Springboard to Success

Mastering LinkedIn: Effective Networking and Profile Building

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Networking

- Why it's important
  - Access to hidden opportunities
  - Building trust and credibility
  - Insight into companies and organizations
  - Learning and mentorship
  - Visibility and branding

Tactics for networking

- Online presence
  - LinkedIn and GitHub
  - Personal website/portfolio
- Community participation
  - Meetups and conferences
  - Online forums
- Project participation
  - Open Source
  - Side projects (individual and group)

Tactics for networking (cont'd)

- Coffee and Mentorship
    - Reach out to professionals (based on other networking or contacts)
    - Coffee to talk about how they got started and advice about entering the field
    - Look for mentors that you can meet with on a regular basis to guide you career development and for other introductions
- Alumni and Professional Networks
    - Schools or University alumni groups are another source of potential contacts
    - Look to join professional and industry organizations that host events or offer industry information

Tactics for networking (cont'd)

- Networking is about building relationships
  - Look to establish **genuine relationships** based on mutual interests
  - Follow-up – after meeting someone, send a personalized message that thanks them for their time
  - Keep in touch
  - Offer value – participate in the meetups and groups you attend by doing something other than just being in the audience. Volunteer at a technical conference or prepare a presentation on something that you are interested in

Resources for Networking

- Local meetups and events
  - Meetup.com
  - Conferences and hackathons
  - College and university events
- Online and professional communities
  - LinkedIn groups
  - Local forums and Slack communities

Resources for Networking (cont'd)

- Columbus Networking
  - https://columbusnetworking.com/
- TechLife Columbus
  - https://www.techlifecolumbus.com/events/
- Ben Blanquera's annual list of Columbus Tech User Groups
  - https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/columbus-tech-user-groups-ben-blanquera-rbmrc/
- Michael Eaton's Github with Ohio User Groups and Conferences
  - https://github.com/mjeaton/ohio-tech

Resources for Networking (cont'd)

- CBUS Networking Events
  - https://cbus-networking-events.org/

Goals for Networking

- Have business cards / personal cards with your contact information
  - Avery clean-edge printable business cards, < $9
- Pick an event or meetup that interests you, research the topic or groups, and attend it
- Take a friend with you but spend at least 50% of your time NOT with your friend
- Have a conversation with at least 3 people
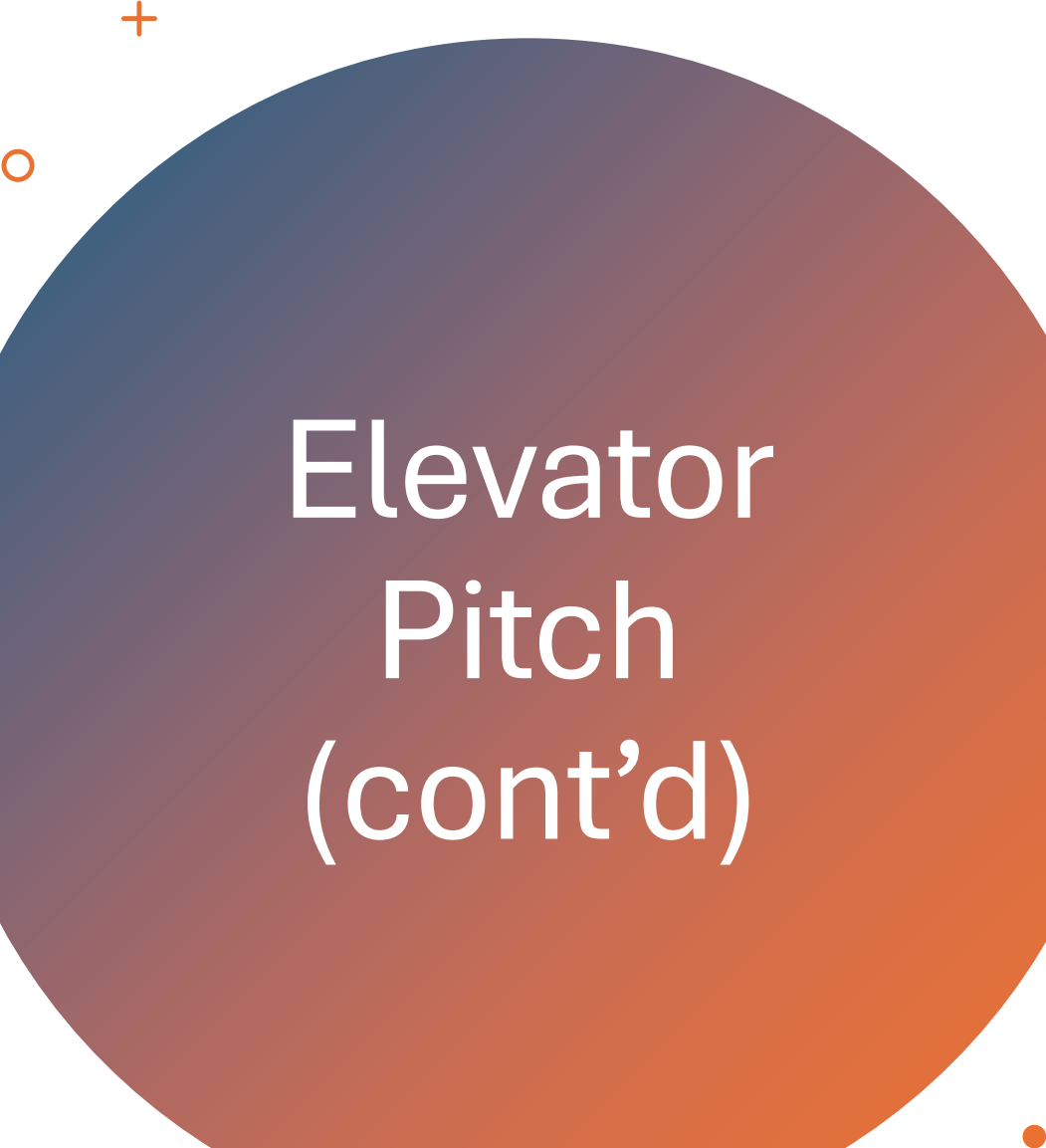- Walk away with at least one contact that you can add to LinkedIn

Conversation Starters

- "What brings you to this event today?"
- "What project or technology are you currently excited about?"
- "How did you get started in technology?"
- "What's your strategy for staying current with technology?"
- "Have you been to other events with this group?"

Elevator Pitch

- If you were on an elevator and had to tell your story in 45 seconds, what would you say?
- Steps
    - Develop an objective
    - List core strengths, what makes you unique, any specific examples of expertise
    - Structure
        - Introduction
        - Key strengths
        - Professional highlights
        - Call to action

Elevator Pitch (cont'd)

- Crafting a narrative
  - Something memorable
  - Something engaging
  - A story with a logical flow
  - 45 seconds (60 seconds max)
- Practice, practice, practice (off script)
- You will often only use parts of your story as appropriate

Building a branding statement

- Creating an impression
- You are the product
- Steps:
  - Identify Core strengths
  - Define the target audience
  - What's the value proposition
  - Concise and Authentic

Examples

- **General IT Professional**

- *"A results-driven IT professional specializing in cloud computing and cybersecurity, dedicated to developing secure and scalable solutions that drive business success."*

- **Cybersecurity Focus**

- *"Cybersecurity analyst passionate about protecting digital assets by identifying vulnerabilities and implementing proactive security measures to mitigate threats."*

- **Software Developer Focus**

- *"Software developer with expertise in Python and full-stack web development, creating innovative applications that enhance user experiences and streamline business processes."*

- **IT Support / Networking**

- *"Dedicated IT support specialist with a strong background in troubleshooting and network administration, ensuring seamless operations and optimal system performance."*

Another ChatGPT/AI/LLM Opportunity

- I uploaded my resume to ChatGPT and asked: "Based on the resume, provide a one-sentence personal branding as a teacher and instructor"

- I got this: ***"Dedicated educator and technology instructor with a passion for empowering students through engaging, hands-on learning experiences in information technology, computer science, cybersecurity, and software development."***

- Prompting "as a developer" produced this: ***"Experienced software developer with a strong background in designing and implementing scalable, secure, and innovative solutions using C#, SQL, .NET, and web technologies to drive business success."***

Keys to LinkedIn

- Optimize your profile

- Build and expand your network

- Showcase your work and knowledge

- Stay active and consistent

- Leveraging LinkedIn for job searches and career growth

Optimize your profile

- **Professional Photo** – Use a high-quality, professional-looking headshot.

- **Headline** – Clearly state your role, skills, or career aspirations (e.g., Aspiring Cybersecurity Analyst | Python & Network Security Enthusiast).

- **About Section (Summary)** – Write a compelling summary highlighting your skills, interests, and career goals.

- **Experience** – List relevant work experience, internships, or projects with brief descriptions and accomplishments.

- **Skills & Endorsements** – Add key IT skills (e.g., Python, Networking, Cloud Computing) and seek endorsements.

- **Education & Certifications** – Include degrees, certifications (CompTIA, AWS, Cisco, etc.), and relevant coursework.

- **Custom URL** – Edit your LinkedIn URL to be professional and easy to share (e.g., linkedin.com/in/yourname).

Build and expand your network

- **Connect with Peers and Professionals** – Start with classmates, colleagues, professors, and industry professionals.
  - Connection request with a message are more likely to be successful
- **Join Relevant Groups** – Engage in discussions in IT, cybersecurity, or software development groups.
- **Follow Industry Leaders & Companies** – Stay updated with trends and job opportunities.

Showcase your work and knowledge

- **Share Projects and Achievements** – Post about IT projects, GitHub repositories, or certifications.

- **Write and Share Content** – Publish articles or posts on industry trends, cybersecurity tips, or coding insights.

- **Engage with Others' Posts** – Comment and interact with industry discussions to boost visibility.

Stay active and consistent

- **Post Regularly** – Share insights, IT news, or lessons from your experiences.

- **Engage with Recruiters** – Follow and interact with IT recruiters for potential job opportunities.

- **Request Recommendations** – Ask for recommendations from professors, mentors, or colleagues to strengthen your profile.

Leveraging LinkedIn for job searches and career growth

- **Enable 'Open to Work'** – Let recruiters know you're seeking job opportunities.
  - Also see the result of the ChatGPT prompt: "Advantages and disadvantages of 'Open to Work' on LinkedIn"
- **Set Job Alerts** – Use LinkedIn's job search feature to find and apply for IT roles.
- **Utilize LinkedIn Learning** – Take relevant courses to boost skills and showcase certifications.

Other Online Presence

- Optimize your professional online presence
  - Google yourself
  - Update social media profiles (Twitter(X), Facebook, GitHub, portfolio page)
- Use other platforms
  - Twitter(X)
    - Follow industry leaders, recruiters, and tech companies
    - Engage in professional discussions and share insights
    - Hashtags (#Hiring, #JobSearch, #TechJobs, etc.)

Other Online Presence (cont'd)

- GitHub / Stack Overflow (for developers)
  - Showcase your coding skills and projects
  - Answer technical questions to build credibility
  - Keep repositories well-organized and well-documented
- Facebook and Reddit
  - Join job-seeking groups related to your industry
  - Follow subreddits like r/cscareerquestions or r/jobsearch for advice
- Instagram and TikTok
  - Follow career coaches and industry influencers for job search tips
  - Consider sharing your professional journey, projects, or tech tips

Network and Engage

- Network and Engage
  - Actively comment on industry-relate posts and discussion
  - Connect with professionals by engaging in group discussions
  - Attend virtual events and \webinars
  - Build your network before you need it – NOW!

Be aware of your digital footprint

- Audit your social media for unprofessional content and update privacy settings if needed

- Avoid controversial posts or comments that may deter employers

Create and Share Valuable Content

- Write blog posts (Medium, Dev.to, or your website) about your experiences, coding projects, or industry insights

- Share articles, research, or thoughts on LinkedIn or X (Twitter) to establish yourself as a knowledgeable professional

Key Points

- Get started networking NOW! Set yourself goals.

- Create an elevator pitch and practice it

- Create a personal brand statement

- LinkedIn is the Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat of the business world. Use it early and often but keep it professional.

- Other online footprints should be a help not a hinderance

I always welcome your questions. Best ways to reach me:

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