

## How to Start Networking on LinkedIn

In today's career development, LinkedIn is rarely optional. It's an essential component of your career growth and professional presence. How you use it will evolve over time. The important part is to start (small) and be consistent.

Perhaps you have been focusing on your full-time job and had limited time for social media. Or you may have been using LinkedIn to follow organizations and individuals, without adding your voice to the discussions.

Wherever you are, now is a good time to start – in a way that works for you.

Remember that you can choose what you enjoy and focus your energy there.

Networking is about offering your expertise in specific subject areas, connecting with colleagues across the industry, learning from each other, and elevating the standards in your profession.

As a result:

- ✓ You will be more visible to the hiring managers and recruiters who may approach you when they have an open role.
- ✓ You will build a community of colleagues who may provide additional information for your company research when you need it.
- ✓ You will be able to find and apply for jobs via LinkedIn.

Below are 5 ways to start.

## 1. Strengthen your profile

LinkedIn likes content and keywords. This is one of the platforms designed for SEO where you can promote your skills for your target roles.

### *Are your career entries a copy/paste from your resume?*

LinkedIn is a great place to use your first-person, narrative tone and voice. Tell your readers how you approached the tasks and challenges in each role, what you did to move the organization forward, and what the outcomes were. Make it 1-3 short paragraphs per job entry. Avoid long lists of bullet points; 3-5 bullet points are optimal.

Remove the self-evident task descriptions and focus on your achievements, strategy, and process improvements. Show the scope of your work with specific examples.

### *Is your summary easy to skim? Does it tell your reader what makes you different? Is it easy to get in touch with you?*

Your summary can be long (2,000 characters max) or brief, but make sure to be clear about your differentiators, define your value, and make it easy for your readers to get in touch. Add your contact information; use bullet points to highlight your achievements, key skills, or awards.

You can add a line about your leadership style or work ethic (core values). Anything that makes you stand out and defines how you work should be in your summary.

### *Do you have recent recommendations that prove your expertise?*

Recommendations is the section that is most frequently read by your profile visitors. Use it to your advantage – to validate your work experience.

#### **Action:**

- ✓ Reflect on your professional voice and tone. Your resume is about facts. On LinkedIn, you can sound and look like the professional you are in the workplace.
- ✓ Think about your audience: peers, colleagues, potential employers, and clients.
- ✓ Draft your summary and career entries; put the draft aside for a few days.
- ✓ Review the draft, make edits, and update your profile.
- ✓ Add links to your media, awards, key publications, or other professional results.

## 2. Improve the 3 key areas of your profile.

Research on reader practices showed that LinkedIn profile readers are most active when looking at the profile's **photo, job titles**, and **recommendations**.

These three areas of your profile should reflect who you are and where you want to be.

Be clear in your job titles: add additional information about the department, region, or function (where applicable). Edit titles in your favor if your employer is flexible about them or put an equivalent in parentheses if your employer uses titles different from the market titles. Make sure the dates are accurate.

Brainstorm a list of people who will be able to recommend you.

### Action:

✓ Pick a professional photo that shows some of your personality.

Your face should take up 60% of the photo.

✓ Give and request recommendations. Here's how: <https://tm-editorial.com/requesting-linkedin-recommendations/>

✓ Add **[/detail/recommendation/write/](#)** to your LinkedIn URL to create your recommendation link. It's easy to share it with your colleagues, sending them directly to the recommendation window where they can type up a few words about your performance.

Anyone on your team with whom you have a positive relationship is a great person to ask for a recommendation, regardless of their role in the hierarchy.

### 3. Create a list of 10-30 companies you would like to work with.

Networking has to be a focused and strategic activity. You don't want it to take up a lot of your time, and you want to see the results down the road. To achieve this, network with

- your target employers
- decision-makers at industry organizations
- fellow members of professional associations
- past colleagues
- university alumni
- service providers
- former clients
- local business owners
- local community/volunteer organizations where you are a member
- recruiters

LinkedIn is a platform where you can often find out about the latest developments in the industry, key conferences, and job openings – if your feed is filled with the voices relevant to your professional goals.

#### **Action:**

- ✓ Create a list of 10-30 (or more) potential employers.
- ✓ Research these companies on LinkedIn by looking up the people who work there, starting with the decision-makers.
- ✓ Look up the associations in your industry and the association leaders.
- ✓ Send personalized requests to connect.

#### 4. Draft a few templates of your introductory messages.

Requests to connect give the best results when they are personalized, clear, and short.

Your reader wants to know why you are connecting with them, what you have in common, and how your professional relationship can inform their practice.

They can find out more about you from your profile; in your limited introduction space, focus more on the mutual benefits or reasons for connecting.

In this message, also phrase your specializations. This is a chance to be remembered for your unique skill set.

##### **Action:**

✓ Draft a few introductory email templates that you can use when reaching out to colleagues or decision-makers.

While you will modify these messages later on or (preferably) write them from scratch, having a starting point is great to give your thoughts some structure.

These messages can include the following:

- ✓ How did you find out about this person's work?
- ✓ Why are you interested in their background?
- ✓ What can you both expect/gain from connecting?
- ✓ What key differentiators do you have that this professional will relate to?

##### **For example:**

*Hello Jane,*

*I enjoyed attending your presentation at [Conference] in New York City. It was great to find out about how to be findable in publishing. Thank you for this learning! I took a look at your profile, and we both have a background in teaching. I've been focusing on [XYZ specialization] recently. I'd love to connect so we could share industry news and perhaps meet again at another conference in the future.*

## 5. Think about your content strategy.

Adding your voice can be very rewarding on LinkedIn. Your colleagues will recognize you for your expertise, and this will in turn create opportunities for new projects, employment, or connections.

You can start anywhere you feel comfortable. The only recommendation is to be consistent, at your own pace.

Perhaps at first you will post once a month or once a week.

Perhaps you will set the ideal days for you to log in, spend 10-15 minutes reading your feed, and contribute one response or post. For example, Tuesdays and Thursdays, between 9AM – 2PM EST. Or one day per week, Thursday, after you have wrapped up most of the week's activities.

Engagement on LinkedIn is not high on Mondays and Fridays. Choose the times that are best for you so you can enjoy the platform, and not let it break your concentration.

### Action:

✓ Create a library of your content ideas. This can be as simple as a Word file where you make notes on everything that may be interesting to your network:

- your own ideas/observations/publications
- articles, videos, or podcasts you have recently read/viewed/listened
- industry news or conference announcements
- key achievements in the industry or within your company

✓ Create a list of formats which you can use on LinkedIn:

- Write a LinkedIn article
- Share a link to your blog post or your publication elsewhere
- Share third-party content (credible sources)
- Write a text-only post
- Record a video of yourself delivering an important message
- Share an occasional photo related to your professional achievements
- Share an inspirational quote
- Ask an insightful question
- Comment on someone's post/offer ideas
- Re-share someone's post if it is of value to your readers