a summary of your professional experience, interests, and capabilities that is designed to attract the attention of important people who are searching for you online — recruiters, networking contacts, and others. A strong profile is a key differentiator in the job market. So let's get started...

☐ 1. Craft an informative profile headline

Your profile headline gives people a short, memorable way to understand who you are in a professional context. Think of the headline as the slogan for your professional brand, such as "Marketing Professional" or "Strategic Planner and Consultant." Check out the profiles of other professionals you admire for ideas and inspiration.

☐ 2. Display an appropriate photo

Remember that LinkedIn is not Facebook. If you choose to post a photograph — and we recommend that you do — select a professional, high-quality headshot of you alone. Party photos, cartoon avatars, and cute pics of your puppy don't fit in the professional environment of LinkedIn.

☐ 3. Show off your education

Be sure to include information about all institutions you've attended. Include your major and minor if you have one, as well as highlights of your activities. It's also appropriate to include study abroad programs and summer institutes. Don't be shy — your LinkedIn profile is an appropriate place to show off your strong GPA and any honors or awards you've won.

☐ 4. Develop a professional summary statement

Your summary statement should resemble the first few paragraphs of your best-written cover letter — concise and confident about your goals and qualifications. Remember to include relevant internships, volunteer work, and any extras you might possess. Present your summary statement in short blocks of text for easy reading. Bullet points are great, too.

☐ 5. Fill your "Specialties" section with keywords

"Specialties" is the place to include key words and phrases that a recruiter or hiring manager might type into a search engine to find a person like you. The best place to find relevant keywords is in the job listings that appeal to you and the LinkedIn profiles of people who currently hold the kinds of positions you want.

☐ 6. Update your status weekly

A great way to stay on other people's radar screens and enhance your professional image is to update your status at least once a week. Tell people about events you're attending, major projects you've completed, professional books you're reading, or any other news that you would tell someone at a networking reception or on a quick catch-up phone call.

☐ 7. Show your connectedness with LinkedIn Group badges

Joining Groups and displaying the group badges on your profile are the perfect ways to fill out the professionalism of your profile and show your desire to connect to people with whom you have something in common. Most people start by joining their university's LinkedIn group as well as the larger industry groups related to the career they want to pursue.

☐ 8. Collect diverse recommendations

Nothing builds credibility like third-party endorsements. The most impressive LinkedIn profiles have at least one recommendation associated with each position a person has held. Think about soliciting recommendations from professors, internship coordinators and colleagues, employers, and professional mentors.

☐ 9. Claim your unique LinkedIn URL

To increase the professional results that appear when people type your name into a search engine, set your LinkedIn profile to "public" and claim a unique URL for your profile (for example: www.linkedin.com/in/yourname). This also makes it easier to include your LinkedIn URL in your email signature, which is a great way to demonstrate professionalism and computer savvy.

☐ 10. Share your work

A final way to enhance your LinkedIn profile is to add examples of your writing, design work, or other accomplishments by displaying URLs or adding LinkedIn Applications. By including URLs, you can direct people to your website, blog, or Twitter feed. Through Applications, you can share a PowerPoint or store a downloadable version of your resume.

Q&A: LinkedIn Etiquette Guide for Students & Recent Grads

Etiquette rules in the offline world are pretty clear: Say please and thank you; shake hands firmly; keep your elbows off the table. But what are the rules for interacting professionally online? Here are some guidelines for managing your e-manners.

Q: How often should I check LinkedIn?

A: While logging in daily is ideal, what's most important is that you maintain a consistent presence and respond to messages and connection requests in a timely fashion. LinkedIn will send you a Network Update once a week or once a day -- you can use that email as a reminder to log in and send someone a note, respond to a request or post to a group discussion.

Q: How do I make sure my LinkedIn profile is professional?

A: First, be totally truthful and never stretch the facts -- remember that your profile is public. Next, post a photo that is professionally appropriate (no pets, quirky backgrounds or funny expressions). Finally, write up your experience and credentials as you would present them on a resume or cover letter. Your writing can be a little less formal on LinkedIn, but proper grammar, spelling and proofreading are essential.

Q: What's the best way to request to connect with someone?

A: LinkedIn provides a basic message "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn," but it's a good idea to customize your requests. You'll get a better response rate if you write a brief, personalized, polite note to each potential connection reminding them how you met (if necessary) and explaining why you're interested in connecting -- e.g., to ask for advice or to keep in touch after meeting at a conference.

Q: How do I ask for an introduction?

A: When you request an introduction, you'll be prompted to write a note to your mutual connection and then a separate note to the person you want to meet. In both cases, draft a compelling subject line and a short note that introduces you and explains why you hope to connect. Just remember never to ask directly for a job -- it's not polite or appropriate.

Q: What should I do if someone doesn't respond to my connection request or message?

A: There is no guarantee that everyone you want to connect with will want to connect with you. If you haven't heard from a potential connection in over a month, it's okay to send that person an email to say that you've reached out and would like to connect. If that doesn't work, it's best to move on to people who are more interested or responsive.

Q: How do I handle a request from someone I don't know or don't want to connect with?

A: You can either reply with a short note requesting an explanation ("Hi - can you remind me how we know each other?") or you can click "Archive" to ignore the request or save it for the future. If you definitely don't want to connect, simply click "Archive" and move on. If you want to report the person as a spammer, then click "I don't know this user." Users who receive several of these clicks are removed from LinkedIn.

Q: Will people know if I un-connect from them?

A: If you unconnect from someone, that person will not be alerted. Of course, if that person looks through his or her contacts or attempts to send you a message, you will no longer be shown as a 1st-degree connection.

Q: How many groups should I join?

A: The number of groups you belong to on LinkedIn should reflect approximately the number of professional affiliations you have (or want to have) in real life. For instance, if you attend college, are an accounting major and love social media, it would be great to join your alumni group, an accounting group or two and a social media group or two. To get the most benefit from group participation, quality trumps quantity.

Q: What is the most polite way to ask someone to write a recommendation for me?

A: Most importantly, you want to request recommendations from people who really know you and your work, such as former bosses or professors. Customize each Recommendation Request with a polite, gracious and personalized note, and provide a few words outlining the accomplishments or qualities this person might mention about you. And, of course, always thank the person for writing the recommendation.

Q: What's appropriate to write in my LinkedIn status updates?

A: Although LinkedIn status updates can cross-post with Twitter, be careful only to post professional comments to LinkedIn. This means no posts about the weather or your crazy cat. The best status updates are like snippets from a networking conversation: quick notes about events you're attending, accomplishments you're proud of, articles or books you've read and professional announcements like a new position.

Overall, use your judgment, be polite and act maturely. If you wouldn't do it in person, don't do it on LinkedIn!