

Social Media for Business Getting Started Guide



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We are a full service agency specializing in findability and sharability through the integration of email, social, web, and mobile applications with traditional media and marketing.

How to Become...

As of August 2009, all 500 of the *Fortune* 500 are represented on LinkedIn. In fact, 499 of them are represented by director-level and above employees.

Most people use LinkedIn to “get to someone” in order to make a sale, form a partnership, get a job, or hire someone. It works well for this because it is an online network of more than 8.5 million experienced professionals from around the world representing 130 industries. It’s easy to sign up, however, there are many tips and tricks to maximizing your profile as a business tool.

First, we’ll cover the reasons why LinkedIn is an invaluable resource. Second, we’ll go over some best practices and how-tos in order to maximize your profile’s effectiveness.

LINKEDIN HELPS YOU AND YOUR COMPANY:

1. Increase your visibility.

By adding connections, you increase the likelihood that people will see your profile first when they’re searching for someone to hire or do business with. In addition to appearing at the top of search results, people would much rather work with people who their friends know and trust.

2. Improve your Google™ PageRank.

LinkedIn makes your profile information available for search engines to index. Since LinkedIn profiles receive a fairly high PageRank in Google™, this is a good way to influence what people see when they search for you or any of your practice areas.

3. Enhance your search engine results.

In addition to your name, you can also promote your blog or website to search engines like Google™ and Yahoo!™

4. Perform blind, “reverse,” and company reference checks.

You can use LinkedIn’s reference check tool to search for years a person of interest worked at the company to search for references. Your search will find the people who worked at the company during the same time period. Since references provided by a candidate will generally be glowing, this is a good way to get more balanced data.

5. Gauge the health of a company you’re doing business with.

Perform an advanced search for company name and uncheck the “Current Companies Only” box. This will enable you to scrutinize the rate of turnover and whether key people are abandoning ship. Former employees usually give more candid opinions about a company’s prospects than someone who’s still on board.

6. Gauge the health of an industry.

If you’re thinking of investing or working in a sector, use LinkedIn to find people who worked for competitors—or even better, companies who failed.

7. Scope out the competition, customers, partners, etc.

This seems like it’s a no-brainer, but you can use LinkedIn to scope out the competition’s team as well as the team of customers and partners.

Getting Started

The following list walks you from start to finish through the setup process and can be used as a how-to while you set up or edit your profile.

The Photo

Always include a picture. LinkedIn profiles seem incomplete without them. Also try to be consistent with your photo – if you have a photo on other social networking sites it's a good idea to use the same photo everywhere. It's also wise to be consistent with your name – use the same spelling, middle initial, honorific, or other designation everywhere. This is important for search engine optimization.

5 minutes

The Headline

The headline is a bite-sized explanation of what you do and what your value is. Note that your headline shows up ALL OVER LinkedIn, especially in lists. Your headline very often accompanies your name. Make sure your headline is at least clear and concise. More than anything else in your profile, these words are how people find and define you. Are you seeking to connect mainly with others in your field and industry? Then a simple, explanatory headline like "Owner of XYZ Bakery..." is best. Regardless of how you phrase your headline, make sure to use keywords that will help others find you. **You could spend countless hours tweaking and refining this single 120 character field. Just try not to.**

"Current"

Your "current" section is created directly from the Experience items for which you check "I currently work here". It is not editable separately from the Experience listing but do consider what you use for your "title" for your most current jobs since this will show up at the top of your profile.

15 minutes

*Web Site Fields

You get to include three active links to external sites. Links you include in other parts of your profile won't be clickable so these are valuable. Make sure you use one of these for your company's Web site, then perhaps use the other two for your professional blog, and perhaps another profile like your company's twitter page or a glowing article about your company. Don't use the generic "My Website" labels. Instead select "Other" you will be able to modify the name of the link to "XYZ Bakery Website" and *voila!* instant search-engine optimization for your site. **To make this work, be sure your public profile setting is set to "Full View."** **10 minutes**

Public Profile

This allows you to create a "custom URL" for your page in order to allow you to link to your profile easier from your emails. To do this, select "edit" by Public Profile. This will bring you to a Public Profile page where you can customize how you will be found in search results. On the first line, click "edit" next to the public profile URL and enter your first and last name. This URL should be copied down somewhere so that you can post it into your email footers and other correspondence.

5 minutes

Your Summary

Use this area in a similar way to a cover letter. Explain in (relatively) normal-speak what makes you unique or different, why someone might want to connect with you, and possibly few details about your products or services. Note that you cannot create clickable links in this area. Try to include keywords related to your business: areas of practice, successes within your practice

30-90 minutes

The Resume or "Experience"

While it might seem tedious to enter every job you've had for the last 20 years *this really is an opportunity*. Think of it this way, while it would be strange for you to randomly send your resume to everyone you meet, sending your LinkedIn profile is perfectly reasonable and can give you that extra edge or a sense of credibility.

Most new users put only their current company in their profile. By doing so, they severely limit their ability to connect with people. You should fill out your profile like it's an *executive bio*, so include past companies, education, affiliations, and activities.

There is some debate how long each job description should be. I think this depends on your experience. If listing more than 5 jobs, perhaps use brief descriptions that include important keywords. If listing 5 jobs or fewer, longer descriptions won't be as problematic.

1-4 hours

Contact Methods

If you would like to receive emails from strangers who might have opportunities or case requests for you, choose to accept "Introductions and InMail" so that anyone can email you. You can also use the checkboxes to indicate what kinds of inquiries you are interested in (Consultation, Reconnecting, Jobs, etc).

5 minutes

Build Connections

LinkedIn doesn't have a lot of value without connections. To get your connections started, go into "Imported Contacts" and check your email address books for people who are on LinkedIn. The best and easiest way to gain useful connections is with the people you already know.

30 minutes

Set updates to be sent weekly not as they happen

If you don't want to receive an email every time someone in your network makes an update, you can change your settings to send you messages weekly or not at all. Just click on the "Account & Settings" button in the top right corner.

5 minutes

Recommendations

The recommendations that most impress others are the ones that are not generic but really specific and sincere.

If you want a meaningful recommendation, sometimes the best way to get one is to write one if that's feasible. And while there are always exceptions, if you can't write a meaningful recommendation for someone there's a reasonable chance they won't be able to write a meaningful one for you. Writing recommendations is time consuming so I suggest that you write them only when you really have something worthwhile and not generic to say.

15-30 minutes per recommendation

Keywords & Search Engine Optimization

Keep in mind that when someone does a Google search for your name, it's likely that your LinkedIn profile will be one of the first links that shows up (unless you have a very common name or share a name

with a celebrity). Take advantage of LinkedIn's high search-ability. Think about the keywords you'd want to be found under on search engines and on LinkedIn itself. Make sure that you include keywords relevant to your industry and position. You might decide to go back and rewrite things at the end to address this crucial step.

30-90 minutes

Other Steps

You can also include a link to your profile as part of an email signature. The added benefit is that the link enables people to see all your credentials, which would be awkward if not downright strange, as an attachment. Send your URL to your web designer (and contact Steele Agency if you don't have one!). If you are listed on your company's website, your LinkedIn profile should be as well.

30-90 minutes

Ongoing Steps

Make sure to periodically check for requests, messages, status, check in and look to see who has searched for you, and group activity.

Make Sure You Don't Include:

1. Any contact information you're not comfortable having your contacts or clients see. Your contact information will be visible only to those you are connected to, but you should decide whether you want that to include things like phone numbers or personal e-mail.
2. Anything that even begins to stray from the truth. Unlike even a resume, your profile will be seen by a lot of eyes. Did you really lead that project, or did you lead it along with several others?
3. Anything you wouldn't want fellow colleagues — current, former, or future — to know. LinkedIn is for professional relationships, and just like at the dinner table, it's wise to keep politics and religion courteously to yourself.

In Summary:

It looks to be about 2-3 hours minimum of setup time, but remember to just divide this into sections that you can tackle easily. Once it's complete, not only will you feel great about what you accomplished, your completed profile will work in dividends to driving traffic to your profile, your site, and your firm.

Get the Most From Your Connections

Goal: Now that you're connected, put all those people to use.

There are three main things your network can do for you: answer business-related questions, make recommendations and introductions, and provide company information. Make sure that you focus on helping others when you first join. "It's the idea of bringing wine to the party," says one Social Media Guru. "If you're offering up helpful stuff and services, your reputation will go a lot further than if you're just out there for yourself."

1. Ask and answer questions.

While signed in, you can quickly see a list of open questions that have been asked by anyone in your extended network. Queries can range from advice on turning a website into a business to detailed questions about tax law. Participating in these exchanges is an easy way of gaining trust and building your reputation. Asking questions will prompt informed sources to offer their expert advice (which helps everyone in the network), while providing answers gives you a chance to show off your own expertise to others.

2. Recommend and introduce colleagues.

Recommendations work as a form of currency in a social network. Those who are happy with your work can write a brief description of their experience on your LinkedIn profile. By having a broad range of endorsements attesting to your professional expertise, you show others that you can be trusted. And make sure to recommend only those with whom you've had good experiences.

Introductions are trickier but also more valuable. This is where your personal judgment needs to come into play. When someone contacts you for an introduction, be sure you understand and approve of what they want before making the handoff. Likewise, make your intentions clear when you are asking for an introduction.

3. Learn more about your professional network.

You can quickly learn a lot about a potential business partner or contact by reading their profile. It gives you a lot of things you can discuss and build a relationship on. Unlike, for example, someone's Google results, everything you find on LinkedIn has been voluntarily placed there by your contact.

Another technique is to look at profiles of those people who your contacts are becoming connected with to figure out who might be worth getting to know yourself.

4. Join industry-related groups.

Pay attention to groups your network may be involved in, and join those that are discussing topics related to your business. Also, look for associations that you are a part of in "real life" to see if they have a LinkedIn counterpart. The associations will do the work of building the group – you just have to check in every once in a while to participate in the conversation, answer a question, or look to see if there is someone new to the group that you would like to build a relationship with.

How to Get On

The best way to become familiar with Facebook is to participate as an individual for a while. Go to: www.facebook.com and enter your name and email to get started. A birthday is required to make sure that age-appropriate content is displayed.

Profiles are JUST for individuals; bands, businesses, or products must create a Page. Non-profits, organizations, and associations can be created as a group once an individual has signed up.

You'll be taken through four steps:

1. Add Friends: this is where you can enter an email account to check and see if folks you already know are on Facebook.
2. Find Friends: This is where Facebook will make suggestions of people you might know based on your location and age.
3. Profile Information: This is where you can choose what information to include on your profile.
4. Profile Picture: this is where you choose a file from your computer to use as your profile picture.

Note: All of these steps come with a "Skip This Step" option at the bottom right corner. You can also return to any of these steps at any point. So, don't feel pressured to enter information on every page. Just do what you are comfortable with.

The first place to visit once you have gotten through these four steps is the "Settings" tab on the top right in the blue bar. Under Settings, go to Privacy Settings. This is where you can specify what types of people (if any) can find you in a search or see certain areas of your profile, and whether your status updates should be made public (This is a must when using Facebook for marketing purposes! But sometimes not preferred for an individual).

That's it. Now you can explore profiles, companies, groups, organizations, photos, events, and discussions. You'll start to get a feel for what information you have access to when you are not friends with someone and different ways that individuals use their profiles and companies use their pages. This first hand experience is crucial to building a strategy around Facebook for your business.

Facebook is not a magic bullet for your company or group. It is a method, like the phone system (just more powerful).

That being said, all company presence on Facebook should be approached with some preparation. We think that each company is unique and therefore, the ways that each company can use Facebook are unique to their purpose, customer base, and operation. Here are some questions to ask when developing a Facebook (or general social media) strategy:

- Is this a cause, group, or page?
- Who am I trying to reach? All our customers or a portion? A new market?
- What kinds of content do I offer? How do we showcase our expertise?
- How do I encourage interaction with fans or members?
- How do I connect my Facebook presence to my real business?
- What's the plan to manage our Facebook presence on an ongoing basis?
- Who else has to buy in to get started?
- What potential obstacles will we have to overcome internally?
- What could we gain from Facebook and how to we get there?
- Are there custom applications and uses we would like to incorporate?
-

If you are ready to answer these questions, call us and we'll help you the rest of the way.