

8 Steps to Creating a Powerful

LinkedIn Profile

1. Your picture

The picture should be of your face. Not your dog. Or a waterfall. Chose a simple headshot where you are looking straight ahead. No selfies. It's well worth the money to have a professional picture taken. Remember, it doesn't have to be boring or artificial. You don't have to wear business attire if that's not your style. But you need to look professional and pleasant. Smile. You are going for "dependable" and "trustworthy." Avoid "sexy" or "quirky."

The old adage is true. People remember faces more than names. This is also why one needs to see your face and not some other part of you. For example, a yoga instructor should still use a headshot and not a photo of her/himself in a yoga pose. Pictures that attest to skill or talent can be uploaded elsewhere on your profile, along with training videos and presentation materials.

2. Your headline

You have 120 characters at the top of your profile to describe to the world what you do. Many people just put their official job title. Which is one way to go... or you can really use the system to your advantage here. Choose descriptive and compelling keywords that a) make you as marketable as possible, and b) help you get found by the right people. Remember, LinkedIn is a search engine.

Examples of effective headlines are "Recruiter, HR, Talent Management Expert" or "Brand Marketing, PR, Communications Professional." Comes in handy especially if you are currently looking for work.

3. Your summary

LinkedIn's Summary section is the best part of its 2012 revamp. You can include high-resolution photos, an infographic of your experience, or a video of a talk you gave. It is well worth it to put in the effort to write a unique and captivating summary section.

You can think of it as your "60-second commercial" or your "elevator speech." These are the first sentences people read, and you have a very short time to grab the reader's attention and make them want to read more.

There are several ways to write a good Summary. It could be a copy/paste of your resume's summary section. Or it could read more like your bio. You could take a core competencies approach and list the three or four key skills you bring to the table. You could take an accomplishments approach and list the three or four big results you have achieved on behalf of your past employers or clients.

Or you could get quite creative and pair an interesting story with a section called "what you won't find on my resume." How far you can go in terms of creativity depends to some extent on your industry, as some are more traditional than others.

In any event, at the end of this section, the reader must have a strong idea of who you are and how you help people. End with a Call to Action (CTA) — for example, "Please reach out to discuss opportunities in X, Y, and Z."

4. Your experience

This is the body of your profile — just like on a traditional resume — where you really showcase your experience, expertise, and skills. You add where you have worked, for how long, and in what roles and functions. Include your current position and at least two other positions.

There are two basic ways to handle this section:

Adapt it from your resume; you can copy/paste the relevant job descriptions and accomplishments for each position.

If you are uncomfortable listing too much information under specific employers, you can simply add the name of employer, your position, dates, keep the rest blank, and include in the Summary a more general "skills-based" experience piece.

5. Keywords and SEO

Include keywords everywhere, especially in the Summary and Experience sections, for search engine optimization (SEO) purposes. When recruiters use LinkedIn, they use certain industry-specific key words. These are the terms that will help you show up in their search results within LinkedIn.

Ways to figure out your keywords:

What words and phrases might people in your target market use to search for someone with your background, experience, and service offering? Go to the Careers page of some potential employers you are interested in, and pick common keywords around that job or industry.

6. Recommendations

This is one area that we see easily fall through the cracks. Yet it is one of the most valuable tools in building up your credibility in the job marketplace.

You have to be proactive about asking for recommendations, following up, and keeping on top of it. Recommendations can be from anyone: bosses, colleagues, mentors and mentees, happy clients, or anyone who has collaborated with you and benefited from your skills or advice.

A well-crafted recommendation that is genuinely glowing from a peer is better than a few generic sentences from a high-level managing director.

Our best advice is to have a strategy. Ask each person to speak to particular skills or highlight certain experiences with as much detail as possible. Help out your recommenders by giving them this detail. For example, if you want them to highlight leadership skills, remind them of two or three instances when you skillfully led a project. Finally, ensure that the sum total of your recommendations covers all your skills and experiences, and that the content in them backs up (or least does not contradict) what you wrote about yourself.

Always thank your recommenders and offer to recommend them too. In fact, go one step further and send along a draft of a potential recommendation.

7. Groups and associations

Groups are a way to build relationships and network with people who are doing similar work or have similar interests as you. You have about 1.3 million groups on LinkedIn to choose from.

Join as many relevant groups as you can and contribute to the conversation. As a start, join the alumni groups for where you went to school and any industry association groups pertinent to your line of work. When you join the discussion, try to lend your expertise to benefit the conversation and to show your interest and your value.

8. Ensure you have a “Fully Completed Profile”

LinkedIn says your profile will appear 40 times more in search results if it is “complete.” In other words, you will be open to 40 times more opportunities if you do this. So please do. Here is LinkedIn’s definition of a 100% Complete Profile:

- ☐ Your industry and location
- ☐ An up-to-date current position (with a description)
- ☐ Two past positions
- ☐ Your education
- ☐ Your skills (minimum of 3)
- ☐ A profile photo
- ☐ At least 50 connections

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