

IVY EXEC

HOW TO CREATE AN AUTHENTIC & OPTIMIZED LINKEDIN PROFILE





Unlike your resume, your LinkedIn profile is the most easily accessible and most often viewed marketing material you have in your job search toolkit.

LinkedIn boasts a reported ~500M users, and surveys report that approximately 94% of recruiters rely on LinkedIn for some aspect of their sourcing & hiring process. In addition, if you Google your name (a good idea before you begin a job search), it is highly likely that the first search result will be your LinkedIn profile. Given the ubiquity of this platform in today's job search process, it's critical that you craft a strong, well-branded, and keyword optimized profile that will get you noticed. In this guide, we will review some best practices both in creating your profile and using the platform, to help you connect, share, and most importantly, find your next opportunity.

LinkedIn has undergone some significant changes in 2017, so we'll highlight some of these changes in addition to providing guidance on optimizing your profile and using the platform for outreach.

Best Practices in Constructing Your Profile

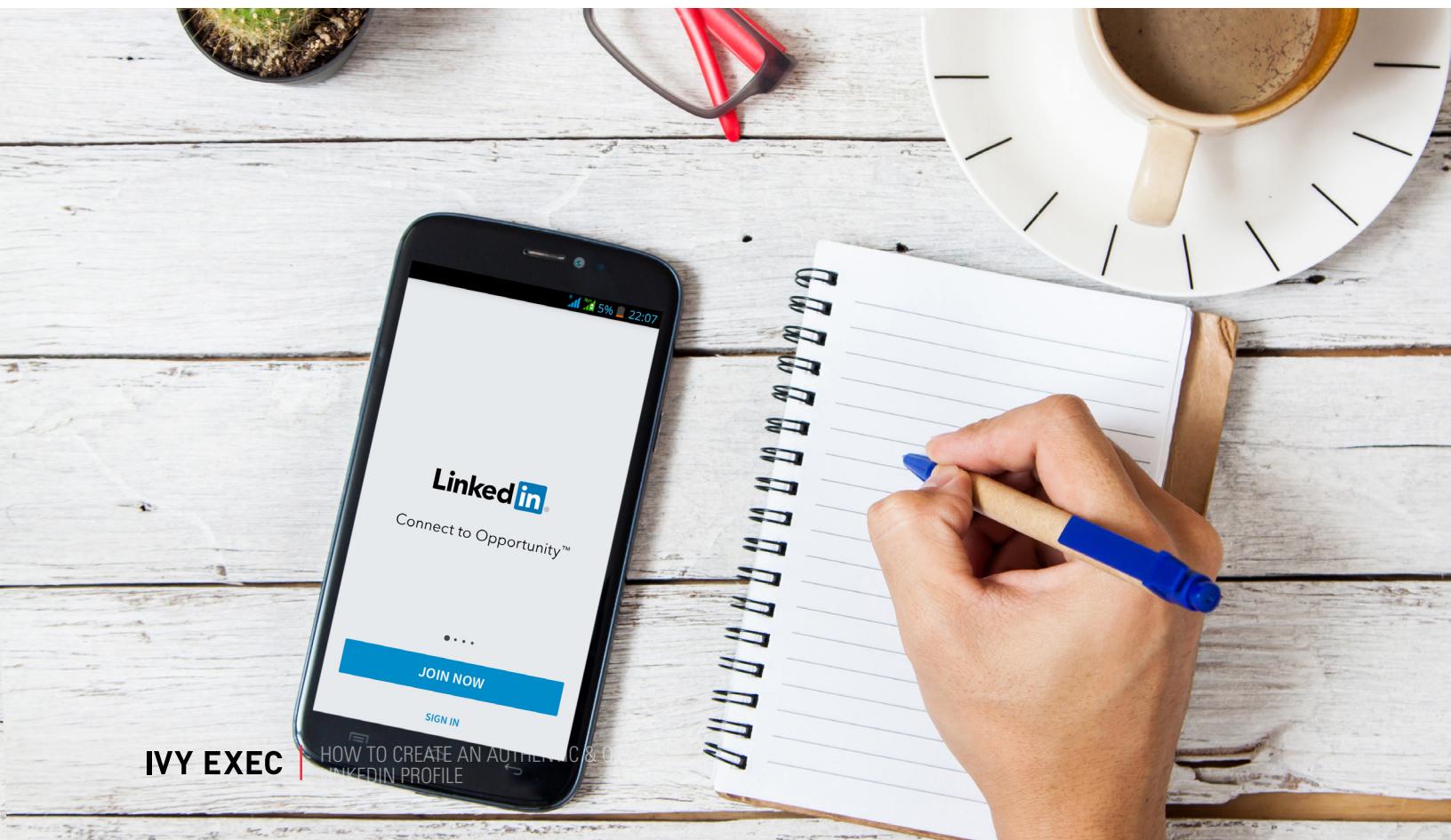
Before We Begin, How to Treat Your Resume vs. LinkedIn

In contrast to a resume, your LinkedIn profile gives you the chance to display more of your [professional] personality and should be thought of as a conversation starter. Viewing it this way reveals three key areas you can use to differentiate between the two mediums and help you stand out.

Headline

A Resume = “FLEXIBLE”: Adjust your headline based on the jobs you are targeting. For example, “Senior Software Development Project Manager.” If you are looking to change industries or conducting an industry agnostic search, simply remove the industry --> “Senior Project Manager.”

A LinkedIn Profile = KEYWORD SEARCHABLE: Be sure to customize your headline or it will default to your current job title. Incorporate keywords related to your function and the competencies an employer would search for when looking for candidates.



Tone

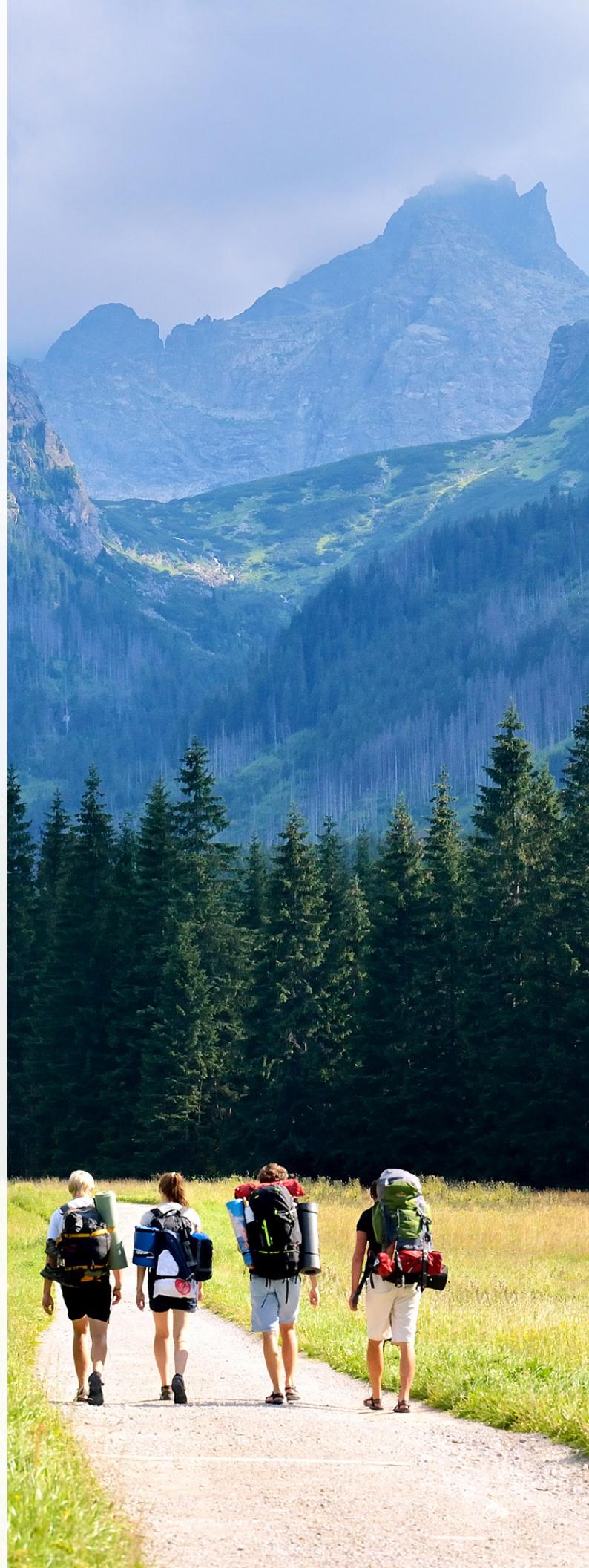
Resume = FORMAL: If you are not in a creative or more “relaxed” industry, you should adopt a generally formal tone employing concise and direct language, while avoiding the personal pronouns “I” and “my.”

LinkedIn = CONVERSATIONAL: On LinkedIn, you have the chance to show your personality, so aim talk more like your authentic self, as though you are having a conversation with a prospective employer. Your summary is a great place to do this!

Summary

Resume = CONCISE & PRECISE: Think of your resume summary as a short but powerful pitch, aimed at quickly grabbing the attention of your reader, with information about your key attributes, value offer, and brand.

LinkedIn = GO BIG!: Your LinkedIn summary allows 2000 characters, so take advantage by writing in a conversational manner to give readers a sense of who you are. To drive the point home about your fit, you have the space to include some career highlights (proof of your value-add), examples of your work, a brief skills list, and even contact information. Maximizing this real estate is also beneficial for SEO, which will boost your searchability.



The Importance of a Complete Profile

This may sound like very basic or even obvious advice, but it is in your best interest to have as complete a profile as possible. The more complete your profile is, the more times you will appear in recruiter search results. A 2016 survey found that only 51% of LinkedIn member profiles were 100% complete. Is yours one of them?

Your goal should be to achieve what LinkedIn calls “All-Star” status, regarding your profile strength. This is the highest level you can achieve, which is shown in your private dashboard when you view your profile. “All-Star” strength profiles, according to LinkedIn, are 40 times more likely to appear in recruiter search results, which are also ordered by profile completeness. You should aim to be as high up as possible in search results. That said, what is the path toward profile completeness?

At minimum, be sure to cover the profile basics listed below. Adding the extras in the second section not only provides more ways to help you stand out and gives readers a better impression of who you are, these will also improve your profile searchability and search rankings.

Important Note: Be sure to **turn off** your “sharing profile edits” notifications before you make any of the changes outlined in this toolkit. You can do this via your privacy settings.

Your Dashboard

Private to you



98

Who viewed your profile

0

Post views

45

Search appearances

Career interests

Let recruiters know you're open: **Off**

Choose the types of opportunities you'd like to be connected with

Profile Basics

1. Profile Picture
2. Industry and location
Note: If you live within commuting distance of a major city, use that city/zip code as your location. It will help you appear in more search results.
3. Your up-to-date, current position (with description)
4. Two past positions
5. Education
6. Featured Skills (3 minimum)
7. At least 50 connections

Add new profile section ▾

Background ^

- Work experience 11 positions on your profile + (circle)

- Education 3 schools on your profile + (circle)

- Volunteer experience 2 volunteer experiences on your profile + (circle)

Skills ▾

Accomplishments ▾

Positive Profile Additions

1. Skill endorsements
2. Recommendations
3. Accomplishments (e.g. publications, honors & awards, projects)
4. Volunteer Experience
5. Interests

Now that we've covered some of the key, high-level issues, we will review best practices of some of the major sections of your profile.

SEO Tip: Include any certifications or titles in your name (e.g. Dele Alli, PMP, CISM.). LinkedIn recognizes the importance of these acronyms and will boost such individuals in search results.

Add new profile section ▾

Background ▾

Skills ▾

Accomplishments ^

- Publications List your published work and be found 7x more. + (circle)

- Certifications Members with a certification get 5x more profile views. + (circle)

- Courses 6 courses on your profile + (circle)

- Projects Add compelling projects to demonstrate your experience. + (circle)

- Honors & Awards Feature the recognition you've earned. + (circle)

Photo, Headline, and URL

Photo

Like it or not, social media (LinkedIn included) is about visuals. Adding a photo to your profile gives you an 11-14 times higher likelihood to be viewed. In real life, when we meet someone in person after previously hearing about them, we all know the saying, "it's so nice to put a face to a name!". Let's just say that this principle also has validity online. So, if you are still showing the profile silhouette, take the opportunity to allow employers to associate your face with your name.

While a professionally taken photo is ideal, if it's beyond your budget or time, try calling upon a friend who enjoys photography as a hobby or rely on the ever advancing cameras and included photoshopping software in today's smart phones. *Do not, however, use a selfie.*



Profiles with photos receive up to 14X more views.

Dimensions: 400 x 400 max ratio; 10mb max file size; JPG, GIF, or PNG.

Profile Photo Guidance

- Use a newly taken or recent photo from within the past 4-6 months
- Dress in attire typical to your industry
- Look personable with a warm & natural smile (*get feedback from people you trust*)
- Use most of the frame: face centered; small space over your head; shoulders visible
- Don't radically change for the photo. If you normally wear glasses or a beard, keep them.
- Keep a neutral background. No other people included or cropped out. No pets.

Background Photo

While not a necessity, you should consider adding a background photo. This can make an average profile pop, with just this one change. Are you in architecture or construction? Why not feature one of your own favorite creations or a building that inspires you? Emblazoning your page with an appealing visual can help catch your audience's eye and reveal more of who you are. The suggested picture resolution is 1584 x 396.



Nii Ato Bentsi-Enchill

Career Coach | Mental Health Counselor | Doing Good for Your Career & Your Life

Ivy Exec (IvyExec.com) • Teachers College of Columbia University

New York, New York • 500+

I provide holistic career coaching and counseling services with the mindset that we are all more than just our careers. I aim to meet job seekers where they are, and guide them to where they want to be by partnering to explor...

[See more ▾](#)

SEO Tip: Don't name your photo file (profile photo or background image) with just your name -- also include primary keywords associated with your industry or function (e.g. Harry-Kane-HR-Compensation-Benefits-Manager). When someone Googles a similar phrase, it increases the chance that your image will appear in the search and lead to your LinkedIn profile.

Headline

LinkedIn requires a headline, and if you do not create a customized version, it will default to your current position title and company. Unless you are a senior leader at a well-recognized company, it's important to create a customized, keyword rich headline. Taking control of this will also help you to reflect your job search ambitions. You have 120 characters to use creatively:

DEFAULT: Sr. Account Executive, Company X

CUSTOMIZED: Award Winning Medical Device Sales & Account Manager | Drives 10% YOY portfolio growth | Opens Greenfield Territories

The above customized headline is 117 characters.

Nii Ato Bentsi-Enchill

Career Coach | Mental Health Counselor | Doing Good for Your Career & Your Life

Ivy Exec (IvyExec.com) • Teachers College of Columbia University

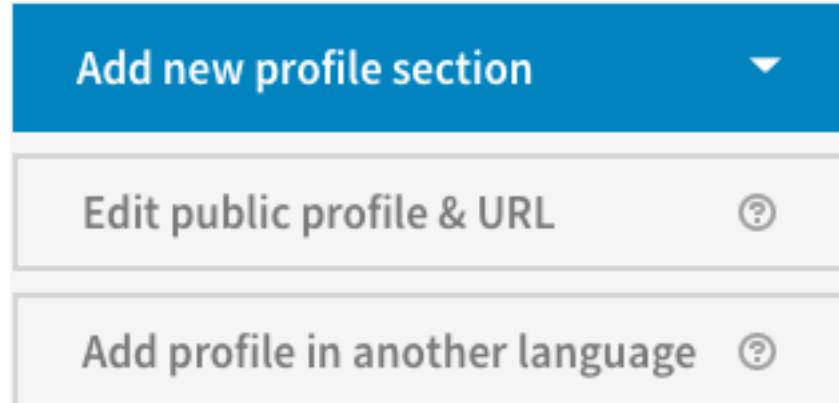
New York, New York • 500+ 

Crafting a headline like this not only provides important keywords that may help you appear in search results, it also brands you and demonstrates your value-add by citing a relevant achievement (including a metric). The recruiter hasn't even read your profile yet, but this headline will likely grab their attention and make them want to click to learn more.

URL

Customization will be a recurring theme throughout this guide, and your URL is no exception. Each step taken to personalize your profile supports your brand and boosts your ability to be found. A customized URL also looks professional and fits nicely on a business card.

Step 1



Step 2

Edit public profile URL

Enhance your personal brand by creating a custom URL for your LinkedIn public profile.

www.linkedin.com/in/niiato



SEO Tip:

DEFAULT: www.linkedin.com/in/sergio-aguero1234/5678

CUSTOMIZED: www.linkedin.com/in/sergioaguero

Personal Website(s)

If you have a link to a personal blog, creative portfolio or another website you'd like to feature under your "Contact and Personal Info" section, be sure to customize the text that is displayed. The default text that shows after you supply the URL is either "Blog" or "Website." When editing this section, select the "Other" option and replace with the actual or more descriptive title for the content the link leads to, for example, "UX Design Portfolio."

Contact and Personal Info

Nii Ato's Profile, Phone, Email, and Twitter

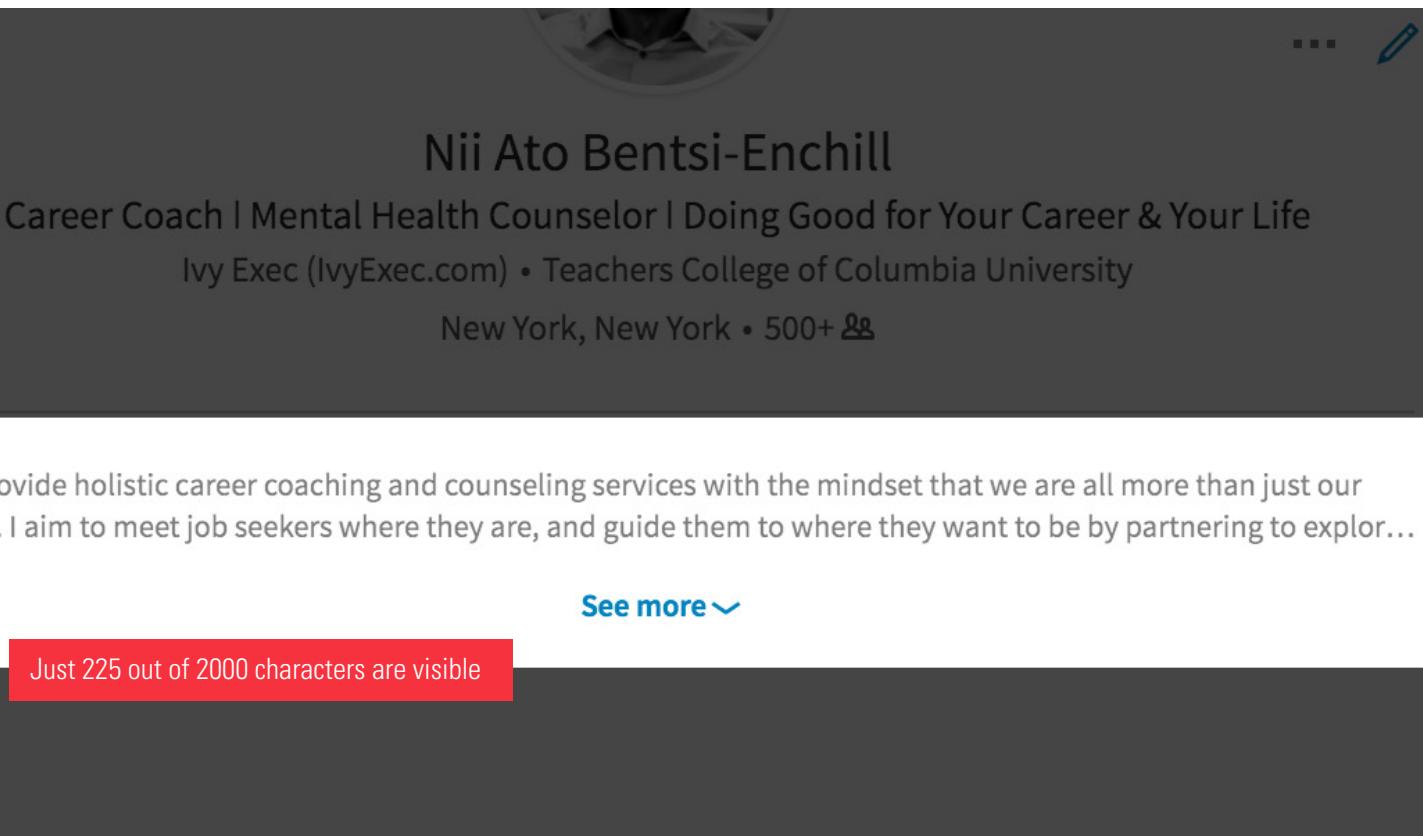
[Show more](#) ▾



Your LinkedIn Summary

What's Changed with the Summary

LinkedIn had a major face-lift from 2016-2017, which impacted not only the way information is arranged in your profile, but also how it's displayed. One critical section of your profile that was impacted is your summary. While the 2000 character limit was preserved between versions, there is a critical difference between what your audience sees. With old LinkedIn, the moment someone accessed your profile, your entire summary was visible. With the new LinkedIn, only the first 225 characters of your summary are visible. Just 225 out of 2000 characters.



Nii Ato Bentsi-Enchill
Career Coach | Mental Health Counselor | Doing Good for Your Career & Your Life
Ivy Exec (IvyExec.com) • Teachers College of Columbia University
New York, New York • 500+ 

Just 225 out of 2000 characters are visible

I provide holistic career coaching and counseling services with the mindset that we are all more than just our careers. I aim to meet job seekers where they are, and guide them to where they want to be by partnering to explor...

[See more ▾](#)

What does this mean for you? It means that your first 225 characters need to make a strong first impression to get them to click the "See more" link that appears underneath.

What to Put in Your Summary

As mentioned earlier, your summary is your best opportunity to show who you are both as a person and a professional. Adopt a conversational tone, as if you are speaking directly to someone and highlighting the best parts of who you are, and most critically, what you have to offer. Imagine that you are trying to create a rich and unique 3-D image with some depth, rather than a flat, 2-D picture of the typical professional in your field.

Who Are You Speaking To?

Before you start writing your summary you should know your audience. After they finish reading your summary:

- What do you want them to know about you?
- What do you want them to do?
- How do you want them to feel?

What Parts of You are Most Important to Share?

In preparation for writing your summary you should record the following information:

- **Passions & Values:** demonstrate what drives you and gets you excited (e.g. diversity of thought or relationship-building)
- **Key accomplishment(s):** showcase the value you have created, relevant to your target role (e.g. increasing sales or market share)
- **Metrics:** numbers make your narrative feel more concrete.
 - These can be numbers associated with your achievements (e.g. monetary value or % change).
 - You can also quantify your nouns (Led a team of 15 engineers and product managers)
- **Top Strength:** what is the one thing you believe you can do better than anyone else?
- **External validation:** awards and accolades (e.g. being listed as top of your field in an industry publication), and thought leadership (publications or speaking engagements)
- **Your X-Factor:** what is unique about you personally and/or professionally? (e.g. I had the opportunity to start HR from scratch at 3 separate employers.)

Considerations When Putting it All Together

- Extend and reinforce the message you communicated via your headline
- Be authentic and aspirational
- Choose either first or third person, do not mix. (*we recommend first-person*)
- Avoid cliche or meaningless jargon (e.g. “results-oriented,” “visionary,” etc.)
- Establish your brand -- how do you wish to be known and perceived?
- Spotlight what you can bring to an employer
- Include a “Specialties” section: a brief list of your most relevant skills/keywords related to your career goals
- Tell people what to do next. (e.g. *I'm open to chatting with anyone in the impact investing space to exchange ideas about this exciting, growing field*)
- Consider adding multimedia. What better way to demonstrate what you have to offer than displaying a presentation deck you created or a video of you delivering a presentation or speaking at a conference.

SEO Tip: Include a section called, “AKA/Misspellings,” especially if your name has a relatively unique spelling. Let’s say your name is, “Shean Decker”: AKA/Misspellings: Sean Decker, Shawn Decker, Shaun Decker, Deker, Dekker,

You are looking to tell an engaging story that showcases not only your personality, but some real substance. If you read your summary and it sounds like anyone in a role similar to your own could write the same thing, then you still have work to do. If you are looking to change careers or industries, your summary is the perfect place to connect the dots for your audience to demonstrate how your past experience ties into your future goals. Be specific, because that's what allows you to stand apart.

Put it to the Test

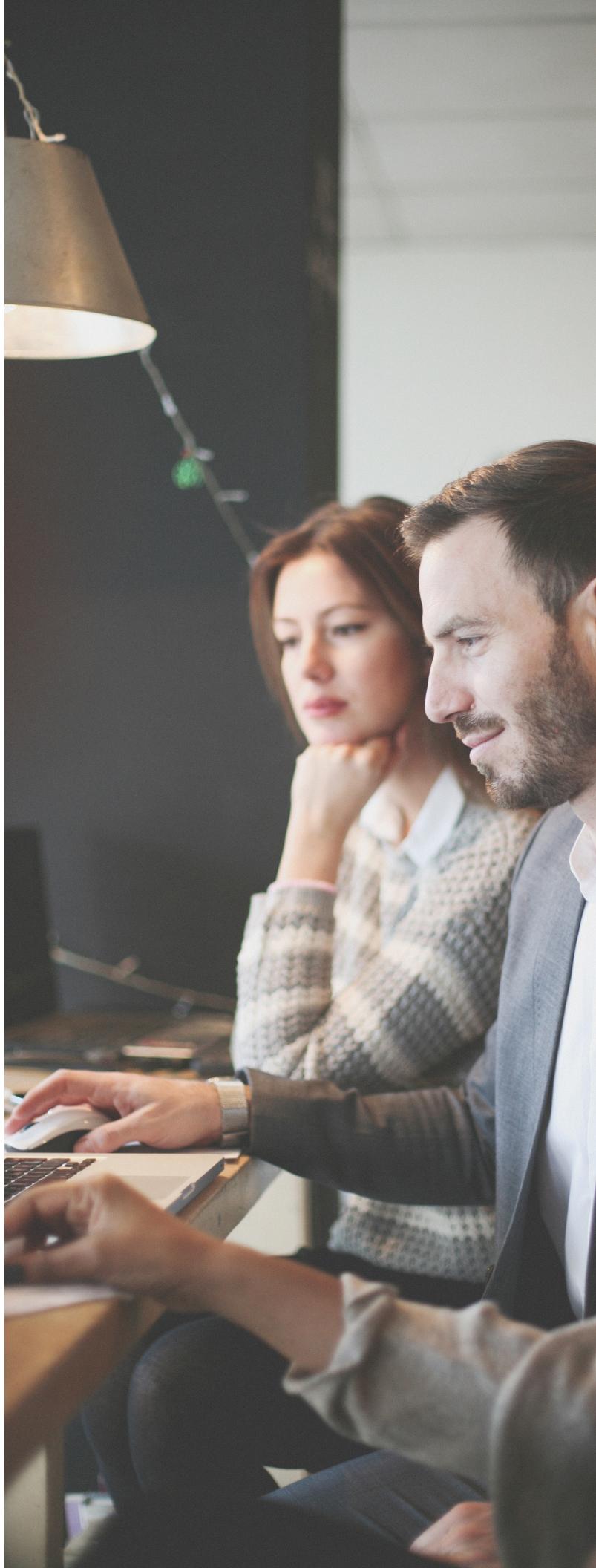
Before having your summary go live to the world, consider asking yourself a few of the following litmus test-style questions:

- Do the first two visible lines of my summary make me want to learn more?
- Does my write-up feel authentic (align with who I am), convey my personality, and does it differentiate me from others?
- Is it relevant and compelling for the audience I am targeting?
- Does it showcase my value and provide evidence of the same?
- Is it well-written & formatted, error free, and include keywords I want to be found by?

As a final check, identify 3-5 people who you trust to give you honest feedback. Pose them the same questions as outlined above, with two important additions:

- Is there anything missing?
- What one thing would you change to improve it?

After going through this process, you should be ready to upload your refined and finalized summary section to your profile and let the world of LinkedIn know how great you are!

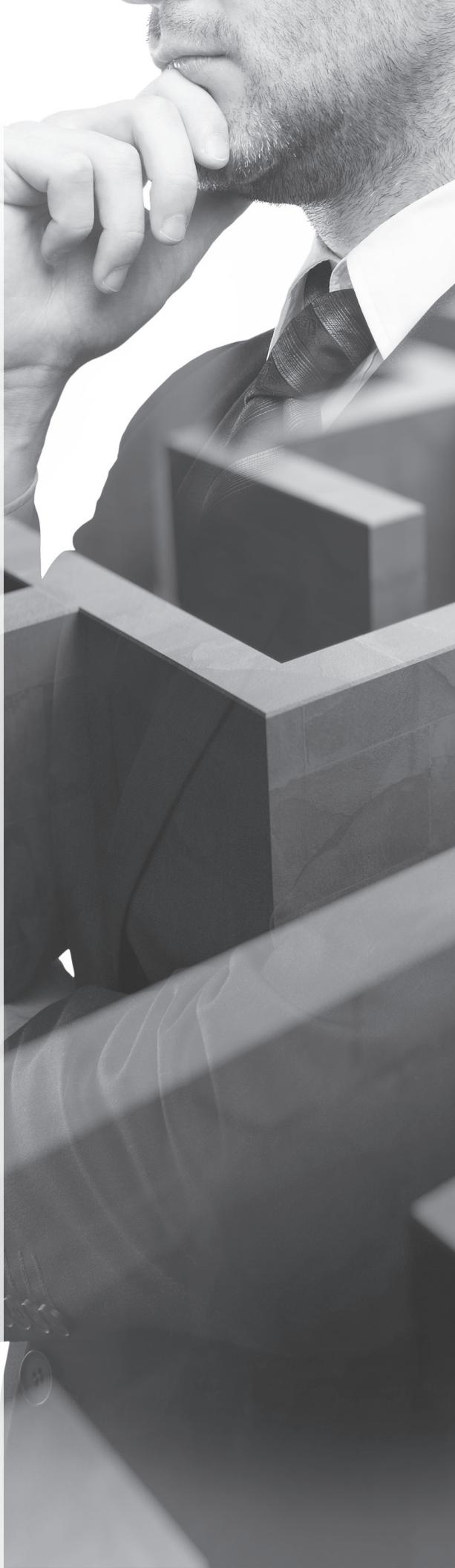


Experience

Up until this point, your headline and summary have served as the shiny objects to grab your audience's attention and encourage them to dig deeper. The experience section is where you provide the hard evidence of what you claimed to be and have done, that will enrich them, literally and figuratively, if they were to hire you.

Of all sections of your LinkedIn profile, your experience section will have the most similarity with your resume. Ideally, you should look to derive a more refined version of your resume experience section for your online profile. Here are some critical steps to follow when creating or optimizing your experience section:

1. **Link your Job to your Company:** when adding a job title, LinkedIn asks you for the name of the company at which you hold/held this title. As you enter your company's name, if your company has a profile on LinkedIn, it will link your job to that company and display the company's logo on your profile.
2. **Include a Scope Statement:** this is a brief overview that may include: the reason you were hired; your key responsibilities; the resources you manage (e.g. people and/or budgets); any other important information that might not be gleaned from your title (e.g. a Marketing Director who also directly manages sales and customer experience teams).
3. **Be Clear & Concise:** many recruiters may be viewing your profile on a smartphone or tablet, too much content can be off-putting.



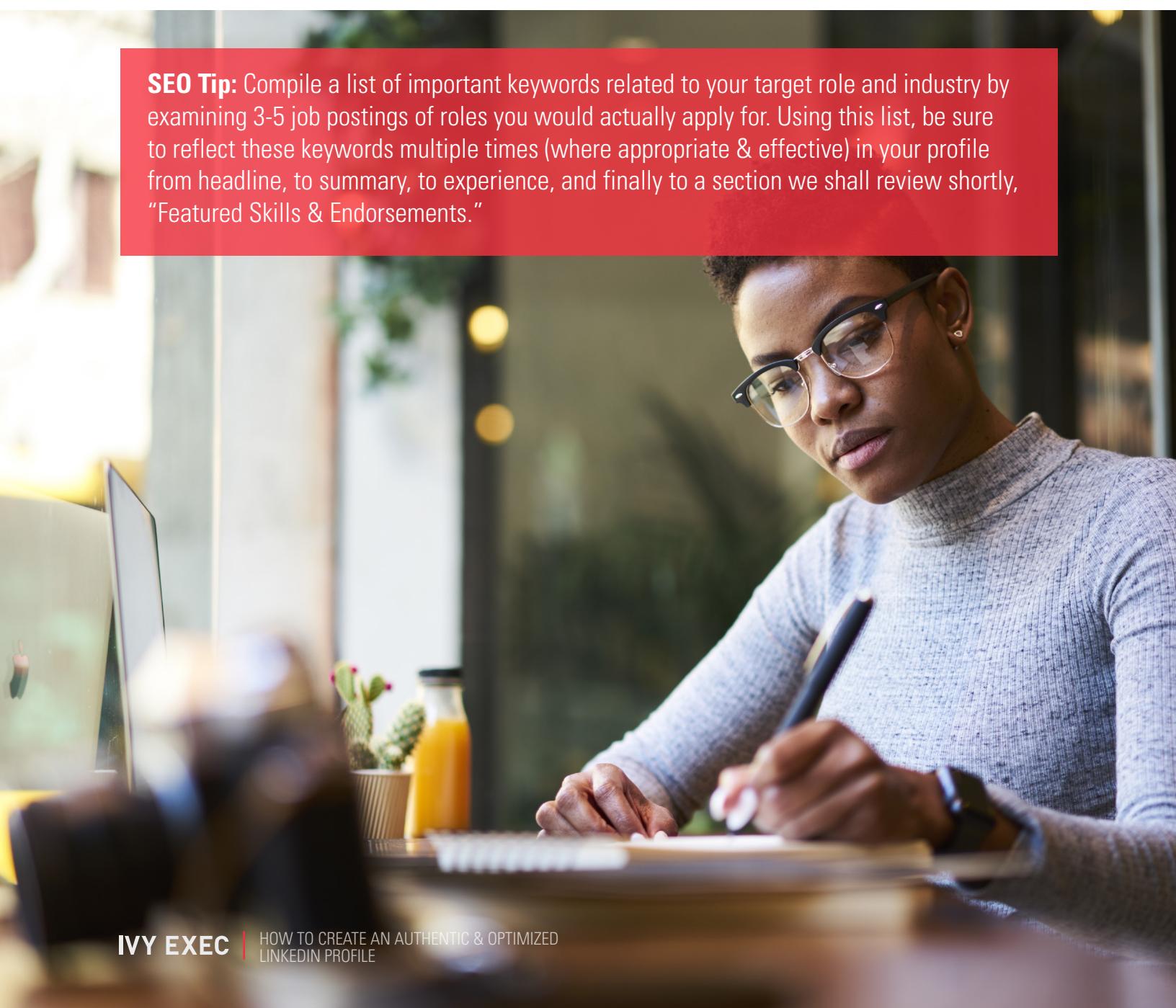
4. **Use Bullet Points:** select the top 3-5 most impactful, achievement-driven bullet points from each role on your resume. These should demonstrate the key skills or transferable skills, and desirable outcomes for your target role.
 - a. Use the correct tense. Present tense for your current role. Past tense for all former roles.
 - b. Check spelling and grammar or risk activating most recruiters' pet peeve.



5. **Frontload your Achievements:** Instead of:
 - a. "Led a comprehensive review and consolidation of all marketing collateral, agency partners, and vendors, to support an insourcing initiative that led to \$100K in annual savings.
TRY
 - b. Achieved \$100K annual marketing savings by leading major insourcing initiative
6. **Ask for recommendations:** ask former clients, colleagues, or supervisors to write recommendations for each role. Direct your efforts to the most recent and/or relevant roles for your future job targets.
7. **Add Links and/or Media:** LinkedIn supports the ability to upload images, PowerPoint presentations, PDF documents and links to external examples of your work. Including such items will help your audience truly appreciate your creative output.

Remember, your experience section is one of the most valuable pieces of real estate on your profile. It forms the core of your business case that offers tangible evidence of the “proven track record” everyone claims to have. This is where you demonstrate your value, align yourself to a role, and drive the SEO that will help your profile get found. Be sure to invest your time to make this section strong and cohesive.

SEO Tip: Compile a list of important keywords related to your target role and industry by examining 3-5 job postings of roles you would actually apply for. Using this list, be sure to reflect these keywords multiple times (where appropriate & effective) in your profile from headline, to summary, to experience, and finally to a section we shall review shortly, “Featured Skills & Endorsements.”



Education

The education section is certainly important for profile completeness, but is especially important for students and recent graduates. Including your degree institutions on your LinkedIn profile will tie you to fellow students and alumni who may prove to be key parts of your network. If your experience is thin or you recently obtained a degree to help you make a career pivot, you can use your education section to include relevant coursework, school projects, case competitions and extracurricular activities that display leadership or other skills. You can also include media in this section.

If you are a MBA student or recent graduate, consider requesting a recommendation from a few members of your cohort with whom you worked on a project, case competition or consulting assignment. Offer to return the favor for your mutual benefit.

Education



Teachers College of Columbia University

Master of Education (Organizational & Multicultural) (after 60 credits), Psychological

Counseling

2009 – 2011

Activities and Societies: American Counseling Association, Metropolitan New York
College Career Planning Officer's Association



Co-founder/Co-facilitator of Friday Conversations

•Awarded \$1,500 Vice President's Grant for Diversity and Community Initiatives (11/10)

•Created bi-weekly cross-disciplinary student discussion group for students to process their experiences both within and outside their academic programs regarding, multicultural issues and social justice in mental health, and education

Featured Skills & Endorsements + Recommendations

Featured Skills & Endorsements

This section of your LinkedIn profile is another one of those impacted by the conversion from the old to the new-look LinkedIn. While the position of this section hasn't changed, once again, the amount of visible information has been reduced. Currently, this section only highlights the first 3 skills you have listed. Similar to the summary section, if the reader wants to read more, they must click to do so.

Featured Skills & Endorsements

Add a new skill 

[View 1 pending endorsement](#)

Career Counseling · 87



Endorsed by Donna Sweidan and 9 others who are highly skilled at this

TCI Endorsed by 6 of Nii Ato's colleagues at Technical Career Institutes

Career Developm... · 51



Endorsed by John Reed PhD, MBA, MCEC, PCC and 4 others who are highly skilled at this

TCI Endorsed by 4 of Nii Ato's colleagues at Technical Career Institutes

Resume Writing · 50



Endorsed by Donna Sweidan and 3 others who are highly skilled at this



Endorsed by 2 of Nii Ato's colleagues at NYU Wasserman Center for Career Development

[See 31 more skills](#) ▾

What does this mean for you? You should place the 3 skills that are most critical to your targeted role AT THE TOP of your list, and ask for people to endorse them! For instance, my 3 top skills listed are: Career Counseling, Career Development, and Resume Writing, each with north of 50 endorsements. It's helpful to request and gather endorsements of your skills, as these acknowledgements add validity to the skills you say that you have. This is especially true if your endorsers are colleagues, customers, clients, or supervisors.

Skills & Endorsements (34)



Delete

Reorder

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | Career Counseling · 87 | |
| | Career Developm... · 51 | |
| | Resume Writing · 50 | |
| | Career Assessment · 29 | |
| | Higher Education · 18 | |
| | Training · 18 | |
| | Psychology · 17 | |

To edit the order of your skills, click the blue, pencil icon found in the right-hand corner of the box for this section. You can also, "Add a new skill" with a button bearing that label. A new window will pop up within which you click-and-drag to reorder your list of skills. Be sure to periodically review and delete outdated or unnecessary skills from your profile.

Keep in mind that members with skills listed receive up to 17 times more profile views than those who leave this section blank.

Recommendations

For many of you, the competition for the roles that you seek is incredibly stiff -- especially at the more senior levels. To this point, you have done everything possible to optimize the content, messaging, and searchability of your profile. What's even left for you to do? At the point where you've exhausted your own words, adding the testimonials of others can put an already strong profile over the top.

A well-crafted recommendation can provide some of the most compelling information on your profile, because it is a true to life illustration of how you have impacted someone else. We strongly recommend gathering recommendations to strengthen your profile by adding voices other than your own. Here are a few key tips:

Recommendations

Ask to be recommended 

Received (10)

Given (4)

You have 1 pending recommendation



Austin F.

Senior Marketing Manager

March 7, 2016, Austin was a client of Nii Ato's

I was connected with Nii Ato through IvyExec. We set up a call to review my resume, and it was efficient, helpful, and enjoyable (not usually a word you'd use when editing a resume). Nii Ato had many good suggestions, and took the time to examine fine details for areas to make improvements. He also provided me with some general recommendations that I can focus on when working on future resumes. I highly recommend Nii Ato, as I was impressed with how much we achieved in fifteen minutes and I look forward to working with him again in the future.



Michael G.

Risk Oversight Executive — Executive Board Member — Lead Global Enterprise Risk Management Programs

January 29, 2016, Michael was a client of Nii Ato's

I had the privilege of working with Nii Ato recently. I was very impressed with the skill and passion he demonstrated. His insights were extremely accurate, his professionalism exceptional and his work product extremely valuable. I highly recommend Nii Ato as a career advisor and coach.

[View 8 more recommendations ▾](#)

How to Select Your Recommenders

In preparation for writing your summary you should record the following information:

- Prioritize gathering recommendations for the roles most relevant to your current career ambitions.
 - Think about which skills, experiences or projects you would want to have highlighted by your recommenders.
- Be tactical in who you select, based on what they are able to say about you. Think through which items you've identified, each would most clearly be able to speak to.
 - These should ideally be people you can contact easily and discuss openly with, to help shape what they might say.
- For each of these roles (depending on its nature) think about requesting recommendations from the following types of people:
 - A direct report
 - A peer at the same level you worked with closely
 - Your direct supervisor or someone above her, who had good visibility of your work
 - A customer, client, vendor, or business partner who benefited from your support
 - Internal clients also count
- We recommend gathering at least 3 recommendations per role.
- Reach out to them prior to requesting the recommendation via LinkedIn so that they are prepared to receive it and produce for you in short order.





How to Request a Recommendation

Now that you have set your priorities for recommendation content, identified good candidates to write them, and prepared them for your request – here's how to request a recommendation:

- Scroll down to the “Recommendations” section in your profile
- Click, “Ask to be recommended” in the upper right-hand corner
- Select:
 - Whom you would like to ask for a recommendation (this should be an existing 1st degree connection)
 - Your Relationship
 - Your Position at the time you engaged with them
 - Write a personalized message & send. Be specific with the request, even if just as a reminder from your previous conversation.
- Once you receive the recommendation back, you have the opportunity to request revisions or simply accept it and add it to your profile.
 - You can also control which recommendations people can see by clicking the blue pencil icon to edit them. This allows you to simply toggle on and off, which recommendations are visible on your profile.

SEO Tip: Ask your recommenders to use important keywords in their writeup that pertain to important skills and achievements you wish to convey. This will help you achieve higher relevance in search results.

Good Online Karma

Tip: After receiving a few recommendations, it's also a good practice to pay it forward by writing a recommendation for a peer, manager, or direct report. Demonstrating generosity on social media rarely returns void. Giving someone you'd like to target an unsolicited recommendation first, is also a great way to get recommendations coming back to you out of reciprocity.

Volunteer Experience, Causes and Interests

When clients ask us if they should include volunteer experience or personal interests on their resume, we always respond with an enthusiastic, "Yes!" While it's true these areas have a lesser impact on your candidacy, the reason we advocate for them is that they help round you out as a person. You are more than just your career. You are three-dimensional and have motivations and passion pursuits beyond what earns you a paycheck. Let your audience know what you care about and how you spend your time outside of work. They may be looking for someone who cares about their social impact, and you would ideally want to work for a company that shares that value.



Conclusion

Now that we have covered the critical sections that comprise your profile, and how to optimize them, in the next part of this guide we will turn our attention toward how to best use the platform to raise your visibility and make quality networking connections.

About Ivy Exec

Ivy Exec is a curated career community of the world's most successful professionals. Ivy Exec's exclusive portfolio of career-focused experts & recruiters, curated job listings, online classes, and proprietary company profiles help its members continue achieving their biggest career objectives.

Always inspired by its members' goals and aspirations, Ivy Exec is their long-term partner – helping them thrive in their career, and harness their best-in-class insights for enduring success.

IVY EXEC