



THE 4½ MINUTE GUIDE TO

NETWORKING ON LINKEDIN

"Hello, I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn" is the message everyone professes to hate receiving. And yet LinkedIn has never been more popular—or more useful for networking. The service boasts more than 400 million members in over 200 countries, and has become what Forbes magazine calls the most advantageous social networking tool available to job seekers and business professionals today."

The secret to networking success on LinkedIn is to be persistent in reaching out to connections, nurturing relationships, and engaging in groups. We teamed up with Beutler Ink to create this guide which walks you through that process, and offer specific tips and tricks to optimize your profile.

PROFILE

Your profile is more than a digital résumé—it's a professional brochure that establishes your brand and highlights your skills and connections. Optimizing your profile is absolutely critical for successful networking. Three fields are especially important: Your user name, your profile photo, and your headline. When people look for you through LinkedIn's People search function, these are the only three items that will show up, so they need to be especially eye-catching.

Name

The name you use on your LinkedIn account should match the name you use professionally and the name attached to your other social accounts.

You can still optimize the last name field by adding a professional designation, e.g. Terra Smith, M.D. It's also acceptable to add your middle or maiden name. However, you should never place keywords ("strategist") or contact info (@strategist) in the name field. Some LinkedIn "experts" have suggested doing so in articles and presentations, but it's a bad idea that could get your account suspended.

URL

LinkedIn gives your profile a default URL that includes a long string of letters and numbers. If you haven't already, customize the URL to something closer to your name or brand. (There's a field to change your URL right below your profile picture.)

Photo

Use an appropriate image of yourself—no vacation photos or selfies. If you don't already have a polished looking headshot (400 x 400 pixels), consider hiring a professional photographer. It's worth spending a little money to have a great digital avatar. And don't forget to support your branding with a complementary background image, which should have a resolution of 1400 x 425 pixels for the best look.

Headline

LinkedIn uses your current job title in this space, but that's not always the best reflection of your brand. Get creative here and write a job description that lets audiences know not only what you do, but also how you add value. Don't just say "Office Manager"—for example—say "Office Manager | Communication Multitasker | Distraction Interceptor." That language signals to employers that you understand the most important parts of the job. Likewise, you can



change "Company X Founder" to "Digital Entrepreneur and Software Architect" if your company isn't big enough to be notable yet.

Summary

This section should be your elevator pitch about yourself—who you are, what makes you different, how you bring value. You should include a lot of keywords here that other professionals (and investors!) will be searching for. But keep your language simple—no verbiage combinations like "Thought Leadership Hacker"—and please: always, always, always use a first-person voice.

When possible, include numbers and case studies that prove success—e.g. "I worked with Brand X to increase sales by 65% over two quarters."

If your first paragraph is a summary, your second paragraph should list out specific skills and expertise—e.g. team building, client relationships, new business development, and strategic communications.

The summary section is a great place to add media, including articles you have written, Slideshare presentations you have given, and video interviews. You can also add a call to action here—for instance, telling visitors where they can download your ebook.

Contact Info

Don't forget to add your email address, Twitter handle, website link, and other important contact info so that other members can contact you.



CONNECT

The entire point of LinkedIn is to connect with other professionals, so that should be your main objective. A healthy number of connections signals to others that you are professionally engaged, social, and influential. A low number of connections (50 or fewer) signals that you are a recluse or an inept social media user. There's absolutely nothing wrong with being an introvert, but if you can't find more than 50 people to connect with on LinkedIn, you should get out more!

Here are some tips to increase your connections and form important professional relationships:

Find your friends, colleagues, and industry connections

The My Network tab offers a variety of other tools to grow and connect with contacts. Click Add Connections in the drop-down menu to import contacts from your email accounts, find social network friends, and connect with alumni from your alma mater. Don't hesitate to reach out to people you've worked with in the past or deal with on a daily basis. You never know when these contacts will come in handy, and the worst they can do is not reply.

But **AVOID** reaching out to people you don't know unless you're being introduced by a third party. If enough users reject your request and say they don't know you, LinkedIn may shut down your account.

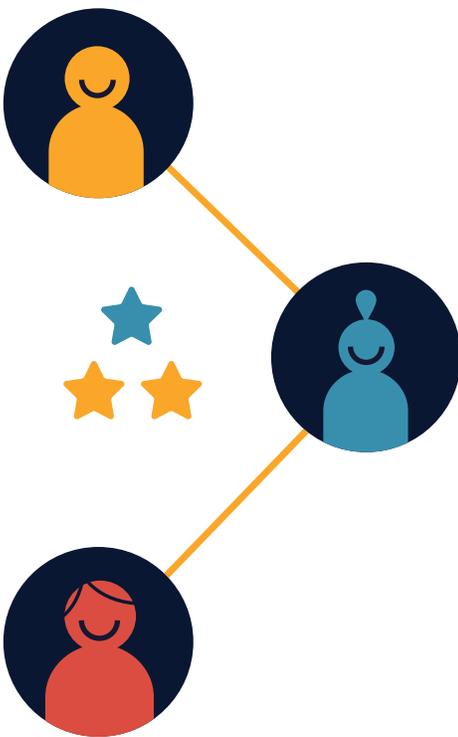
LinkedIn premium account holders can set their profiles to "open" so that any LinkedIn user—regardless of membership level—can send them a message whether they know them or not.

Personalize your communication

Stop using the default "Join my network on LinkedIn" message to reach out to new contacts. Instead, demonstrate that you are a professional worth connecting with by crafting thoughtful, personal notes.

To make an introduction between two professionals, write a message to each individual and explain why you think they should connect.

Some people don't like LinkedIn's default mode of alerting people when you've viewed their profile. It's possible to change this setting so you can peruse profiles anonymously—but we suggest leaving this setting as is. Nobody will be offended that you looked at their profile (for whatever reason) and they might reciprocate and look at yours.



Nurture relationships

Keep in touch with your connections. You can maintain relationships by congratulating connections on significant events like work anniversaries and promotions.

Don't immediately start messaging somebody you've just met and would like to know better—instead, start slowly by leaving comments on their posts or sharing their content. If appropriate, give them an endorsement or recommendation.

Utilize the newsfeed

Get in the habit of checking your newsfeed daily—or at least a few times a week—to see what your connections are up to and what content they're sharing. Your connections will appreciate it when you leave comments or simply like their posts. You should also share updates of your own, even if it's just industry news.

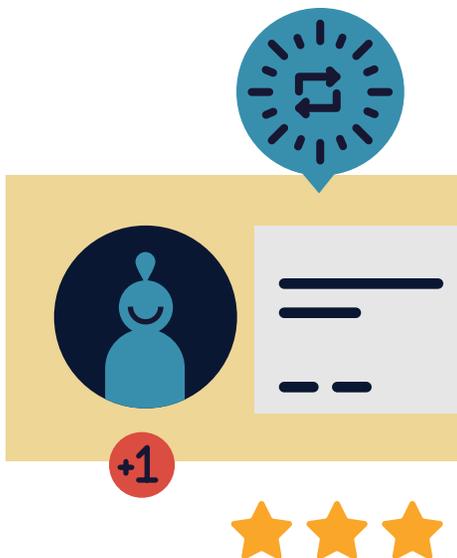


ENDORSE & RECOMMEND

Endorsements and recommendations are the most valuable form of social currency on LinkedIn.

Endorsements are one-click, well... endorsements of particular skills and talents—e.g. writing, social media strategy, team building, or creative problem solving. Endorsements are a simple and effective way of recognizing other people's strengths and engaging your network.

Recommendations are more detailed testimonials that you write on behalf of connections, be they coworkers, employees, employers, clients, or colleagues. These comments show up on profiles next to particular jobs or engagements and allow you to publicly vouch for someone's professional character and capabilities.



Endorsements simply require a click of the mouse, but recommendations are more time-consuming tasks. That, of course, means they're far more valuable, and connections will really appreciate it when you take the time to write up something thoughtful.

Here are some tips for efficiently writing recommendations:

Lead with a strong hook

The first line of a recommendation is the most important line. Without going overboard in praise, try to describe why a connection is valuable—"Chelsea is a office leader, a professional mentor, a dear friend, and somebody I would wholeheartedly endorse for any position."

Describe your working relationship

Context is important—let the reader know what projects you worked on together and what your reporting relationship was to one another. "Chelsea was my supervisor on three important year-end projects, and she provided timely instruction and clear and actionable feedback to shepherd the project over the finish line."

Identify a standout trait that sets the contact apart

Focus on something the connection does better than anybody else. "Chelsea is one of the most skilled communicators I've worked with in my twelve years in design and marketing."

Close with a solid recommendation

Something simple and sweet: "Chelsea would be an invaluable asset to any team."

GROUPS

Once you write a few recommendations, you'll get the hang of the format and be able to produce them on demand. This is a valuable skill, as recommendations are generally a tit for tat affair. If you haven't received as many recommendations as you'd like, you're probably not providing enough of your own.

LinkedIn Groups are an incredible resource for career networking and professional branding. By joining groups relevant to your industry or field, you'll instantly join a conversation with other professionals who are interested in the same topics as you are. Groups are also a great place to meet new people, discover valuable content, and ask for advice about business problems. Here are some tips for getting the most out of groups:

Join the right ones

The most valuable groups for you will likely be related to your industry, your job title, your niche interest, or your location. If you live in a major metro like New York or Los Angeles, you might be able to find a group that covers all four! One easy way to figure out which groups are best for you is to survey the profiles of influencers or colleagues and see which groups they belong to—you'll probably find certain groups have big followings across your network.

Engage in discussions

Once you've joined a group, you shouldn't hesitate to join in the discussion. If you see interesting posts, add your insight to the comment thread. And once you get a better sense of the typical group content, feel free to share new thoughts, articles, or videos. Avoid anything overly promotional, however, unless it's an absolutely relevant piece of content and you're looking for feedback.

By engaging with the group, you'll introduce yourself to professionals who are passionate and knowledgeable about your field. Down the line, you may feel comfortable sending them a connection request.

Start your own group

Launching your own group is a great opportunity to brand yourself as a leader in your field. Don't consider this option unless you've got enough time on your hands to serve as an active moderator and discussion leader. If you've got the bandwidth, though, starting a group is an excellent way to make a name for yourself and reach out to new connections.



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