

Social Building Blocks for Your Career How to Build a Solid LinkedIn Profile

Last week we discussed Social Media in very general terms and LinkedIn more specifically. Now you're ready to set up your own profile on LinkedIn and begin the path of working more effectively with social media.

To begin, go to **<http://www.linkedin.com>** and provide the very basic name, email and password information and be taken directly to your profile. You will be guided to input information including current/past employment, education, awards and business, taking the time to make it as complete as possible. Depending on your background, this may be a time consuming process but most of the information can be taken directly from your resume. When done correctly, however, the time spent will be rewarded with people visiting your profile and connecting with you. As a barometer of your progress, pay attention to the "% complete" monitor provided. Your goal is 100%!

Your LinkedIn profile is a Personal profile. It may be a reflection of the company you work with but is more so meant to be a reflection of who you are and what you have to offer. In our busy lives, people are looking for real connections to form and build professional relationships and social networking is a significant path for that. People may want to connect with you because they know you, have worked with you, want to work with you, just to keep in touch etc. however, this may also be reciprocal. Building relationships is the true strength of good social networking so be yourself on this page.

As well, while you're building your personal profile, consider that prospective employees out there are doing the same. The LinkedIn Profile is like a resume with "perks"! Nowhere can you find a more comprehensive view of potential talent. Think of this in terms of being able to pre-interview all of your candidates.

Your Basic Information - Use your full name or at minimum, your first name and last initial, if you are concerned about your privacy.

Personalize Your Presence - Here you can create a personalized web address for your profile (use your name for this, or, if your name is unavailable, try using your name with a numeric identifier. Click "Edit My Profile" and then "Edit", "Public Profile".

Your Headline - The Professional "Headline" provides you with a place to put right up front who you are and what you do. Look at this as establishing your professional "brand". The LinkedIn platform provides a headline for you based on the first item in your employment history section, but you can customize it to best suit your objectives. Consider this field carefully. If you are an Accountant, you might want to put that in the field but you may wish to make this field work for you at a higher level. Consider using a phrase or group of words that will make a prospective employer believe that they have found the answer to their prayers and need look no further. You might also consider using your professional designations in this area (i.e. Controller, CA). It is entirely up to you, but keep in mind

that this is the first thing people will know about you, so you want it to be the best it can be. What is your professional identity?

Location/Industry - Type geographic location and industry into the fields or select from pull downs to fill these areas. At your discretion, you will be able to provide as much or as little of this information on your profile. If geography or industry is important to you, however, it is recommended that you complete all of the available input areas.

Employment/Education – Include current/past employment and education history and be thorough in this area including as much information as possible, as far back as possible, even to high school (this is one area where LinkedIn differs from your resume). You never know what search parameters may be used to find you and it is possible that an old classmate or colleague may be out there seeking to reconnect. Not only would it be interesting to renew old relationships, but they may be able to assist you at some point in your career or they may be the perfect fit for a role you are trying to fill. As with your resume and especially if your career spans more than one industry or career type, split this section to highlight all the areas where you possess knowledge and strength. You can do this by company, job title or career specialty. You decide how you want it to look but remember to make it easy for any reader to follow and interpret. You want to stand out from the crowd.

Summary - Your LinkedIn Summary is the place where you should tell your story and feel free to brag. Use your space to emphasize your key accomplishments and future goals if you choose. This can be very similar to your profile statement on your resume but the guidelines are different. You can make it longer and this is the place to let your personality shine through. Resumes are in third person; your summary can be personalized so writing in first person is more than alright. When someone is reading it, it's as though you are reading to them.

Specialties - Include all of the things that make you unique and valuable in your industry. **NOTE:** This is a potential employee's opportunity to let you know what sets them apart. Looking for a specific skill set? It should be here in either point form or full written paragraph style.

Photos - LinkedIn provides space to upload your photo. Use a *professional photo* that clearly shows your face. Click on "Upload Photo" to Browse your files, select the photo that you wish to use and make it your display picture. You can easily change your photo to keep it current. Many LinkedIn users won't consider reviewing your profile seriously without a photo so make it a good one. LinkedIn is about developing relationships and it's hard to do that without a picture.

Skills, Certifications and Publications – These areas are provided for you to highlight anything that hasn't been captured above. You may have identified your skills and certifications in other sections and if you have, that's perfect but if something important is missing, add it here. Identifying publications you have created adds to your credibility as a professional, whether it's a book or even an article. If it's relevant to you, let everyone know.

Your LinkedIn profile is a significant part of your public image and credibility. With the pace of our lives changing rapidly, your on-line presence is taking a more significant role than your paper presence so be creative, know that it will take a while to get the profile you are very happy with (just like a solid resume) and have fun with it. Next week we'll help you ***Build Relationships That Matter!***

Take care,

Lotte