



BECOME LINKEDIN, the right way

The ultimate resource

LinkedIn is renowned worldwide for being the leading corporate networking site, hence its popular description as “the Facebook for business people”. Having launched in 2003, the site can boast over a decade of successful operation and growth, and with 200 million users it’s an unparalleled resource for meeting professionals from a vast range of industries.

What sets LinkedIn aside from less effective rival sites is its selection of useful features, excellent site reliability and, due to an enviable reputation, the fact that if an individual is going to register on only one professional social networking site, they’d be a fool to choose any other.

It sounds like a watertight plan, doesn’t it? Sign up to LinkedIn and watch your sales skyrocket. Sadly, this isn’t the case, the reason being a simple one: there are so many people using the site that you need to make yourself stand out, otherwise you’ll become lost in the crowd.

So here are our top tips that can help you to transform an aloof connection into a paying client.

The more the merrier

Do you use Facebook? Chances are you’re “friends” with that kid from school who you never really liked that much but it would have been rude not to accept his invitation. Chances are equally as high that you’ll “unfriend” him the next time you have a purge in an effort to clean up your news feed. The same goes for Twitter: you’re interested in a company’s marketing campaign (*clicks the Follow button*), but before long it’s become stale and irritating (*clicks the Unfollow button*). We all do it; it’s only natural.

However, LinkedIn is different. It’s safe to say that the more connections you have, the better. This is because your first level connections open up second and third level connections, which can sometimes prove even more valuable, depending on your respective backgrounds. For example: you’re connected to a Sales Advisor for Company A, he’s connected to a Marketing Executive for Company B (the individual and company having previously evaded your awareness), and she in turn is connected to the IT Manager of the same organisation. Suddenly you have the opportunity to connect with someone with whom you would otherwise have never come across, so get in touch with a short, polite and friendly message request.

In your own words

Filling in your current and previous job descriptions, educational achievement, personal statement, relevant awards and various other information can be a real pain sometimes, but never underestimate just how much it can grab a viewer's attention. A lot of business begins with the individual, so your profile is there for people to find out more about you personally, which in turn gives them a feel for your company. By providing as much information as possible in a concise, engaging and informative way, ensuring that everything is up-to-date and free of spelling and grammatical errors, you're far more likely to gain new connections and move forward with existing ones.

And please don't leave your profile picture blank – no one trusts a faceless professional!

Investigate to accumulate

But we're not talking about your own profile this time, we mean those of countless others that offer a goldmine of valuable information.

From an individual's role within a company, to their location, skills, affiliations, connections and status updates, you can use all of this however you wish. Perhaps you'll create a strong database of contacts, which you can then build further by ringing the companies' gatekeepers in order to acquire the email address of the desired individual (it could even be available on their profile). Alternatively, you might begin a conversation as part of a contact's status update, showing that you share similar interests and knowledge. Or maybe you'll simply find out as many birthdays as possible and use them as icebreakers. The choice is yours, and there are plenty of opportunities to keep you busy.

Take a look

Whether a LinkedIn member has a basic account or has upgraded to a paid package, they can see at least some of the people who have recently viewed their profile. Likewise, you can see who's viewed yours. If a stranger has visited your profile but not requested to connect, maybe you should request it yourself; after all, they've taken the first step, and connecting with them can open up further opportunities in the future.

Also, due to the two-way notifications, viewing a connection's profile is a subtle way of reminding them about your services: sometimes a delicate approach can be as effective as an assertive one.

The personal touch

There's a message button on each of your connections' profiles. **Use it.**

Granted, it can be difficult thinking of a reason to get in touch, but if you think hard enough there's bound to be one. If there's a networking event that you're attending, ask them if they are too. If you've read some positive press or a celebratory status update about their business, offer them your congratulations. Or maybe you think you saw them in your favourite restaurant the other day – whatever the reason for that first message, make sure it's not the last!

In with the in crowd

There are countless groups on LinkedIn that are open for you to join. We're not saying you should join hundreds for the sake of it, but instead find ones that share an interest, or that discuss a topic perfectly suited to your product.

Never spam them! Become involved in conversations as a means of building a rapport, connecting with potential clients, finding out about useful events, and then taking it from there. Plus there's always the possibility that a desired connection is part of a group, in which case joining it and being an active member with interesting input is an excellent means of making yourself known and provides an opportunity to connect directly.

Strictly business

Again, similar to Facebook and Twitter, there are organisations listed on LinkedIn as well as individuals. By following pages that are relevant to your business, you'll automatically be kept in the loop with developments, be it a new member of the team or a job available for tender. All you need to do is check your news feed daily, that way you'll never miss a trick!

Mutual support

Practically everyone on LinkedIn will have filled in their profile's skills area. A handy feature is the ability to endorse these skills simply by clicking the "+" button next to each one, and usually at the top of the profile will be a box listing a small selection, offering a timesaving option to endorse all of them with a single click.

Endorsing is seen as a friendly, supportive and selfless act, but it's also a chance for you to remind connections of your own profile whilst putting yourself in their good books. In addition, there's a very good chance that they'll endorse you in return, thereby strengthening your profile in the process.

In the news

Visit LinkedIn's news section to find a variety of articles on every topic imaginable, from digital journalism to IT outsourcing. But don't just read them, comment on them too! By giving an intelligent and informed opinion, you can catch the eyes of millions of users in a natural and welcome way.

Be the best

The fee to become a paid member is small potatoes, but the outcome could be big business for your company. When unlocked, the wider range of features and insights means that you can use LinkedIn to its full potential, increasing your presence across the site and turning vague acquaintances into hot sales leads. Sporting the Premium Account symbol on your profile also adds extra credibility; think of it as a membership badge that you can take great pride in wearing.

What are you waiting for?

So there you have it: ten easy steps for making the most of your LinkedIn account. Now, don't move onto a piece of work and immediately forget everything you've learnt; go straight to LinkedIn and spend thirty minutes making your profile shine by updating all information and connecting with some recommended users. And remember: a connection is good; an active connection is better; but a connection that becomes a client is the result that will increase those monthly sales.

With Thanks

This short guide should help with your marketing efforts, but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require anything else.

Best wishes,

