



Building Your LinkedIn Profile

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100% complete = 100% more likely to get noticed. You can't build connections if people don't know you exist or see what you have to offer. Your LinkedIn profile is your online business card, your resume and your letters of recommendation all in one. Users with complete profiles are 40 times more likely to receive opportunities through LinkedIn.

Craft an informative profile headline. Your profile headline gives people a short, memorable way to understand who you are in a professional context.

Display an appropriate photo. Remember that LinkedIn is not Facebook or MySpace. If you choose to post a photograph—and we recommend that you do—select a professional, high-quality headshot of you alone. Party photos, cartoon avatars, and cute pictures of your puppy don't fit in the professional environment of LinkedIn.

You are more experienced than you think. Complete profiles are so important because the more information you provide, the more people will find reasons to connect with you. Think really broadly about all the experience you have, including summer jobs, unpaid internships, volunteer work, and student organizations. You never know what might catch someone's eye.

Show off your education. Be sure to include information about all institution you've attended, which is different than a traditional resume. Include your major and minor if you have one, as well as highlights of your activities. It's also appropriate to include study abroad programs and summer institutes. Your LinkedIn profile is an appropriate place to show off your strong GPA and any honors or awards you have won.

Develop a professional summary statement. Your summary statement can be aspirational, concise and confident about your goals and qualifications. Remember to include relevant internships, volunteer work and extra curriculars. Present your summary statement in short blocks of text for easy reading—bullets work too.

Fill your "Specialties" section with keywords. "Specialties" is the place to include key words and phrases that a recruiter or hiring manager might type into a search engine to find a person like you. The best place to find relevant keywords is in the job listings that appeal to you, LinkedIn profiles of people who currently hold the kinds of positions you want and company profiles on LinkedIn.

Claim your unique LinkedIn URL. To increase the professional results that appear when people type your name into a search engine, set your LinkedIn profile to "public" and claim a unique URL for your profile. (for example: www.linkedin.com/in/yourname). This also makes it easier to include your LinkedIn URL in your email signature or on the top of your resume, which is a great way to demonstrate your professionalism.

Collect diverse recommendations. Nothing builds credibility like third-party endorsements. The most impressive LinkedIn profiles have at least 1 recommendation associated with each position a person has held. Think about soliciting recommendations from professors, internship coordinators and colleagues, employers, and professional mentors.

Student-Friendly Profile Options

Projects. Participating in projects shows that you can apply classroom learning to real-world challenges and work effectively in a team. Add compelling research or class projects to your profile – especially those that demonstrate experience relevant to your professional goals.

Honors & Awards. Did you make the Dean's List or earn a merit-based scholarship? Add it to your profile. While much of your profile is a subjective characterization of your abilities, Honors & Awards provide objective validation for your accomplishments.

Organizations. Participation in on-campus or external organizations shows your contributions outside the classroom. Leadership abilities, and making a positive impact within an organization, are talents widely sought by employers and recruiters.

Test Scores. Employers often view strong test scores as indicators of good problem solving skills. If you have excelled at standardized tests, or have a stellar G.P.A., include these scores on your profile.

Courses. Do you consistently push the envelope by enrolling in rigorous coursework? List select courses on your profile – especially those that qualify you for positions you are seeking, or demonstrate your commitment to expanding your academic horizons. Many employers know your school's course catalogs as well as you do, so include the strongest courses of your college experience.

Building Connections

Use your inbox. Contrary to popular belief, networking doesn't usually mean reaching out to strangers. The best networks begin with those you know and trust, and then grow based on personal referrals. Start building your LinkedIn network by uploading your online address book and connecting to friends, relatives, internship colleagues, and professionals you know in the "real world."

Get personal. As you build your connections on LinkedIn, always customize your connection requests with a friendly note and, if necessary, a reminder of where you met or what organization you have in common. If you're being referred by a mutual friend, write a brief intro of who you are and why you'd like to connect. You'll impress people and stand out with your personal touch.

Join the "in" crowd. Another successful way to form new online relationships is to join LinkedIn Groups. Start with groups for St. Thomas such as Alumni Sharing Knowledge (ASK) and University of St. Thomas Career Development Center. Also, think of volunteer or professional organizations. As a member of a group you can comment on discussions, find exclusive job listings, and meet people who share common interests.

Close your connections. If you are on the job search, you might want to think about closing off your connections. Recruiters are now not only looking at your profile, but also your connections profiles to see if they are more qualified. However, when your job search is over—open them back up as it is better for networking.

Show your connectedness with LinkedIn Group Badges. Joining groups and displaying group badges on your profile are the perfect ways to fill out the professionalism of your profile and show your desire to connect with people whom you have something in common. Most students start by joining their university's LinkedIn group as well as the larger industry groups related to the career they want to pursue.

Building Your Use of LinkedIn

Use applications. Use applications to add examples of your writing, design work, or other accomplishments by displaying URLs or adding LinkedIn applications. One that is very helpful for someone who is on a job search is “Company Buzz”.

Update your status weekly. Networking is not just about who you know; it’s about who knows you. A great way to stay on other people’s radar screens and enhance your professional image is to update your status at least once a week. Tell people about events you’re attending, major projects you’ve completed, professional books you’re reading, or any other news you would tell someone at a networking reception or on a quick catch-up phone call. Remember, these updates need to be professional and work focused!

Lend a (virtual) hand. As you build connections and group memberships, think about what you can do to support other people. Comment on a classmate’s status update, forward a job listing that fits the criteria of a friend, or write a recommendation for a summer job colleague. You’ll find that your generosity is always rewarded. Remember...pay it forward.

Ask questions and give answers. LinkedIn’s Answers feature is a great place to seek advice from a wide variety of people all around the world. You can also show the world what you have to offer by answering people’s questions about a topic where you have some expertise. The more active you are in Answers, the more people will see your name, view your profile and want to connect with you.

Do your homework. Before an informational interview, job interview, or networking get together, use LinkedIn to learn about the background and interests of the people you are scheduled to meet. Access Company pages to research organizations and their employees.

Now step away from the computer. There’s a perception that young people are only comfortable communicating online, so be sure to support your online networking with real human contact. Set up phone calls and attend live events. Remember that online methods should supplement, not replace, in-person relationship building.

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