



Build Your Online Professional Presence With LinkedIn

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LinkedIn is a free online social media tool that reached 100 million users in 2011. Think of it as the professional version of Facebook. Why is this social media website so important for your professional career and advancement? It's part of your online presence that isn't limited by the length or formality of a resume, but also offers a place to showcase your experience and talents that can be validated by your colleagues.

This is also a way to take control of your overall online persona. Go ahead and Google your name and see what pops up. Do it right now! Like what you see? If you have a more common name you likely won't find yourself in the first few pages. If you have a less common name, you'll likely appear on quite frequently. The first few links will almost always be your social media profiles. This can be good if your social media profiles are on the up and up. For LinkedIn, this means having a complete profile and having low security on your profile. Here's the way you can build your online professional presence using LinkedIn.

Begin or Complete Your Profile

It's important to complete your LinkedIn profile as much as possible. Think of this as your comprehensive resume that isn't limited by length. Start with the Summary Section. Include a first-person review of your professional-self.

The Experience Section is where you list your current and past positions. You will put your position at the company, the dates you worked there, the location and a brief paragraph about your responsibilities for that position.

An easy way to show your experience is through the Skills & Expertise Section which allows you to list up to 50 different terms that describe your experience. People can now verify the skills and expertise terms you list. The number of people who have verified a term will show up as a number next to that particular term item.

After the Skills & Expertise Section, look at your Recommendations Section shown. The recommendations you have are categorized by the position you were recommended for. Each recommendation consists of a quote, the name of the person who recommended you, their title and how you know that person (worked directly with, managed, etc.) Although people can recommend you on their own, you are most successful if you ask for recommendations for the places you have worked.

The Organizations Section shows your involvement in local, regional and national organizations. You can list your role, how long you were with the organization, if it was related to a job you listed in the Experience Section, and you can add a description as well.

Toot your own horn with the [Certifications Section](#) and list the certifications you have achieved. You can list the certification name, which organization issued the certification, a license number on your certification and the dates if appropriate.

List your educational experience under the [Education Section](#). It's most important to list your collegiate-level education in this section. In addition to listing the type of degree and concentration you achieved, you can also list the dates you attended and if you participated in any activities or societies.

In the [Additional Information Section](#), you can list your interest and your personal details. Be careful with posting all the juicy contact details. Only post what you feel comfortable with.

The [Personal Information Section](#) is accessed by clicking on the rolodex card icon at the top of your profile in the bottom right-hand corner of the first box. You can include your email, IM, phone, address, twitter accounts and websites. Again, be careful what information you want to be public. For me personally, I post my business cell phone, but not my address.

Other sections that can be good to fill in for your profile include: Languages, Courses, Patents, Test Scores, Honors and Awards, Projects, Publications, and Volunteer Experience & Causes.

With LinkedIn's new updated profile views, you can reorganize the pieces of your profile that fall under the [Background Header](#). Place it in the order that you want people to view your information. For instance (and just like with a traditional resume), if you've been in the workforce for many years, you should list your education towards the bottom. If you've just graduated, you should list your education at the top.

As of December 2012, LinkedIn had removed the [Applications Section](#). (I will leave this information in this white paper in hopes that they bring it back.) This area can set your profile apart. There were a limited number of applications available. I would suggest adding Events (and post which events you're going to be going to); WordPress (if you want to connect your WordPress blog to your profile); and SlideShare Presentation (to post your presentations to your profile). There are some fun applications available as well like Reading List by Amazon and My Travel.

Ask for Recommendations

One section that is extremely important on your profile is the Recommendations section. You should ask people you're connected to for recommendations to put on your profile. When you ask for a recommendation from a person, you will be able to distinguish which job you're asking a recommendation for and they will be sent a message. When they write a recommendation, you will get to review what they wrote before you post it.

Sometimes people that you have asked for a recommendation will ask what you want them to write about you. If you have this opportunity, give them suggestions that highlight the specific things based on what you were responsible for.



The most frequent question I'm asked about recommendations is, "if I ask my current coworkers and boss for a recommendation, they'll think that I'm looking for a new job." If you are fearful of this perception from your coworkers and boss, you have a couple of options:

- Don't ask them if you are afraid it could put your current job in jeopardy.
- Ask them and if someone actually asks you about it say, "I'm just trying to build my LinkedIn profile" or "I just completed project X and wanted to get a recommendation for it while the success was still fresh in our minds."
- Ask them and don't worry about perceptions.

Just remember that if you are updating or creating your LinkedIn profile to get a new job and the company does their online homework, they'll be able to look at your LinkedIn profile and all the good things that the people you know have to say. Make sure you have reached out to all appropriate references to get nice things written about your professional abilities before you post your resume.

Build Credibility Online with Answers

In addition to building credibility on your profile with recommendations from people you know, you can also build credibility by participating in the Answers section of LinkedIn. The Answers Section of LinkedIn is accessible through the More Tab at the top of your Home Page.

People use the Answers Section to ask all types of questions, mainly about professional topics that are categorized into various segments. Some of those segments include finance and accounting, conferences and event planning, law and legal, professional development, and startups and small businesses.

Let's say you are a conference and trade show manager and you want to demonstrate your expertise in that topic. Once you're on the Answers Section home page, type "conference" or "trade show" in the top right-hand box. (You should also search variations of words, for instance, in addition to "trade show" be sure to search "tradeshow" with no space.) The search results will appear with All Questions. Make sure to click on the Open Questions tab to display all Open Questions, or questions that are available to be answered.

When you go to answer a question, make sure you read all the previous responses first. If you have something to add that hasn't been included, then click on the yellow Answer button and add your response. You can also list Web Resources to direct readers to as well. This gives your response some added credibility. You also have the option to Suggest and Expert, which can be useful as well.

Join Groups and Participate in the Conversation

Joining groups related to your professional, personal and volunteering interests will demonstrate your experience and passion for different areas. There are two types of groups: open and members only. Open groups grant you membership as soon as you click the Join Group button and members only groups send a notification to the administrator of the group to approve your



membership when you click the Join Group button. You can search for a Group by typing various search terms in the top right hand corner of the page.

Joining groups is beneficial because you're exposed to other people that share your interests. You can start or respond to discussions posted about those niche topics. You can also create a poll to gain input from other members. If you're looking for a job (or have a job to post) the Jobs Discussion section is the place to check. Find this section under the Jobs Tab on the home page of each individual group.

Get Online and Update!

Now that you know what to do, get online and work on your profile. You can build your professional online presence by working on your LinkedIn profile and by participating in Groups and giving your expertise in Answers.

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