



LinkedIn: How to use it effectively

It's proven that LinkedIn can create new business and career development opportunities. With over 400 million members in 200 countries and 20 million users in the UK alone, LinkedIn is a professional platform that can boost your reputation. However, if you're going to use it, you need to use it well. Here's what we've learned about creating LinkedIn profiles for ourselves and clients.

Creating a profile

LinkedIn asks you to complete a number of sections, namely:

- **Headline**

A LinkedIn headline is what appears after your name. It is the most important section of your LinkedIn profile and will be used when people search for contacts of a particular type. The headline is about what you are and what you do. Some people list their current job title and company but you have 120 characters to add extra information. You may also want to say the area you specialise in, that you are looking for new opportunities or keen to connect with specific types of people.

For example:

- *Corporate lawyer helping the aviation sector to agree new contracts. Clients include: BA, Virgin and Monarch.*
- *Experienced interim property marketing director actively seeking new in-house contract opportunities.*

- **Profile picture**

A professional, high-quality head shot should be used rather than one of you on an evening out with friends, glass in hand!

- **Summary**

An effective LinkedIn summary is what makes people want to know more about you and ultimately connect with you, so it is important that you reflect your professional self and include interesting and relevant information that's going to show you off in the best light. Think about the audience that you are writing for. What is it you want them to learn from your profile and how do you want them to feel?

Include your key achievements, awards, accreditations or additional training you have received, but go easy on the management speak and those phrases that pepper CVs but actually say nothing, like 'self-starter'.

- **Experience and skills sections**

Include key skills that will make it easier for users to identify your talents. Which skills and experiences make you a unique and essential professional? You can add up to 50, although most people tend to list about 10.

If you are struggling, ask colleagues what they consider as your key skills and, for inspiration, click on the 'More' section from the top menu on LinkedIn, choose "Skills and Expertise" and type in one of your skills. You'll be able to see other people who have indicated they have this core skill and check their profiles to see if there are others you wish to add.

Once your profile is set up, your contacts are able to endorse your skills – this can quickly build a picture to other users of your strengths.

You should keep your profile up-to-date to make the most of LinkedIn and connecting with your professional network. So that connections can see your updates, make sure you 'switch on' the 'Notify your network?' prompt box on the right hand side of your profile page.

Connections

Once you have completed your profile, you have a strong platform for connecting with people you know and want to know. You just search by name and send an invitation to connect along with an indication of how you know them.

You are limited to sending 5,000 invitations to connect. Any more and you will experience site difficulties. However, if you genuinely have thousands of potential connections, LinkedIn can increase this limit on request. However, this is unlikely to be a problem as most users have between 500-999 connections, according to Stastica.com, with just 1.1% of users having more than 10,000 connections.

Once you have connected on LinkedIn, you are considered a 1st degree connection and can communicate with each other via the site and see each other's updates. Your 1st degree connections also serve as introductions to the people they know and to the people they know, these connections are considered to be 2nd tier and 3rd tier connections.

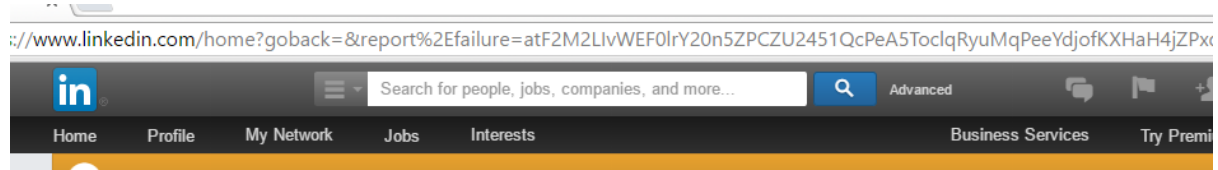
A 2nd tier connection means you have a mutual 1st tier connection. You are not able to message this person. You can see their full profile but not their email address. If you would like to be connected, it is sometimes useful to ask your mutual connection for an introduction. Otherwise, request to be connected and mention that you have a mutual connection and reasons for connecting.

A 3rd tier connection is a contact of a 2nd connection. You may not be able to see their full name, only the headline, which explains why that is such an important part of LinkedIn. You may not even be able to see where they currently work. And you may not be able to connect. This all depends on their settings. You are not able to message them, unless they are members of the same group, or you have a Premium (subscription-based) account, in which case you can send them inMail, LinkedIn's private email system.

Advanced search options

More advanced search options exist can help you build specific types of contacts.

To conduct a more advanced search, click the magnifying glass at the top of the home page and filter as appropriate.



When names appear as John S. or Jane L. this means they are outside of your network and you are unable to connect with them. To avoid this, click on their profile and try to extract as much information as you can. Type this information into Google and their public profile should appear. Then type in their full name into the search field.

Your company profile

If your company has a LinkedIn profile, make sure you link to it and follow it. It can be a useful source of news and content to share with your connections and also helps to put your work and skills into perspective. Your activity may also help your business to recruit new and likeminded staff or win new work too.

Groups

LinkedIn groups provide a place for professionals to establish themselves as industry experts. The aim of LinkedIn groups is to allow professionals in the same industry or with a similar interest to share content, posts, vacancies and interact with other professional users. Active involvement in groups helps make new primary connections, which, in turn, grows your exposure to people who are looking for your skill set.

They are a bit 'suck it and see'. Some groups are active and have interesting discussions, which can help you meet new contacts; others look relevant but turn out to be moribund. You will work this out soon enough.

Post, like, comment and share

Posting, liking, commenting and sharing content is fundamental to engaging with others on LinkedIn.

To increase traffic to your LinkedIn profile, you have to interact with other users. If you've written an article, for example, you can share it on the site and pose a question to encourage other users to engage. If you are attending a conference, you can mention this and ask your network if they'll be there. If you've launched a new product or service, you should definitely announce it on LinkedIn and ask for feedback.

To maximise the content you add to LinkedIn, you can also link your other professional social media accounts, such as Twitter and Facebook (if it's a business account). Useful guidelines can be found via [this link](#).

Recommendations

Recommendations can really strengthen your LinkedIn presence as they are third-party validation of your experience and strengths. You can email your contacts via LinkedIn to give you a recommendation.

In terms of how many recommendations you should have, some professionals advise one for each job you have had, while some recruiters say they won't look at a profile that doesn't have at least ten recommendations. The truth is that quality, well-written recommendations giving a more rounded view of you and your abilities will always help, especially if this comes from a senior person within the organisation. Too many hastily written recommendations speak far less than a few considered ones written by senior, well-respected employers.

Upgrading to Premium LinkedIn

All that we've told you about so far applies to a basic, free LinkedIn account.

You can also pay to upgrade to one of four different Premium LinkedIn accounts, which, for varying monthly fees, allow you to be even more targeted in how you use the network. These are:

1. **Job Seeker**, as the name suggests, helps with your job search. Through this option, you can direct mail recruiters, become a 'featured applicant' moving to the top of recruiters' lists, see how you compare to other applicants, and see who has viewed your profile in the past 90 days.
2. **Sales Navigator**, helps to identify new sales leads. It allows access to direct mail, see which prospects have been interested in you over the last 90 days, create custom lead lists with advanced search filters, view unlimited profiles from search results and suggested profiles (up to 3rd degree), and provide recommendations as well as timely sales insights on your accounts and leads.

3. **Recruiter Lite**, which is aimed at recruiting the right people into your business. This provides InMail messages with templates, the chance to see who's viewed your profile in the last 90 days, an advanced search designed for recruiting, access to unlimited profiles from search results and suggested profiles – up to 3rd degree, tracking candidates and open roles with Projects, and the ability to manage the candidate pool in one place.
4. **Business Plus**, which is a much-enhanced profile and keeps your profile open for all LinkedIn members to view, allow you to send InMail to any LinkedIn member, see who has viewed your profile and have access to unlimited searches. It is likely to be of most interest to growing businesses and could really help to boost contacts.

Summary

LinkedIn is one of the most valuable professional networks available, and if used correctly it can create various business and career opportunities, as well connecting with numerous industry professionals and organisations. Keep your profile up-to-date and you never know the opportunities that could come your way as a result.