Leveraging LinkedIn

Whether you have a part-time job at the corner store down the street or have only taken part in a high school case competition, you can always have skills to showcase to a potential employer. The group projects you do in school, the events you take part in and every other extra-curricular activity you may have contributed to, all show a level of engagement with your community and there is no better platform to display your experience other than LinkedIn. In the following article, we will look at some of the reasons why you should join LinkedIn and how to best leverage it as a university student.

Why should I join LinkedIn?

Among the many reasons to join a professional platform like LinkedIn, here are our 5 top picks why every student should consider signing up.
1. To build a network of connections

As much as everyone would like to believe that landing a job position is only about your skills, knowledge and experience, it doesn't always work that way. Sometimes, knowing the right people who you have stayed connected with, can land you the perfect role for you. Why you ask? Because between most other applicants who can present themselves only through a resume and cover letter, you have the competitive edge, as someone in the company knows you and trusts that you will do a good job.

Start by first adding your friends to your LinkedIn network. Once you have your small circle going, try connecting with your university professors and teaching assistants as well. Finally, you can pinpoint companies that you want to work for and search for people that are holding positions that you are interested in and ask them if you can connect with them on LinkedIn.

Make sure to not forget to leave a personalized note with every request you sent, especially if you haven't met the individual in person prior to adding
them. Some people may be reluctant to accept requests from people who they
don’t know. Therefore, introducing yourself and explaining why you want to
connect can go a long way.

2. Get job alerts

LinkedIn is not only a great platform to connect with professionals in the field,
but it also serves as a great starting point for job hunting. Whether you are
looking to be a media planner or investment banker, LinkedIn has it all. Most
companies that have a LinkedIn page leverage the ‘Jobs’ section and put their
openings in there as well.

Taking this one step further, apart from searching for jobs, you can also
program the platform so that it notifies you for any job alerts that you are
interested in. This may be when a company posts more job openings, a
certain industry, a specific job title, or anything that you may be looking for. For
example, if you are a fourth of fifth year student on the lookout for “New/
Recent Grad” positions, you can target that keyword so that every time that a
job posting includes the phrase, LinkedIn will notify you. Cool, right?
3. Recruiters can find you

If you have been in the business of job hunting for a while, you might have noticed that companies sometimes ask you to put the link of your LinkedIn profile on the application platform. Of course, this is always optional, however, you have to remember that just like you are conducting research on the company and the people hiring you, they, on the other end, are doing the same thing. When they conduct this research, you will want the first thing they see to be your LinkedIn profile, where you can put even more information that what is available on your resume or cover letter. Therefore, if you don’t want your recruiters to find your more “informal” social media platforms, make sure you sign up in LinkedIn!

4. Interview preparation

LinkedIn servers as not only a platform to connect, but also it is a great research tools for candidates. Through a simple search, you can find out what you want to know about a company and go into your interview as prepared as
possible. While you can find the “About Us” section in the company’s website as well, news related to a company are somewhat more challenging to track down. Companies usually stay active on LinkedIn and make sure to post when a significant event occurs. By doing your research, you will be able to answer one of the famous interview questions: “What is a piece of news you have heard about us recently?”.

5. Show that you are dedicated

Students that have a well put LinkedIn profile show that they have taken the time and effort to make themselves attractive candidates. This give the message that the student is dedicated in pursuing a career in their chosen field and that they are serious applicants.

Where do I start?

If you are a bit lost on where to start when building a LinkedIn profile, don’t worry about it! Below, we will explore 4 tips on how to make your LinkedIn profile stand out.
1. Create a professional profile

The advantage LinkedIn has over resumes is that you can put on it as much information as you want. Make sure to create a full LinkedIn profile by coming up with an appealing summary to shortly introduce yourself and filling in your experience. Remember that when you interact with other people’s posts, it also shows on your profile as your activity. Therefore, make sure you are as professional as possible.

2. Display your best business face

While it may not seem important, having a nice headshot picture on your LinkedIn profile goes a long way. It lets the recruiter put a face to the name and see you in the light of a serious candidate in business attire. Most importantly, connections find it easier to recognize you if you have a picture of yourself.
3. StayActive

Sometimes, people might think that they have nothing to share with their LinkedIn network, but that is simply not true. Did you get to learn a new skill today? What did you like most about it? How do you plan to leverage it? As long as you are continuously learning something new and gaining new skills, you will always have something to share with your network.

4. Get your connections to validate your skills and leave a recommendation

If you have been in a group project with a couple of classmates, or made an impression on your previous supervisor, make sure to ask your connections to validate your skills and maybe even leave a recommendation. Having other people prove that the things you are saying are true makes them a lot more reliable for a potential employer.