LinkedInformed

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LinkedInformed

Everything you need to know to network online effectively

LinkedInformed: Everything you need to know to network online effectively

1st edition

Contents

Foreword

The way we communicate has undergone unprecedented change over the last 10 years.

The facsimile (fax) machine has been relegated to the scrap heap, the amount of letters we send has decreased dramatically and even email is suffering a loss in popularity due to the amount of spam or irrelevant messages that fill up our inbox.

Social media however has become incredibly popular and especially the big three – Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

LinkedIn is the dominant force in the business world with millions of professionals from all industries signing up to network online.

LinkedIn has proved to be an extremely useful tool for many individuals and organisations whether they be using it to market their products/services, develop wider networks, find and approach new customers or employees or whether they use it to obtain their next career move.

LinkedIn has been around since 2003 and it is here to stay. Its popularity continues to grow from strength to strength with over 2 new members signing up every second of every day!

If you are in business you are expected to have a profile on LinkedIn, it is almost obligatory these days so mastering its use is now an essential skill for everyone.

This book is designed to give you a quick and easy to understand guide on how to make the LinkedIn network work for you.

I hope you enjoy it…and happy networking!

1   We all have to start somewhere

Opening a LinkedIn account is very simple. It is free and can take a little as five minutes to get started with a basic profile. Your profile however is worth much more to you than five minutes of your time. Your LinkedIn profile may well be your first chance to impress someone so taking some time to get it right is a wise move.

This was brought home to me when I met Colin at a networking event a few years ago.

Colin was pretty excited because he had recently won a substantial amount of business for his HR consultancy business and this had been done through LinkedIn.

He had been surprised when out of the blue he received an email from the managing director of a locally-based company. The email explained that Colin had been recommended by someone and invited him to a meeting to discuss the services that Colin could offer.

During this meeting the managing director had told him the name of the person who had recommended him but Colin could not recall knowing this individual (although at this stage he didn't reveal that)!

The meeting went very well and following further discussions Colin's company was awarded the contract.

Whilst this was great news, Colin was still puzzled as to who this referral had come from. He had remembered the name the managing director had given him so he went onto LinkedIn to find out more about who they were. On finding the individual's profile he could see that it was not someone he had ever met in fact they were not even a first-tier connection, the only thing they had in common was that they shared a group on LinkedIn.

With the contract secured Colin felt safe enough to tell his new client that he didn't actually know the individual and enquired why she had recommended him.

The client laughed when he heard this and explained that the lady who had referred Colin had made it very clear that they had never met but that she had come across someone in a group on LinkedIn who was regularly contributing to discussions. She had been impressed with Colin's contribution and described him as "someone who talks a lot of sense and appears to know a lot about HR".

The interesting thing about this story is that the lady who referred Colin couldn't even remember his full name! She had remembered what he looked like from his profile picture and she was fairly sure his first name was Colin but that was all!

The way that they found his profile was to undertake a simple search on LinkedIn using the information that she had which was as follows;

> First name – Colin
> Keywords – "human resources"
> Location – Manchester (the group was a local Manchester business group)

The search produced about 30 profiles and a quick scan through them easily identified the correct Colin from the profile picture that she remembered.

Unfortunately because she was not a first or second tier connection to Colin his name only showed as Colin W (see pic below)

Fortunately as you can see, Colin had taken the time to amend his headline to include his full name as well as a clear description of what he has to offer. In addition he had also included his email address and this is how the Managing Director contacted him.

The amazing thing about this story is that someone was prepared to refer Colin on the strength of his contribution to discussions in a group and that combined with having a strong a credible profile led to the opportunity.

So what can we learn from this story?

1) A profile picture is essential: the main thing that people remember about you is your face! If you want your activity to count then you need to be memorable.

2) The headline is a critical section of a profile because it is seen by everyone on LinkedIn no matter how close to you they are, even users who are outside your network can see your picture and headline. By including your full name in your headline you are revealing important information that most people wouldn't normally see and by adding an email address you are making it easy to contact you – remember only 15% of users upgrade their account and only these members can send a message to someone they are not connected to.

3) A well written profile gives you credibility

4) Activity is key. Without getting involved in the group discussions Colin wouldn't have been noticed. It is a fallacy that people will frequently search for you on LinkedIn (other than recruiters and suppliers). Most people will come across you as a result of your activity.

2 Creating a great profile

If Colin's story hasn't convinced you that you need a great profile then perhaps you might want to consider what happens in the following circumstances;

1) You call somebody for first-time and leave a voicemail message
2) You send an email to someone who doesn't know you.
3) You arrange to meet someone for the first time.
4) Somebody hears about you from a third party.

I would suggest that in all the above circumstances there is a very good chance that the individual concerned will "check you out" on LinkedIn before deciding if and how to respond. In fact I have also heard of situations where the recipient of a cold call actually looks up your profile as you are introducing yourself!

It is fair to say that your LinkedIn profile is frequently going to be your first impression – and we all know the importance of first impressions!

You will probably need to set aside 30 minutes or so in order to complete your profile properly, so it is not exactly a mammoth task!

There are many sections to the profile but for the sake of efficiency I am just going to focus on those that will have the greatest impact.

Profile Picture

As I have already explained your profile picture is critical and therefore is worth taking the extra time to make sure it is right. Here are my top five tips for a great profile picture;

- Head and shoulders only and wearing professional attire.
- Make sure it is relatively up-to-date (taken within the last 18 months)
- Do not include anyone or anything else (kids, partner, pet, glass of champagne or a weapon of any kind – trust me, it has been done!).
- Do not use cartoons, sketches or avatars as it contravenes the LinkedIn user agreement (the rules).
- Consider putting a red border around your picture to make it stand out (this will need to be done with photo editing software)

Headline

This is probably the most valuable real estate in your profile. As previously mentioned everyone can see it and it is your opportunity to clearly explain what you have to offer.

You can write anything in this section although you are restricted to 120 characters. My suggestion is that your headline should include the following;

- First name and surname (unless they are included in your email address).
- Contact details. Preferably a work email address, it is best to avoid mobile/cell numbers.
- A clear description of your professional offering including important keywords.

When you first create a profile you are not required to write a headline, LinkedIn simply takes your job title and company name and populates this field automatically for you. This is why many people mistake a headline for a job title – the two however, should be very different.

In order to complete your headline correctly you will need to click on the edit symbol (it looks like a pen) next to your headline when in edit profile mode.

Summary

A great summary should be written in a "personally professional" style, meaning that your character and personality should come across but in a professional context. Remember this is your profile and you are representing the company you work for so both need to be covered in this section.

Start this section with a short paragraph introducing yourself and explaining why you enjoy what you do. This should be written in a style that is authentic and genuine.

The second paragraph should focus on your role and the company that you work for, this would be less personal and more factual in style.

Most profile summaries tend to read as very factual. In essence people explain **what** they do but you can improve this so much more by following steps;

Who – Introduce yourself and explain briefly how you got to this position in your career.

Why – This is the best bit! Why do you do what you do and why are you passionate about it? Make sure you are being genuine and make sure you 'open up' and show people who you really are

What – This is the more factual bit about what you do and who you work for (the bit that most people put!)

Use short paragraphs and bullet points to make it easy to read and try to keep it down to a maximum of 500 characters if possible.

Employment

A big mistake that people make with this section is that they feel it is only appropriate for those who are using LinkedIn to find a new job.

This shows a lack of understanding as to how people read LinkedIn profiles. When somebody "checks you out" they are not just interested in what you are currently doing but they are almost always interested in your "back story".

I recently received a marketing email from an individual offering their services as a business coach. When I looked at their LinkedIn profile the only employment on show was the last two years as a business coach. The problem this gave me was that I had no way of assessing their credibility, I'm fairly sure that prior to their current role they had plenty of business experience but because this could not be seen I naturally assumed the worst and discarded the email.

Authenticity is key and not revealing information about your background may lead to people to the wrong conclusion or worse still, to not trust you.

Recommendations

A LinkedIn recommendation is a testimonial written by a first tier connection that will show on your profile. There will also be a link to this recommendation in the profile of the person that wrote it and when you receive the recommendation your other first-tier connections and the connections of the person that wrote the recommendation will be notified.

I am a big fan of recommendations but only if they are done in the correct manner.

This is the best example of "social proof" on LinkedIn and can be a very powerful addition to a profile. Social proof is a tried and tested technique popularised by websites such as Amazon, TripAdvisor and the Apple App Store. Just think about the typical process that most of us go through when buying a product from Amazon, we check the price, take a cursory glance at the description and then go to the reviews. There is strong evidence that the reviews are more influential to our buying decision than anything else and yet these reviews are from random people who we know nothing of!

Compare that to a recommendation on a LinkedIn profile, this testimonial includes a direct link back to the profile of the person that wrote it with extensive information about who they are, what their background is and who they know.

It is easy to see how a recommendation can significantly enhances the quality of a profile but they do have to be done in the right way. My guidance would be to follow these rules;

1) Only accept the recommendation from someone who you feel would be influential, this means that they need to have credibility to the people you most wish to impress.
2) Never recommend someone back in return, this will show in your activity stream and on both profiles which will ruin the credibility of the testimonial.

Skill & Expertise Endorsements

As well as describing your experience LinkedIn also offers you the opportunity to list a set of skills, these have to to be picked from a extensive list on LinkedIn and you can pick up to 50 that will show on your profile.

A good example of a skill will be a certain type of software you are competent with or something like public speaking. Simply type whatever words best describe your skill and LinkedIn will show you a list of applicable skills to pick from.

So why do we need skills as opposed to simply including keywords throughout our profile? The answer is simple, LinkedIn prefer it this way because they can monitor the popularity of certain skills and this helps them when selling their recruiting products.

In isolation skills are not especially valuable but they do become more useful when they are endorsed by another user. A skill endorsement happens when someone that is connected to you views your profile, when the page loads up the first thing they will see is a list of up to 5 of your skills with a link to endorse the skills. The more endorsements a skill gets the more useful it becomes in your profile because each endorsement "power boosts" its sensitivity to a LinkedIn search.

The way LinkedIn explain endorsements is;

Endorsing others is a great way to recognize your colleagues for the skills you've seen them demonstrate. It helps contribute to the strength of their profile, and increases the likelihood they'll be discovered for opportunities related to the skills their connections know they possess.

The key part of this is where they say it increases the likelihood of being discovered. This indicates that it has a dynamic effect on the search algorithm. In simple terms it works like this;

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If you have the Skill 'Public speaking' and it has been endorsed by 20 connections then you will not rank as high in a search result as someone who has the same skill endorsed by 50 connections.

I honestly don't believe that people will be impressed by how many endorsements you have in your profile especially as we have become used to the fact that people will endorse your skills for no other reason than they are asked (by LinkedIn) to do so. I am regularly endorsed by people who have never met me for skills that they can't know I have!

Everyone knows that skill endorsements are not an accurate indicator of quality or experience but that really isn't the point. They will have a significant effect on how often you appear near the top of someone's search result and that is why they are worth having – this is especially important for jobseekers.

Whilst LinkedIn will allow you to have 50 skills I would advise that you just pick the 10 most important ones, this way they are more likely to get endorsed because the most common way an endorsement occurs is when a connection visits your profile and if you have too many skills then they will be suggested for endorsement less often.

Media

A picture paints a thousand words or so the saying goes and if this is true then a video or PowerPoint presentation must paint even more! LinkedIn provide us all with the opportunity to insert media into our profiles at no cost so it makes sense for everyone to use this feature.

At the bottom of the summary, experience and education sections you are able to embed or link to a variety of different types of media files for example you can show a PowerPoint (.ppt) presentation or a photograph (.jpg, .jpeg) or even a Word or PDF document.

If the file is in excess of 100mb in size (such as a video) you can show this by linking to it on the website where it is held i.e. YouTube, Vimeo etc.

The file will be seen as a small square in your profile which when clicked, will open to a full page format.

This technique can make a significant difference to a profile and really make it standout.

Other Sections

The above areas are the most important to get right but there are various other sections that may be of interest such as;

- Projects
- Languages
- Publications
- Honors & awards
- Test scores
- Patents
- Certifications
- Volunteering & Causes

It makes sense to add the above sections if they are appropriate but they are not required to get your profile strength to 'All-star'.

Profile Strength

LinkedIn will grade the strength of your profile, this is a measurement based on how much information you have provided in your profile…or put a different way, how much information that LinkedIn are interested in!

You can see your strength rating by going to the right hand panel of your profile page where you will see a circle that is part filled with colour.

When you first enter a basic profile you will be graded as a 'beginner', move your cursor over the circle in the box to view the next level of strength you can reach. You can click the 'Improve Your Profile Strength' link for a guided tour that'll guide you through adding content to your profile.

When you get to the dizzy heights of an 'Expert' grade then you have completed all the information required but you will need to grow a larger network to achieve 'All Star' status (see below)

Profile Strength

All-Star

This is LinkedIn's attempt at 'gamification'. In order for their recruiting products to be effective they need users to provide enough information about themselves for recruiters to find them in their searches.

By measuring your profile strength in this graphic way they are setting you a challenge which they know you will find hard to resist.

Whilst LinkedIn have their own commercial motives for this feature, I don't believe this is a problem because the user will also gain advantages by having a higher profile strength. To use LinkedIn effectively you need to make sure your profile is easy to find, this is especially important for jobseekers but it is relevant to everyone.

The simple fact is that the higher your profile strength, the more likely you are to be found.

<p align="center"><strong style="color:orange">Objective – Get your profile strength to 'All Star' as soon as possible.</p>

Conclusion

A LinkedIn profile is a critical and highly effective personal branding tool. It doesn't matter why you are using LinkedIn, the fact is you need a great profile.

Profiles work better when they are authentic, comprehensive, easy to read and most importantly, interesting.

When you have finished compiling your profile, check it for typos and then ask a colleague or friend (preferably someone that knows you in a professional capacity) to check for any errors and also to make sure that it is a true and accurate representation of you.

3   Connecting

When I look back on my career there have been two significant and pivotal moments that facilitated a change in direction and a positive leap forward.

Both of these events happened as a direct consequence of knowing somebody but interestingly neither of these individuals were people that I would describe as someone I knew well.

This is a classic example of what the world renowned sociologist Mark Granovetter described in his highly acclaimed thesis titled "The Strength of Weak Ties".

It appears that I am not the only person that this has happened to, in fact most people find that the significant moments of their lives most commonly happen as a result of a weak tie.
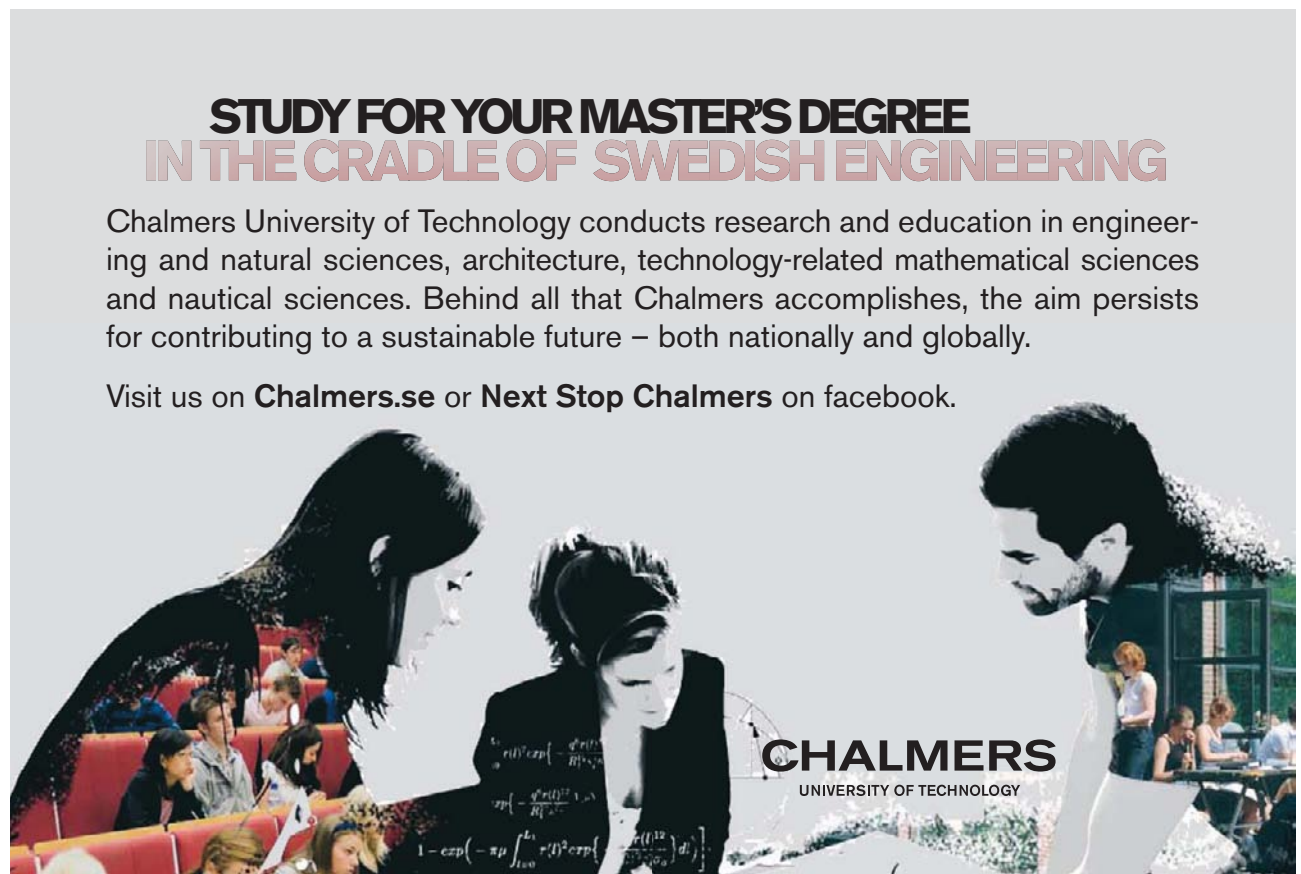
What has all this sociology stuff got to do with LinkedIn? I hear you ask!

Well I believe that LinkedIn offers us the best opportunity we have ever had to create an extensive network of weak ties. The strength of LinkedIn is in its diversity of people, professions, locations and expertise. Never before have we had such easy access to so many people in business.

If you focus on building a wide and diverse network of weak ties you are creating many potential pathways to success. For me, nothing sums up the power of LinkedIn more than that!

My Story

One of the examples I referred to earlier happen to me a few years ago. Things had been going well and my business was growing steadily until I hit an unexpected downturn in business, some of this was due to things within my control and some wasn't but the bottom line was that I was in a difficult position.

At times like this it is easy to panic and try everything you know to generate some new customers quickly and I was definitely guilty of this yet what saved me was not what I did then but what I had done in the years before…I had established many weak ties!

One day out of the blue, I received a call from a LinkedIn connection of mine who I had met a couple of times but this was not someone I would describe as knowing intimately well. She told me she had been providing some consultancy service to a large blue chip organisation and they had recently been discussing how they were using (more to the point not using!) LinkedIn. She had strongly recommended me to this client and had arranged for me to call them with a view to arranging an appointment.

The interesting thing was that this individual had been introduced to me by someone else who I would also describe as a weak tie, who in turn was the wife of someone who had been on one of my LinkedIn workshops (another weak tie).

I went to see the client and managed to secure a contract to train hundreds of their staff over an 18 month period. This was the largest contract I had ever won and came at a time when I most needed it.

The chain of events that led to this referral involved three of my LinkedIn connections, none of which I knew intimately well and I had only actually met two of them.

This was clearly not just down to LinkedIn but it certainly played its part, each introduction had been made through LinkedIn and LinkedIn allowed me the platform to keep in touch and keep my name in front of them so that when they were in a situation where LinkedIn training was mentioned, they were able to remember to refer me.

The important point is that it was only by building weak ties that I was able to be in a position to receive this referral in the first place.

It is therefore somewhat strange that LinkedIn actually discourage us from connecting with weak ties! You will notice that LinkedIn strongly advise that we only connect with people that we know well and trust – this contradicts decades of research and in my opinion, makes no sense at all!

This does not mean that I am recommending you should connect with as many people as possible, those that do are rarely successful (other than recruiters who tend to connect freely in order to improve their search results). I am however suggesting that connecting to people that you do not know does makes perfect sense, provided they are relevant and that you engage with them before inviting them to connect (more on that later).

The best way to build a network of relevant and useful first tier connections is to firstly decide on a clear strategy. It may help to ask yourself the following questions:

- What are my objectives for LinkedIn?
- Have I connected with everyone I know well? (They don't need to be relevant if you know them well)
- What sort of people do I wish to reach and be visible to? (Remember only 1st & 2nd tier can fully see your profile in a keyword search)
- Who might these people be connected to and could I connect to them?
- How can I engage with these people prior to connecting with them?

Once you have a clear idea on who you want to connect with you can then start building a list of people who you want to target as a potential connection.

The recommended workflow for building an effective network should look something like this;

- Conduct an advanced search using the job title field set to "current" and enter a list of their most likely job titles. This can be done by using a technique often known as a Boolean search string. Each job title (assuming it has more than one word) should be quoted in " " to signify it as a phrase and then you need to put the word OR in between each phrase, this is not seen by LinkedIn as the word 'or' but as a command allowing you to search multiple job titles at once. For instance a search string should look something like this;
- "Managing director" OR MD OR "chief executive" OR CEO
- You can also add a location criteria into your search (a mileage radius of a postcode in some countries).
- You can also add some phrases or words into the 'keywords' field which searches the whole profile, for instance you might want to connect to people who have an interest in property management, this might not be included in their job title but is likely to be mentioned somewhere in their profile.
- Make sure you search everyone on LinkedIn by ticking the "3rd tier and everyone else" box
- Once you have performed the search you can go through the list and send an invitation to connect to everyone that you know or have recently met.
- As you go through the rest of the list, save each profile of those who you do not know but wish to connect to, to LinkedIn Contacts by clicking on the star or selecting from the drop down menu in their profile (see pic below)
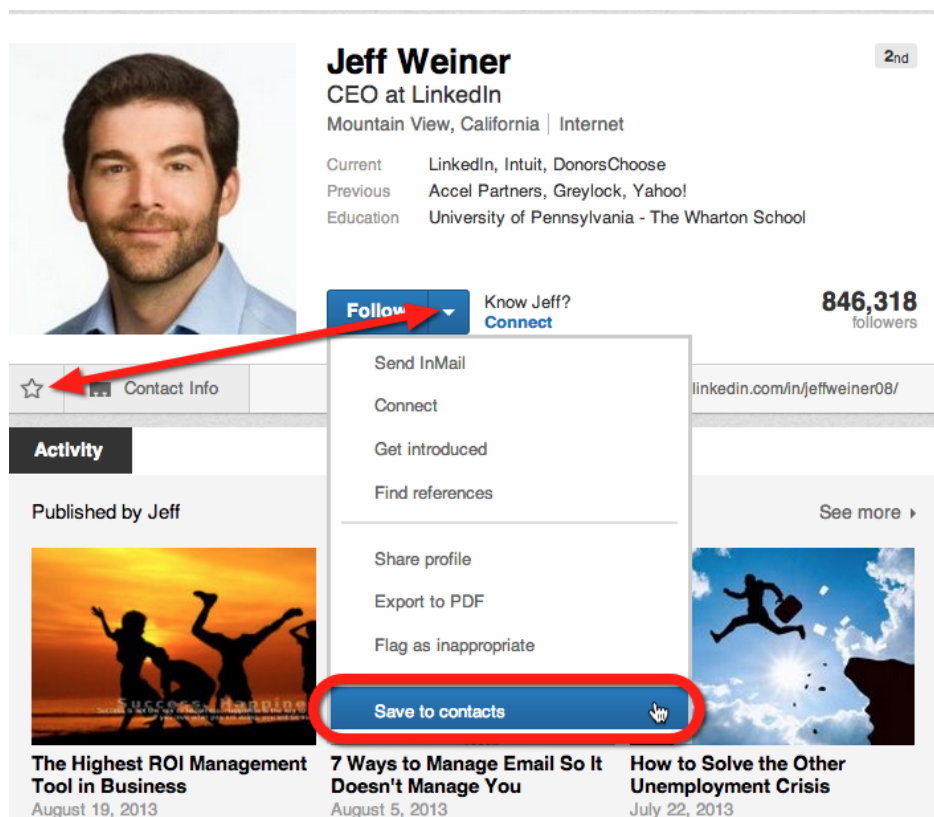
- Once a profile is saved you can then tag them. This is a free facility and you can create up to 200 of your own tags. On this occasion you just need to create a tag named 'invite to connect' or something similar see below;
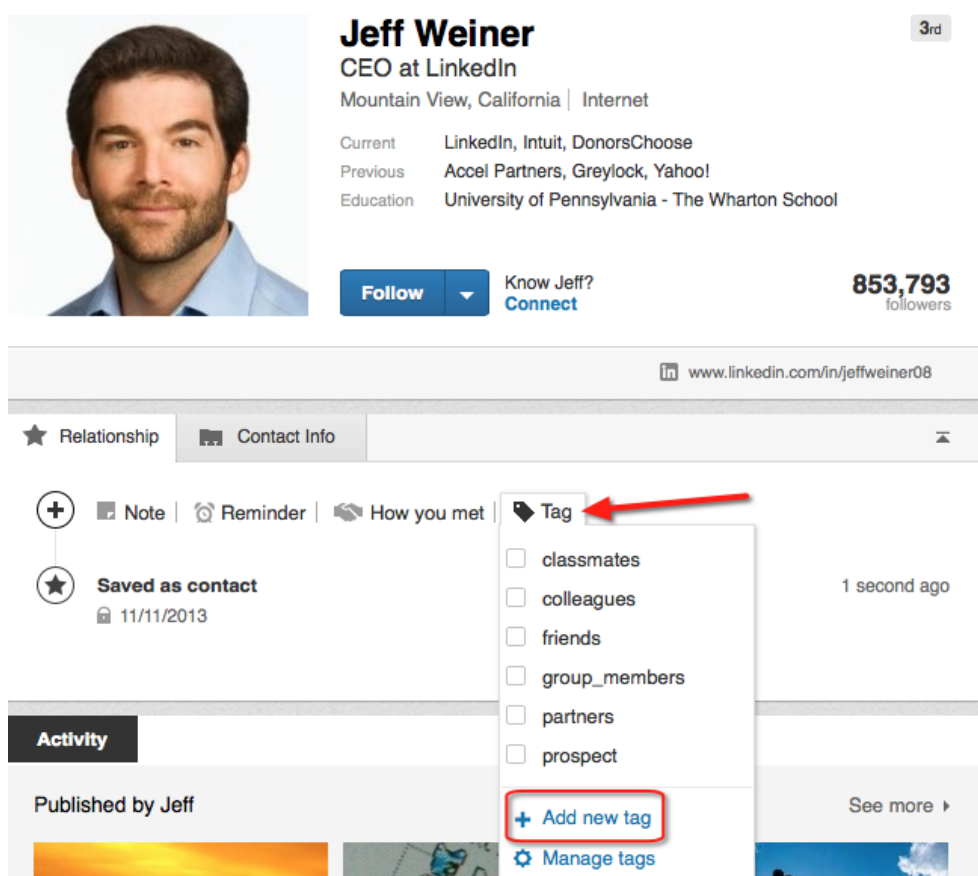
- Now you have a list of people to contact and engage with before sending them an invitation to connect. You may find various ways outside of LinkedIn to engage with them but within LinkedIn the best way is though Groups (see chapter 4).
- Once you have made contact with them you should then send an invitation to connect. It is best to do this via the LinkedIn Contacts area because this prevents having to select a reason (the options rarely fit) and allows you to personalise the message (unlike invitations sent via a mobile app).
- Following this workflow closely will ensure that the vast majority of your invitations are accepted.
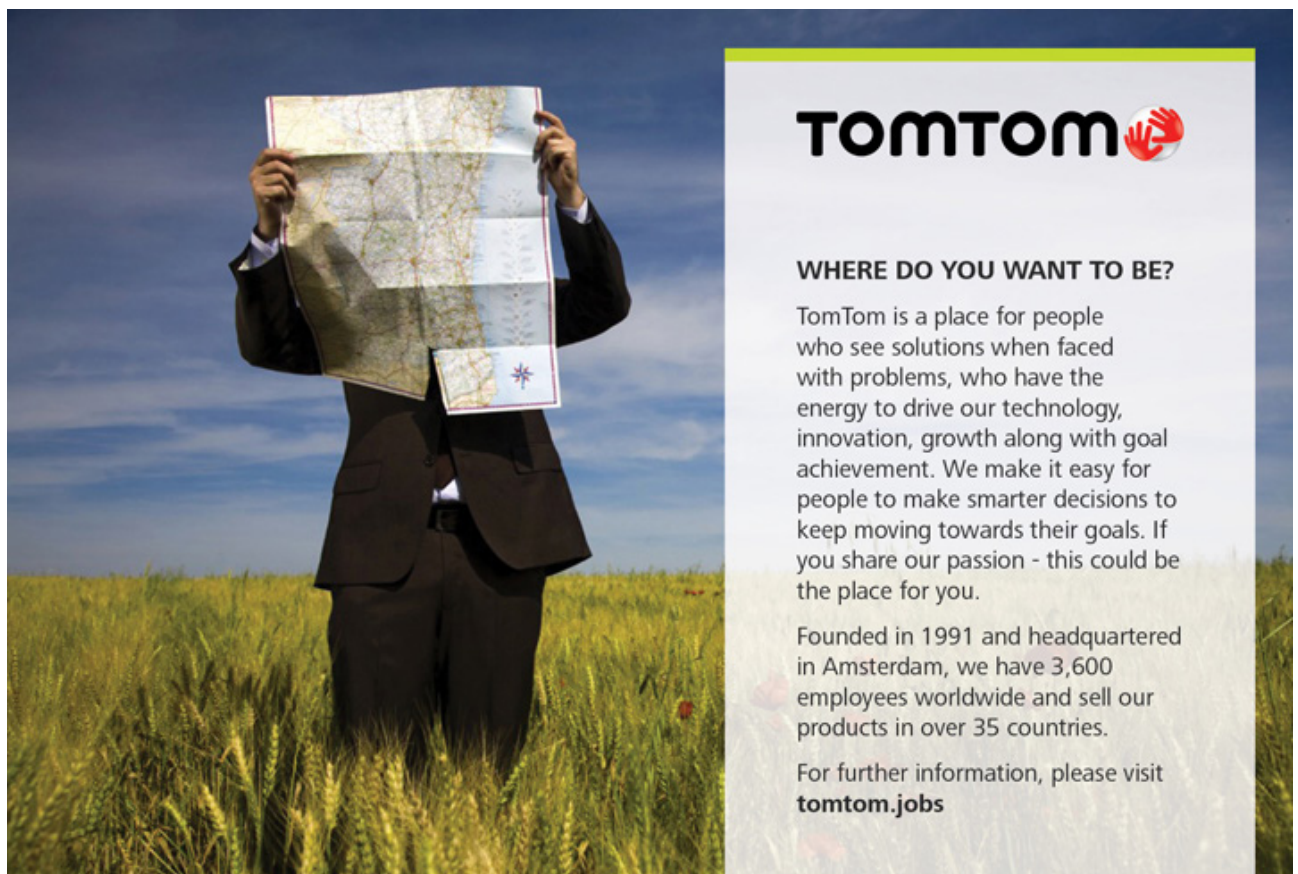
There are also two other methods you can use:

The "people you may know" section in the top of the right hand column of your homepage is also a useful resource when building your network. LinkedIn works out who you may know from a complicated algorithm that takes into account many factors including who you are already connected to, information in your profile, which groups you are part of and many other things.

You can also click on the "add connections" link (small grey head and shoulders figure with a + next to it in the top right corner of any page). This allows you to connect with your email account, LinkedIn will search through all the email addresses in your contacts and cross-check these against any email addresses registered on LinkedIn. If an address is found and you are not connected then it will give you the option of sending an invitation and any addresses that it cannot find it will send an invitation to sign up to LinkedIn.

Whilst this can be a very useful facility, it can also be very dangerous!

The first issue is that the list by default has every contact ticked, this means that a message will be sent to everyone on the list which could easily cause you problems. The only way to use this list effectively is to un-tick all and go through the list, ticking only those that are appropriate to invite.

The other problem with this method is that the emails that are sent to addresses that are not registered on LinkedIn are sent on your behalf and encouraging the recipient to sign up to LinkedIn, this may be okay but if the recipient does not respond they are then sent several reminder emails and this is often regarded as spam. The problem is that you have no control over this process and you cannot prevent these emails being sent.

My advice is to be very careful and only use this facility if you really need to.

Karen's Story

A good example of this would be Karen who is an ex-colleague of mine and now a "superuser" of LinkedIn.

Karen has always been good at networking, she is a regular face at events and functions in her specialist market and has been for years. When Karen started using LinkedIn she naturally connected with the same group of people and rarely communicated with them on LinkedIn because she was in regular contact with them via email, telephone and in person.

When we discussed LinkedIn I challenged her strategy and encouraged her to use her excellent communication and rapport building skills to widen her network online.

This required a focussed approach to 'actively networking' on LinkedIn, the equivalent of 'working the room' online. She started to get more involved in a few of her groups by posting discussions and responding to others, she began taking notice of her home page feed and commenting and liking updates from her connections and others. As she increased her activity she started to engage more and more with 'weak ties' who she then connected with (the majority invited her to connect).

Karen told me that this became a very interesting an enjoyable activity and it didn't take long for it to deliver some real results.

About 7 months after our discussion she won a significant piece of business from a brand new customer.

This was due to a referral she received from someone she had connected with on LinkedIn about 3 months earlier. The individual who referred her was someone she had engaged with in a group, they both had similar views on the discussion topic and Karen used her communication skills to develop the conversation outside of the group, they connected and kept in touch and when Karen realised she was going to be passing by this persons location she suggested meeting for a coffee.

This is a classic example of taking a relationship from online to offline.

Karen realised that the more weak links she built, the greater the chance of something like this happening.

Of course it is not just about connecting but it is a very important early step in the process of networking online.

In contrast to this story, many LinkedIn users take entirely the wrong approach to connecting.

Have you ever received an invitation to connect from a random person that you have never heard of that simply reads "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn"?

Yes?…me too, in fact I get them almost every day!

My immediate thought is "who are you?' swiftly followed by 'What do you want from me?" Why would anybody wish to connect to a random stranger who doesn't even bother to introduce themselves or explain why they wish to connect!
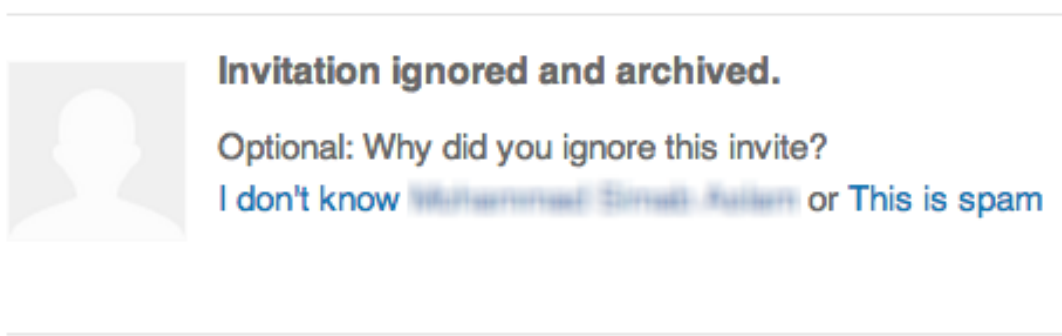
Have you ever sent an invitation like this? Come on, don't deny it!! I certainly have, before I became aware of the consequences.

You may have done it without realising because inviting via a mobile app automatically sends out the ignorant message quoted above without allowing you the opportunity to personalise the message.

The LinkedIn apps are good for keeping on top of news and update feeds but you should avoid using them to invite someone to connect. The safest way to invite someone to connect is either by clicking on their profile and connecting from there or saving their profile in Contacts and inviting from within the Contacts section.

Not only is this likely to prevent you from building a network it can also get you into trouble with LinkedIn!

If someone responds to your invitation by clicking "ignore" then they are asked a further question (see below)

Invitation ignored and archived.

Optional: Why did you ignore this invite?
I don't know ~~Muhammad Ismail Aslam~~ or This is spam

If they were to click on the option to report that they do not know you then this can result in your account becoming restricted.

LinkedIn has a built in feature designed to discourage you from connecting with people that you don't know. If five people, over any time period, reject your invitation to connect and state that they do not know you then your account will be restricted automatically.

A restricted account means that you can only invite members if you have their email address, in every other respect you can use LinkedIn normally but this restriction will make growing an effective network of weak ties difficult.

Ideally you should aim to connect only with people that you have previously met, spoken with or at least swapped an email or LinkedIn messages with. Some form of engagement is recommended prior to connecting to ensure a successful outcome.

Taking the time to build your network in the correct manner will pay dividends and you should always be looking to grow more weak ties and pathways to more opportunities.

Once the initial task of establishing connections is complete then you should have a reasonably effective network. Always keep in mind that you need to keep connecting with people who you meet or become aware of.

Just being connected is not enough however, you now need a workflow to ensure that you keep in touch with your network.

4   Taking things further

As a LinkedIn Trainer one of my greatest challenges is to ensure that my delegates continue to use their LinkedIn network on a regular and sustained basis. It's very easy to be inspired in a training session and have every intention of putting your new skills into practice but it is a very different thing to maintain the correct level of activity once the initial excitement has subsided.

I believe the only way that this will happen is to put in place a LinkedIn schedule/workflow that becomes a normal part of your working day. It is only through intentional and consistent activity that you will get results from online networking.

This will require the following activities on a regular basis;

1. Direct contact with key people in your network.
2. Indirect contact with the whole of your network.
3. Focused activity in a small number of key groups.
4. Monitoring certain activities of your connections.

Let's tackle each of these points individually.

4.1   Direct contact with key people in your network

The first thing you need to establish is which of your connections are "key". This will obviously depend on what your objectives are but a few examples might be;

- Someone you wish to do business with.
- Someone you consider to be "well-connected" i.e. Someone who is widely known and influential.
- Someone you feel you could work in collaboration with, for instance an individual who deals/sells to the same people as you.
- Someone who you feel you could learn from.

By being connected to these people they may well see your updates and activities on LinkedIn which will ensure they remember you but these people are considered to be key to you so it is important to go further, this can be done in a variety of ways and it is really important to make any communication targeted and personal to them. Consider the following options;

- Share an article/blog piece that you believe will be of interest directly to them (this involves clicking the share link and opting to send the link directly to a connection)
- Liking, sharing and commenting on their updates.
- Sending a direct message asking them for their help or their opinion on something
- Offering to introduce them to another connection you feel may be of interest.
- Suggesting an informal meeting for a coffee.
- Suggesting a telephone or Skype/Google hangout call.

4.2   Indirect contact with the whole of your network.

Regular activity will ensure your name and profile are often seen by the rest of your connections. We have all heard the phrase 'Out of sight – out of mind' but the opposite is also true 'in sight – in mind'!

Many people make the mistake of believing that focussed activity over a short time period will deliver results, the reality is that the majority of people will not see your activity. Only consistent activity over a long time period is likely to ensure that they notice you occasionally.

This requires a structured approach ensuring that you do at least one activity on LinkedIn every working day. This can involve a variety of activities including;

- A status update linking to an article you think is of interest. Some of these pieces should ideally be written by you (blog, whitepaper etc) but the majority should be from elsewhere. It is really important to understand that just linking to an article is not good enough, this is in many respects just like spam – Always make a comment about the post you are linking to.
- Group activity such as posting or commenting on a discussion (open groups only). As with status updates you should avoid just posting links.
- Connecting
- Liking or commenting on someone else's update (preferably the latter)
- Updating your job title in your profile (don't overdo this)
- Following a company

This may sound like a lot of work but in reality most of the above actions take seconds. The time consuming part is finding and writing relevant articles to share (see chapter 8). Looking for interesting articles can be outsourced or delegated but you must always ensure you read every article you comment on. LinkedIn itself can also be helpful in this respect as the 'LinkedIn Pulse' feed that you will see at the top of your home page is a valuable resource especially if you refine your picks so that your feed is for relevant sectors and topics. The popular 'Thought Leader' articles can also be useful if you follow the right people.

4.3 Focused activity in a small number of key groups.

95% of LinkedIn users join at least one group and there are over 2 million to choose from. You can find a group for pretty much anything these days and you can join up to 50 groups.

In many respects groups are the heartbeat of LinkedIn, there is more activity in groups than anywhere else in the network and they can be a fantastic place to get to know and be noticed by many other users.

Unfortunately groups can also be a frustrating waste of time and a major distraction!

The problem with groups is that anyone can start a group, the entry barriers are non-existent so many users start a group without any thought or planning and it turns out to be a chaotic, unproductive mess for everyone!

Because groups are so popular they also attract the worst type of user – spammers!

My advice is that to get the maximum benefit from groups you need to decide on a clear strategy. This will involve splitting groups into two distinct categories;

- Research and contact resources
- Networking communities

4.4 Research and Contact Groups (join plenty)

You can often find out some useful information about someone via their activity in a group and sharing a group with someone allows you to send them a free direct message (thereby avoiding having to pay for an expensive Inmail message). Joining groups with lots of members also improves your search results (group members are as visible as 3rd tier connections). For these reasons you should join plenty of groups but you will need to go into the group settings and switch off all email alerts – if you don't you will soon find your email inbox becoming overloaded with messages from these groups!

The aim of these groups is not networking, it's just access and information so you really don't need to keep up to date with the activity of these groups.

4.5 Networking Groups (join very few)

These are the groups where you will spend most of your time. They should be populated by a highly relevant community of LinkedIn users who you wish to build relationships with. They should be groups where there are regular credible discussions (not link posting with few comments or lightweight bickering) and these discussions will have a wide range of contributors (many groups are dominated by a small handful of active members). The size of the group is less relevant, often the best groups are quite small and niche (200-1000 members) and the massive 'super groups' are the ones that attract the spammers. This is not always the case and each group has to be judged on its merits.

The best groups are strongly managed by a highly visible manager who is clearly in control. The tell-tale signs of a good group are as follows;

- No automatic entry. All membership has to be approved.
- When you request to join the group you are sent a message from the manager outlining the required criteria and recommended behaviour.
- On joining the group you are made very clear of the rules. A strict set of rules with a 'zero tolerance' policy is generally a good sign.
- The language used when describing the group includes words such as 'community' 'engagement' 'contribution' and the manager encourages members to get involved.
- The vast majority of discussions are genuine debates amongst a wide range of members – very few would be links without comments

Once you have joined such a group you should adjust your email settings so that you get daily emails informing you of every new discussion.

The reason you have joined this group is to get highly involved and you should consider every discussion as a valuable opportunity to increase your visibility. Consider each discussion carefully and decide if you have something to add, if you don't believe you can then try to think of someone else you know who might have something to say on that subject. Call them and ask for their views and then post their views in the discussion thread – DO NOT claim credit for this, simply explain that you have a good contact who has an interesting view. No-one will criticise you for this (unless you overdo it) and you are clearly demonstrating that A) you are committed to adding value to the group and B) You know people who are very well informed!

Groups are very similar to offline networking events. You wouldn't go to a networking event and walk into a room full of relevant and interesting contacts, all talking to each other and find a quiet corner and sit there eating the vol-au-vents and drinking wine would you? Yet many people join groups on LinkedIn and do exactly that!

The best way to behave in these groups is the exact same way you would when networking offline. Seek to help others, mix with a wide range of people and speak up (get involved).

This type of activity can be time consuming so my advice would be to only join a small number of groups on this basis – start with just one and see what you get from it before joining another on this basis – only commit more time if you are confident it will pay dividends.

It may make sense to join your max of 50 groups but it is likely that only two of those will be for networking purposes, the other 48 will fall into the 'research and contact' category.

Colin's Story

Remember the story about Colin referred to in the very first chapter of this book? He had managed to be referred to a new client by someone who he shared a group with. They had never met but Colin had made a favourable impression by getting involved in the group and that, combined with a strong profile had resulted in his HR consultancy winning a major contract.

Robin's Story

Robin, an emotional intelligence expert and consultant, had a very different experience with groups although the outcome was just as positive.

He had developed an idea in his specialist area of expertise (resilience), in a nutshell his idea was to produce cards with images depicting various aspects of resilience that may help practitioners when working with their clients. He was keen to obtain feedback on his idea so he posted a discussion in a small (c450 members) group on LinkedIn dedicated to the subject of resilience.

He was delighted to receive several messages of support and a few suggested areas for improvement and expected nothing more to happen.

A few weeks later however, he received a message on LinkedIn from someone in Australia who was writing a book about resilience. They had noticed his post and wanted to include a chapter on Robins concept.

Robin gladly agreed to contribute to the book and was proud to see his chapter published several months later.

This was more than he had expected from his original post and he had no expectations of anything more.

This however was not the case! Following publication of the book he found many other opportunities coming his way and a couple of months later he was invited to speak at the premiere emotional intelligence conference in the world at Harvard University!

This has since been followed with several other invitations to speak at other conferences and events throughout the world.

Robin fully appreciates that without LinkedIn and specifically without this niche group he would not have been able to achieve the things that he has.

4.6   Monitoring certain activities of your connections

Imagine if you could have your very own professional intelligence agent, a mythical being who appeared to you when you requested information and told you things about what was going on in your network.

"Tell me when one of my best contacts meets someone who might be of interest to me"
"Inform me when a contact gets a new job or is promoted"
"Let me know if they express an opinion in a group discussion"
"Remind me when its someone's birthday"
"Alert me when a customer has a work anniversary"
"Give me strong clues that one of my contacts might be about to leave their current job"

And many more relevant and interesting snippets of information.

Now imagine if this intelligence agent kept telling you these things and you kept ignoring them. That would be crazy wouldn't it?

Well that is exactly what most people do with the information that LinkedIn feeds to us on a daily basis. The problem is two fold;

1. We did not ask for this information and it costs us nothing (hence we do not value it)
2. Information overload. We are fed too much data to be able to effectively use it.

Before explaining how these problems can be overcome let me give you an example of how using this information can be highly beneficial.

Sylvia's Story

Sylvia runs her own small coaching and professional development practice. She uses LinkedIn to connect to all of her customers who are either business owners or HR professionals. As well as keeping in touch through LinkedIn she also keeps a close watch on their activity by monitoring her homepage feed.

One day she noticed that one of her HR contacts had updated her profile, this was merely a cosmetic change to her job title and in isolation meant very little but Sylvia made a mental note of it.

Over the next few days she noticed this contact also performed the following actions on LinkedIn;

- Followed several companies
- Obtained new recommendations
- Connected with several recruiters

This led Sylvia to believe that her contact may well be actively seeking a new role. This was both an opportunity and a threat so Sylvia decided to get in touch. She suggested they meet for a Coffee as they hadn't been in touch for some while and when Sylvia asked her how her job was going her contact mentioned that she was close to accepting another job offer. Sylvia was able to find out who her replacement would be and even got them to make an introduction. They kept in close contact throughout the forthcoming weeks so that when this individual started their new job, Sylvia was in a position to ensure that she won their business with the new employer as well.

Monitoring the activity of people that you are connected to is a key task on LinkedIn but not an easy one because we cannot sit and monitor our homepage feed every hour of every day.

There are however a number of things that you can do to make this process more manageable;

1. Hide updates from connections who are less relevant to you.
2. Customise your homepage updates by selecting to see only those updates (by type) you are interested in.
3. Use external tools such as Nutshellmail.com or BullhornReach.com or ifttt.com to assist you with alerts.
4. Make LinkedIn Contacts (desktop and/or mobile app) a key part of your daily workflow.

Information has always been a powerful tool in business and information about people is even more powerful. Make sure that you extract the most useful information from LinkedIn and act upon it.

5   Privacy setting

One area that often concerns people when building a network is the privacy of their connections.

When you connect to somebody they are automatically able to see who else you are connected to. This can be seen in their activity feed at the point you connect to someone else and they can also browse through and search your connections from within your profile.

This may not be a problem for most people but occasionally it may be prudent to hide the fact that you are connected to someone.

All of this can be controlled in your profile privacy settings.

To prevent your connections from searching or browsing through the full list of your other connections you need to adjust the setting labelled "select who can see your connections". I believe that it is good practice to keep this open and show a willingness to share information and contacts but I can appreciate that there may be situations where it makes more sense to have this closed. For instance the following story shows a situation where privacy settings were commercially critical to a business.

Maria's Story

Maria is a Senior Area Manager for a packaging company, she has been working for her current employer for about 2 years who she joined from a competitor.

Maria's role is focused on business development, she uses LinkedIn as a tool to help her find and connect with prospects and other relevant people in her market.

On one occasion she received an invitation to connect on LinkedIn from a contact at a prospective customer whom she had met the day before at a meeting where she had been invited to present her company's case for winning the account of this large manufacturing business.

The meeting had gone very well and she had been surprised to find out that they were not talking to any of her competitors at that time. This was unusual and led to Maria believing she had a very good chance of winning the business.

Maria had always connected to relevant people in her market, especially prospective customers and so she didn't have to think very long before deciding to accept the invitation. She was also concerned that it may not create the right impression if she didn't accept!

Two days later she called this person to follow up on her meeting and the sales proposal she had sent them. She was shocked to hear that the prospective customer was now talking to one of her competitors and this would result in a delay. "I thought you said that you were not speaking to anyone else about this requirement" she enquired,

"That is correct" answered the customer.

"but the day after our meeting I received a call from one of your competitors enquiring as to whether they could help with any current requirements. I'm not sure how they got to find out but they seemed confident that we would be interested in their products, I felt duty bound to consider any proposal they offered so they are sending me a quote today".

When Maria asked who the other company was she was shocked to find out that it was her previous employer!

How did this happen?

This was not just an unlucky coincidence, Maria had actually unwittingly tipped off her competitor via LinkedIn.

The problem occurred because Maria was still connected to her ex colleagues and her privacy settings were still at the default level. This means that her first tier connections saw a notification of this new connection in their home page feed or when visiting Maria's profile and saw that she had connected to this (confidential) prospective customer.

Privacy settings can be changed at any time and your settings are applicable at the time of a particular action.

Understanding your settings and controlling what information you reveal at any given moment is a very important aspect of using LinkedIn.

Maria could have avoided this problem by managing her privacy settings correctly.

This is what she should have done;

- Before accepting the invitation from the customer she could have switched off the setting titled 'Select who can see your connections' see below
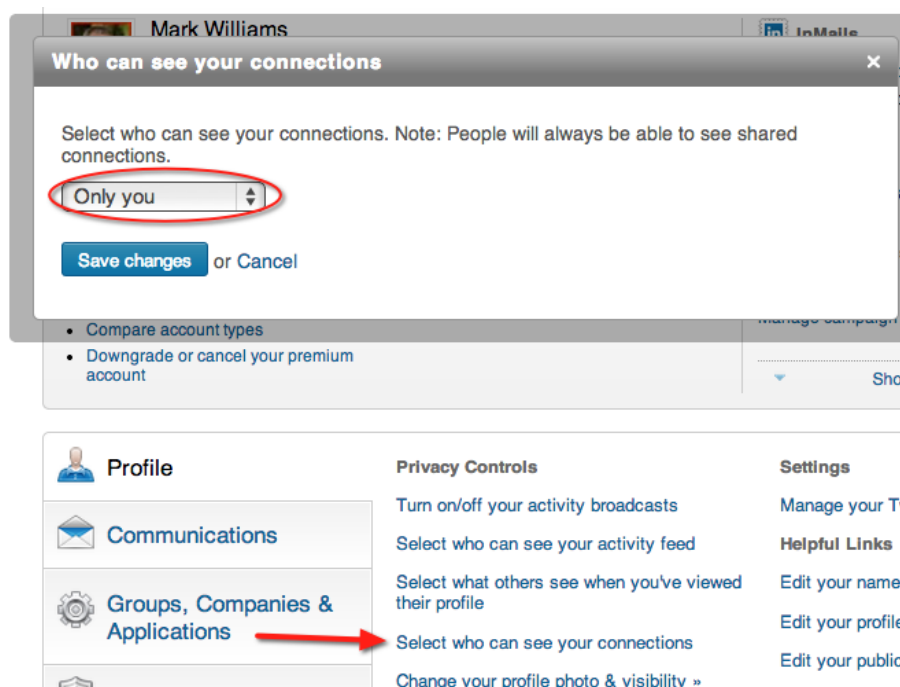
- She can then change her setting back to show her connections if she wished. Because the setting was switched off at the time of the connection it will not show in her activity feed (top of her profile) or in the feed on the home page of her connections or in the 'New' section of her connections browse (see below)

Connections   All (500+)   New (5)   🔍
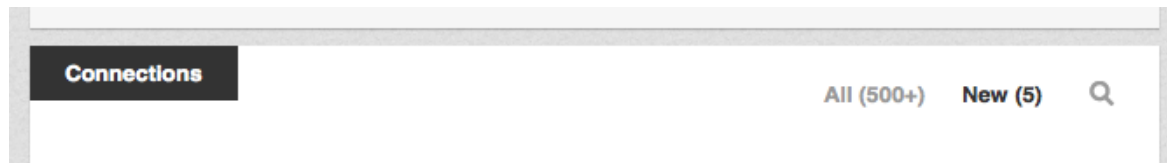
Now you might be wondering why she would want to show her connections at all but many people believe (myself included) that it is good networking practice to show your other connections who you are connected to. This encourages a spirit of co-operation which is what networking is all about.

The fact that you are connected to someone (a customer for example) is not really sensitive information, you could have connected years ago, the timing of the connection **is** sensitive however as it may be commercially sensitive information as was demonstrated in Maria's story.

Of course all of this could be avoided by not connecting to competitors in the first place but that is much harder than you might think;

- Do you always remember to disconnect with ex-colleagues when you leave a company?
- Do you remember to disconnect with colleagues when they leave your current company?
- What happens if a client or prospect or anyone you are connected to decides to change direction in their career and accept a job at one of your competitors. Will you notice and be aware of this?
- What happens if a connection becomes friendly with a competitor and tips them off when they see you connecting?

In truth it is almost always impossible to ensure you are not connected to competitors so using your settings intelligently is by far the best way to maintain confidentiality.

6 Company Page

LinkedIn provide us all with the ability to set up our own company page and this is one of the most underutilised features of LinkedIn. It is completely free to have a company page and they do not take long to set up.

Company pages are very different from personal profiles and whilst very useful they do not have anything like the functionality associated with a personal profile. LinkedIn is and always will be a network of people who work for companies (even if the company is just themselves).

That said, setting up your company page correctly is an important task.

If you are working for a large organisation the chances are that your company page will already be managed by your marketing or communications department.

If you're working for yourself then you may need to set up your company page from scratch. Anyone can do this provided they have a registered email address on their account that is of the domain for that company. For instance I use two email addresses mrlinkedin.uk@gmail.com and mark@etn-training. co.uk. I would not be able to use the Gmail account to set up a company page but I did use the etn-training one as this is the domain I have purchased for my company.

The company page has 6 sections or pages as follows;

6.1   Home

This is the landing page for all visitors to your company page.

You can input a basic description of your business and complete some category fields but the main focus of this page should be pictures and graphics that you can load up to give visitors a very positive first impression. LinkedIn has quite tight regulations on the size of these graphics so make sure you follow the guidelines that they provide very closely.

There is also a link to the profiles of all of your employees in this page and a list of 'similar companies' neither of these features can be turned off.

There are links to the products/services and career pages as well as your showcase pages.

The rest of your homepage will be taken up with status updates, these are covered in more detail elsewhere but it is important to ensure that you are regularly sending out quality information and updates to your followers (followers are explained in this section).

Unlike personal updates you can actually target who your updates are seen by (see section on content) and you can see a breakdown of how many impressions and clicks each update receives.

6.2   Careers

This is not a free page, customers who purchase corporate recruiting packages have the opportunity to use this page to showcase employees, recruitment videos and current vacancies in this section.

6.3   Products & Services

This is the most important and feature rich section of a company page.

You can create a page for every product or service you offer to your customers. Sometimes this may require being creative about how you break down your offering. For instance you may be able to create a new product for each market segment that you sell a similar product/service to.
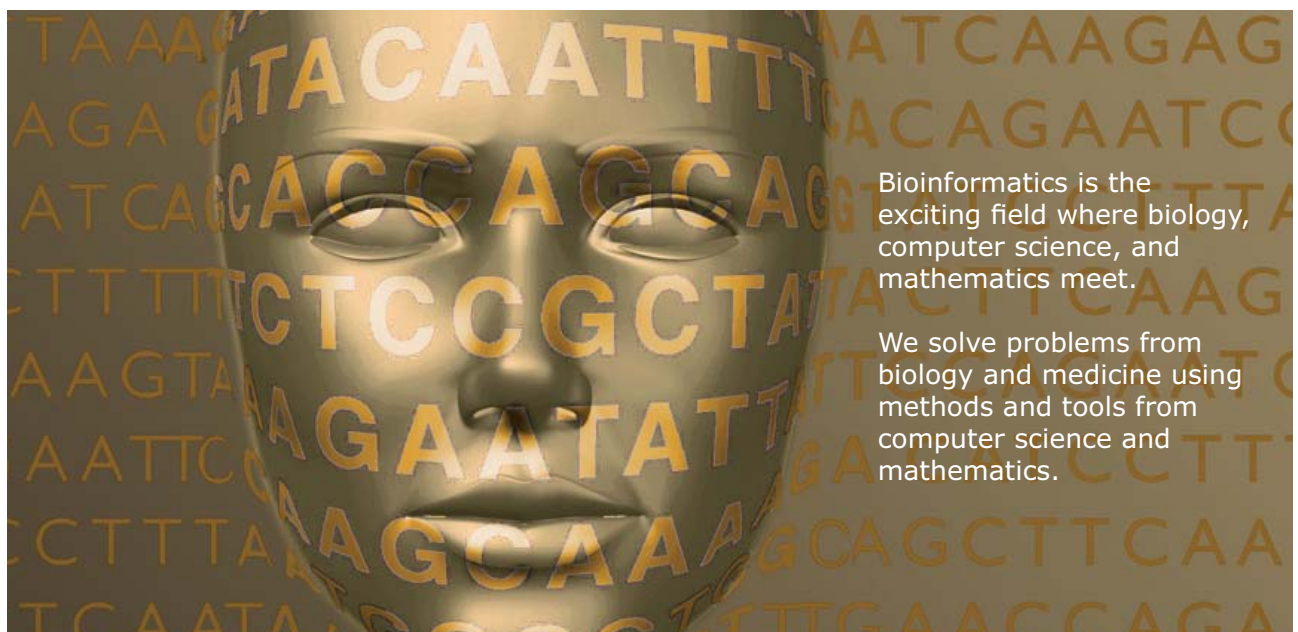
Each product/service page has a description, website links, up to 3 contact points (so long as they are on LinkedIn) who can be sent a free message as well as a special promotion section (an external link but with more space than the normal website link to describe the offer) and even the opportunity to embed a YouTube video into the page.

You are also able to obtain recommendations for each products/service. These recommendations can be from anyone (not just your connections) and they do not even need to type anything (although its better if they do!). This adds an extra layer of social proof to your business.

Finally you can set up 'audiences' for company pages. This requires you to specify a type of background by company size, job function, industry, seniority and geography. Once you have set these up the visitor will see a different order of products when they visit this page.

For instance I have ensured that when a marketing person visits my products, they see my company page tutorial first whereas if a recruiter visits, they see my searching tutorial product.

6.4   Insights

This is an information only page and you cannot control the content. Viewers will see information about ex-employees plus which skills are most common amongst employees and the most recommended employees.

6.5   Showcase Pages

These pages can be accessed from the home page only (they do not have a separate tab) and are designed to promote special products/services or events. They differ from a product page in that you can attract specific followers but they have less features. This means that they are best suited to events, promotions or special products.

For instance I produce a Podcast called LinkedInformed (www.linkedinformed.com) and I release 2 episodes each month. Using the Showcase page allows me to build up followers and alert them every time a new episode is released. Another good use might be specific product promotions that you wish to run from time to time or regular networking events

6.6   Analytics

LinkedIn will provide you with a breakdown of how many visitors your page receives as well as how popular each update has been and a breakdown of the demographics of your followers.

6.7   Followers

A follower is a LinkedIn user who has decided that they wish to keep up to date with your company page. They will see activity (new employees, people leaving) and updates in their home page stream. If you do not make a concerted effort to attract followers you will find that your followers are suppliers, competitors and people that are interested in working for you.

If you aim to attract followers you will start to build a list that will be of more use to you. Attracting followers is not straightforward as the right people are only likely to follow a company if they feel that it is in their interests.

7 The 7 steps of 'Social selling'

Dean's Story

Dean was a typical salesman. Confident, outgoing and highly motivated to hit his targets which he had been finding tougher to achieve in a challenging economic climate.

I met Dean at a LinkedIn workshop I had been asked to deliver for the sales team at his company, there were 11 eager delegates in the room plus Dean who was anything but eager! It was obvious from his body language that he was there under duress!

During the introductions Dean gruffly announced "I really don't understand why I am here, I despise Facebook and can't see how social networking could be relevant to my job"

The only thing that was unusual about Dean was that he was so vocal in his negativity, it is not at all uncommon for people to feel this way and completely understandable, especially when your only experience of social media is Facebook which is strongly focussed on light hearted engagement with family and friends.

I was confident that, provided Dean was sufficiently motivated to succeed, he would find what I was about to show him interesting, challenging and ultimately effective.

By the end of the day Dean was beginning to soften his view, I wouldn't go so far as to say he was a convert but he was definitely starting to see the possibilities that LinkedIn offers.

Fast forward eight months and I had the opportunity to meet Dean again. The occasion was the international sales conference for his company and I had been invited to deliver a speech plus run some breakout sessions. I met Dean at a break in between sessions.

"Hey Mark how are you doing? He said in a positive and friendly manner "you will be pleased to know that I am using LinkedIn every day now". I must admit I was rather surprised and replied "that's great Dean, I doubt you are the kind of person who would do that without good reason so why are you focusing on LinkedIn now?"

"Well as you know I was sceptical at first but I was willing to give it a try and within six weeks it had been instrumental in winning us a major contract!"

"That's fantastic. What did you do?" I replied

He then went on to explain what had happened;

1) He built a prospect list by conducting an advanced search of LinkedIn users in his territory with certain job titles.
2) The above search was saved and he set LinkedIn to email him every week with any new users who met the criteria of the search, thus adding them to his prospect list.
3) One of the above emails alerted him to a new key prospect who turned out to be a 2nd tier connection via a current and highly satisfied customer.
4) At a subsequent review meeting with this customer he asked if they would be willing to introduce him to the aforementioned prospect. They were happy to do so.
5) This introduction eventually led to winning a multi million pound contract.

In many respects this is a very simple example of how LinkedIn works. There was nothing innovative about what Dean did, he simply used the tool effectively to open doors for him. This is the beauty of using LinkedIn.

Using a first tier connection to introduce you to a second tier connection is highly effective. Asking the question "Do you know anyone" is much less effective than asking "I see you are connected to X. How well do you know them and how would you feel about introducing us?" This is much more targeted.

Download free eBooks at bookboon.com

8   Content

Providing relevant and interesting content is the backbone of your activity on LinkedIn.

The task of producing, finding and collating content is often overwhelming for people but it really doesn't have to be that difficult.

Producing your own content

There are various ways to produce your own content such as blogs, videos on YouTube or Vimeo, Podcasts and whitepapers. These are all very accessible and inexpensive these days, they do take some time and this has to be taken into consideration but to counterbalance that, content that you personally produce is always more likely to influence your audience.

The biggest barrier to writing content (apart from time) is inspiration. Thinking of subjects to write about can be difficult but you will find it much easier if you are well read yourself.

My best ideas for blog posts have come from books I have read, Podcasts I have listened to or other blogs I follow.

Writing content is a creative process so you may find it much easier if you take yourself away from your desk or normal working environment. When I get an idea I often go for a walk or run and let the idea develop before sitting down and writing.

Remove distractions when writing and focus purely on that one thing (again I find away from the office helps).

Collating other content

Because it is so easy to create content these days you will find that there is an almost inexhaustible amount of material on the Internet. This does have a downside in that it can be hard to manage at times but I strongly recommend that you have a system for collating and reading relevant articles every day.

Every day may seem overwhelming but most good blogs are no more than a 5 minute read and thats without scan reading.

This is an area that can be outsourced if you really can't find time. I personally spend 30 minutes every morning (whilst eating breakfast) reading relevant articles from industry experts, inspiring bloggers and even competitors.

Sharing Content

Once you have sourced relevant and interesting articles to share you need to think about how and when you will share them with your network.

There are several ways you can share on LinkedIn as follows;

Status Update (personal account)

The most effective way to post a status update is to make a comment or ask a question relating to an article/blog that you also link to (just paste the link in the status update box). Updates that are purely links do not encourage engagement and tend to be less seen and read.

The post should always include a picture because updates that do not include a picture are very easy to miss – you have to remember that the competition for someone's 'eyes' on their homepage feed is intense so you must provide some kind of picture or graphic to attract their attention.

If there are pictures on the web page that you are linking to then LinkedIn will bring these across and let you pick which one you wish to use. If no picture can be found then you can also attach a file from your computer such as a JPEG picture/photograph, this actually produces a bigger image in the feed and is therefore often more effective. I recommend keeping several general images (possibly including a corporate logo) on your system for using in this way.

A personal status update will (depending on settings) be seen in several places as follows;

- The updates stream on the homepage of your first tier connections, this happens immediately as you post. It is unlikely to stay there for long but this depends on how many other connections they have and how active they are.
- At the top of your profile which by default is seen by your first tier connections but you can adjust your settings so that anyone that views your profile can see it (advisable).
- In the homepage stream of anyone who is connected to someone who has commented or liked your update.

Status Update (Company Page)

This will not be applicable to everyone but if you are a small owner managed business you need to set up a company page (see chapter 6) and then you can send out status updates to your followers which will be seen in their home page stream.

The technique is very much the same as with personal updates with the exception of being able to be more selective in who each update is sent to.

Provided you have at least 100 followers you can send an update to a targeted group by specifying which industry, size, function, geography and seniority or any combination of several of these (provided the end result is at least 100).

Whilst you can share other material here it is best to mainly stick to posting your own content from your company page. Followers may include some of your connections so it is best avoid doing this at the same time as a personal status update.

Liking, Commenting and Sharing

This is the easiest and least time-consuming way to share content with your connections.

When you see an update from one of your connections or followed companies in your homepage stream you are given three options;

- Like – this will simply repeat the update in your connections homepage stream.
- Comment – by making a comment the update will automatically be shared as above with the extra advantage of encouraging engagement.
- Share – this is the best option as it allows you to comment as above as well as sending the update directly to a connection (including a private note)

The most important thing to remember is that you should never share anything that you haven't personally read (even if it was a quick scan read), do not be fooled by an attractive headline as the actual article may not live up to expectations and may even include inappropriate content.

I would try to avoid 'Liking' unless you are very short of time, the problem is that it does not encourage engagement whereas commenting and sharing are much more likely to assist you in building stronger, more meaningful relationships with your network.

Sharing content in this way is not only quick and easy, it also has the added benefit of improving the chances of the same people sharing your updates.

I recently won an attractive contract from a client who had contacted me out of the blue on LinkedIn. When I enquired as to how he had found my profile he explained that he had noticed an update from one of his connections which was simply a 'Like' of one of my updates (which was a short blog post). . He read the article and then a few more blog posts before looking through my profile and company page. He liked what he saw so he got in touch…winning business on LinkedIn really can be a simple as that!

The interesting thing is that the individual who 'Liked' my update in the first place is someone who I know and respect and I have commented and shared his posts several times before. We have only met once but our understanding and appreciation of each other's work and opinions has developed through this process resulting in this positive outcome. It's not really a case of "you share my update and I will share yours" but rather a mutual understanding and respect that has developed over time.

Groups

Another option you are given when you see an update that includes a link is to post it to groups. This allows you to create a new (general) discussion in one or several groups that you are a member of.

This can be an effective way to communicate provided you are careful. Posting irrelevant articles in groups will not go down well with the manager of that group so be very careful to ensure you pick the right group(s) and ensure that you give the discussion a good heading and commentary to start the discussion rather than just posting the link.

If any of these groups are open groups then your update will also appear on the stream of your first tier connections which will help to make you more visible.

In addition to this you may wish to share your content directly within groups of which you are a member.

Groups are designed to be discussion forums and not a list of thinly disguised advertisements (commonly referred to as 'blogvertisements!) therefore it is really important to ensure that any articles that you post are done so in support of a discussion and not just the link and title as this may well result in you being asked to leave the group.

If you can adopt a strong, effective workflow for content you will definitely see results, this may take several months but the rewards are worth the persistence.

9 Jobseeking tips

Whilst LinkedIn is primarily a business networking site these days, its roots are firmly planted in recruitment and it is still a very useful resource for a job seeker.

Here are my top 10 tips for using LinkedIn to help you find a new job, some of these points have been covered in more detail elsewhere but this should help you if you are looking for a new job;

1. **Ensure your profile has 'All-star' strength.** Completing each section of your profile will automatically mean that you are giving recruiters more keywords to find you but achieving 'All Star' status makes a significant difference to how high you are likely to appear in a recruiters search result.

2. **Use a more suitable location (not applicable in every country).** When you first created a profile, LinkedIn required you to enter a postcode and if you are like the majority of people you will have put your home postcode. The problem is that when you are looking for a job you really need your location (defined by postcode) to be where you wish to work – which for many will not be where they live! I would advise changing your postcode to a central area of a realistic mileage radius of your ideal work location. If a recruiter performs a search and states for example a 35 mile radius of the roles location and they find 600 profiles they may decide to filter this result down by reducing the postcode radius down to 25 miles and this could drop you out of the search result if your home is 30 miles from the job (a commute you have no issue with).

3. **Build a strong network**. As discussed in previous chapters, your visibility is directly affected by the size and relevance of your 1st degree network. As a job seeker your biggest concern is being outside (or even 3rd tier) of the network of that recruiter who is handling your dream job. Its less about having x number of connections and more about who you are visible to. The best way to test your network is to 'reverse' a search and look for the kind of people (recruiters and applicable line managers) that you would wish to be found by. If too many are not visible to you then you know you need to work hard to build your network. Visibility restrictions do not apply to recruiters using corporate accounts and even recruiters with a free account should always be able to find you if they are proficient LinkedIn users but these people are not your concern, you must assume that all recruiters are using free accounts and that they are very inexperienced at using LinkedIn.

4. **Ensure your skills are endorsed.** Endorsing of skills (by your connections) power boosts those specific keywords and pushes you higher up a search result. Don't worry about the quality or credibility of endorsements, it's unlikely that anyone will take any notice of your skills but the search algorithm does and that matters. Pick your top ten skills and then get active, this will result in profile views and this is when endorsements happen.

5. **Obtain credible recommendations.** As opposed to skill endorsements, recommendations have very little effect on where you appear in a search result but they can make a massive difference to the quality of your profile. Put simply – don't 'big yourself up' in your profile, get someone else to do it for you! Make sure they are credible and never return the compliment (see Profile chapter 2). When you get an interview, it is highly likely that the person sitting across the room from you has just spent the last 10 minutes reading your recommendations!

6. **Join 50 groups**. There are groups covering just about any subject on LinkedIn, most are discussion forums, some are simply designed as a place to advertise jobs (like a job board). I recommend both types to jobseekers, the ones where jobs are advertised have obvious benefits but niche discussion groups may also have a jobs section and the roles advertised are highly likely to be relevant. In addition to this they are a great place to raise your profile and ensure you get noticed by getting involved in discussions. They can also be a useful resource for those looking to move into a new sector or discipline where they can learn from reading the discussions and integrate into a new community. Whilst it makes sense to join the max number of groups (50), I would recommend switching off the email alerts in each groups settings unless you really want to get very active in that group. You will receive at least one email each week from every group you join and these can stack up as you join plenty of groups.

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7. **Set up automatic job posting searches**. The job section on LinkedIn (paid adverts) can also be a useful resource. In this section you can perform an advanced search specifying location, industry, keywords, job title and an estimated salary range (upgraded accounts only). You can then save the search and get LinkedIn to email you daily or weekly with any new job alerts that meet your search criteria.

8. **Source potential openings.** It is a fact that people that are looking for a job usually perform three actions on LinkedIn. They update their profile, obtain recommendations and follow companies (remember Sylvia's story) so if you see these activities amongst your first tier connections then you might consider acting on that information. I am not suggesting you contact their boss and send them a message offering your services but why not have a look at the profiles of several key people in the business as well as all HR/recruitment contacts? At least this way you are potentially making yourself visible to them when they click on the 'who's viewed my profile' link

9. **Research companies thoroughly prior to interview**. There is so much information available on LinkedIn that there is no excuse for lack of preparation these days and companies expect it. As well as checking the profile of all relevant people in the business (look where they used to work and look for patterns) I would also advise searching for people who previously worked at the company, especially those that have left in the last 3–12 months. Contact them and ask them if they can provide you with any advice or tips on what to expect at interview. If they provide a helpful response you could enquire as to why they left. It's all highly valuable information.

10. **Ensure daily activity**. There are no shortcuts with this, as a job seeker you need to be active every working day, even if it's just accepting an invite. Any form of activity keeps you in people's minds and that is crucial to being spotted or referred for a job.

10 Conclusion

Now that you have finished the book you have a decision to make. Are you going to act on the things you have learnt or are you going to go back to using LinkedIn as you did before?

If there is one thing I have learnt about LinkedIn over the last five years it is that this tool is only as good as the effort you put into it. LinkedIn will keep developing new functionality but the real difference is made by you and all the other users.

The good news is that millions of people are getting more and more involved in online networking and this will help in making your efforts more beneficial.

Online networking will never replace good old fashioned face to face networking but it can compliment and enhance your opportunity to build a strong and lasting network that will serve you well for the rest of your career.

I wish you well with your new and exciting LinkedIn adventure!