

DRIVING FORWARD LINKEDIN GUIDE



Overview

LinkedIn is a vital business tool for college students and recent graduates. The LinkedIn platform provides opportunities to share your personal brand and accomplishments. It includes tools to connect with other professionals to grow your network and your knowledge base. The platform is a robust resource for finding job openings, career advice, and professional profiles to support your career development journey.

This is a three part guide for building and enhancing your LinkedIn profile. Part one is setting up your LinkedIn profile to provide access to the platform. Part two focuses on optimizing the profile to strengthen your personal brand. Part three includes actions to leverage LinkedIn to connect with more professionals.

Part 1 - Setting Up Your Linked Account

Headshot

A headshot is important for your LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn published research that highlighted profiles with good headshots received 21 times more views and 9 times more connection requests.

While professional headshots are great, you can use phone to create an appropriate headshot. Select a location with little in the background that could be distracting. Find a wall inside near a window or outside in the shade. Wear solid color clothes.

Banner

An attractive banner conveys a little bit more information about you and that you have thought about your personal brand. You want this banner to be a relative simple image with a small amount of text at most.

You can quickly create an attractive banner by going to Canva and searching for “LinkedIn Banner”. Select a template, add your information, download the file, and upload it to your LinkedIn profile.

Headline

Your headline is important, particularly if you do not work for a well-known company or institution. If you have a full time job, include your job title and additional phrase highlighting your professional focus. Examples include “finance professional”, “digital marketing expert”, and “certified <fill in skill>”. If you are a current student, include your university, major, expected graduation, and professional interest.

About

The About section of your LinkedIn profile is your elevator pitch. Describe in three to five sentences your skills and interests. If you include accomplishments, include one to two examples.

Use a tool like ChatGPT to help you brainstorm the content for your About section. Write a prompt asking for LinkedIn About section content in a specific number of sentences. Include your resume to produce the results. Change the prompt slightly to create different versions for you to review.

Skills

Including your skills in the Skills section highlights your hard and soft skills. While you can select up to 100 skills, more than 10 skills looks sloppy and suggests you do not have a focus. Analyze your resume in ChatGPT for skills. Speak with your employers, teachers and mentors for potential hard and soft skills to highlight. “Communication” is the most attractive soft skill for employers, so strongly consider including it.

Connections on LinkedIn can endorse the skills in your profile. Ask individuals that have seen you demonstrate these skills for an endorsement to help validate your profile.

Part 2 - Optimizing Up Your Linked Profile

Customized URL

The default URL profile includes a string of meaningless letters and numbers. With a customized URL, you will have a more professional appearance on LinkedIn. Your personal brand will be stronger with links you provide on your resume, emails, and website. Your name will appear higher in Google searches.

To create a customized URL profile, click on the pencil next to the custom profile and URL. Edit the profile to your name and then select save. Your LinkedIn URL will update immediately.

Featured

The Featured section provides the opportunity to share two highlights. These highlights can include posts you have made on LinkedIn. Examples include posts you made highlighting a point of view and announcements about professional or personal milestones. You can include external links. Examples include a personal branded website, certificates and degrees, and personal or professional projects you have completed.

Similar to the customized URL profile, your headshot, and your banner, providing content in the Featured section contributes to your personal brand.

Certifications and Licenses

You can add credibility to your profile by including certifications and licenses. If you have access to LinkedIn’s “Learning” platform, you will earn certifications for completing courses. To learn about the wide array of external certifications and licenses, search through the options in this section.

Certifications and Licenses (continued)

You can add certifications through popular training sites like Udemy and Coursera. Be thoughtful of certifications that you pursue. Preference those that are most relevant to your interests and profile. Resist the urge to pursue certification that are easy to complete but not necessarily relevant to your personal b

Follow thought leaders on LinkedIn

LinkedIn has a wide range of experts and thought leaders posting content on the platform. These individuals post career advice, reflect on industry trends, and share company updates. Following their profiles can keep you current on helpful information. It can also signal your professional interests to others reviewing your profile.

You can stay up to date on their content by following their profile, selecting the “Follow+” title below their headshot.

Part 3 - Grow Your Visibility

Connect With People You Know

Build your network and social capital by connecting with people on LinkedIn. You will find potential connections in your news feed and through search. LinkedIn will present possible connections in the My Network section under Grow. LinkedIn will suggest possible connections on the far right, “People You May Know” when on an individual’s page.

You should attempt to connect only with people you know. Someone reviewing your connections should sense continuity in the backgrounds of these connections. When asking to connect, write a personal introduction note. It will signal to recipients that you are appreciative of the opportunity to connect and are not indiscriminately messaging.

Connect With People You Want To Meet

LinkedIn helps you contact people on the platform. You can message 1st degree connections by selecting the “Message” tile below the profile’s headshot. If the individual is a 2nd degree connection, you can message them by selecting the “More” tile at the bottom of their profile section.

Share Professional, Academic, Extracurricular accomplishments

When you reach significant milestones, post about the milestones on LinkedIn. Starting a new job or internship, receiving a promotion, completing a project, and graduating from an academic program are common and relevant posts.

Be thoughtful about what accomplishments will resonate with others as meaningful. Professional and academic progress is important, much of it is expected as the result of showing up and doing the work. Creating impact for organizations like student groups and non-profits are well received because of the leadership and other soft skills you demonstrate.

Part 3 - Grow Your Visibility (continued)

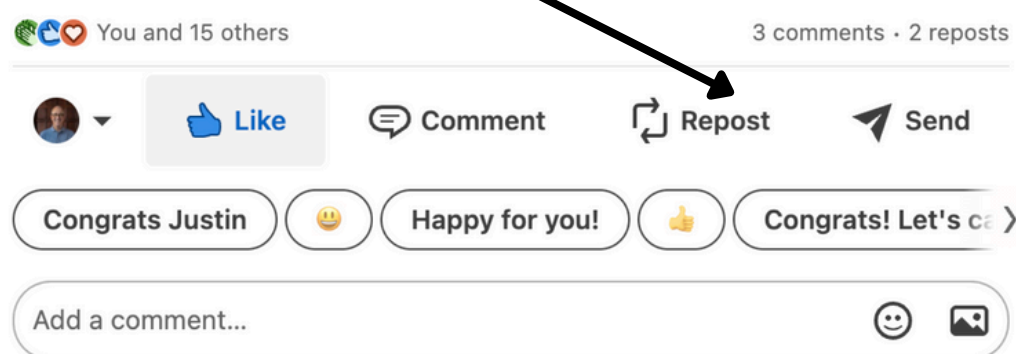
Support Others - Like, Comment, Repost

An easy way to stay engaged on LinkedIn and increase your visibility is to support others. When you see a post from a contact you want to support, select the “Like” button at the end of the post. The button includes six types of emojis: Like, Celebrate, Support, Love, Insightful, and Funny.



You can add even more support by contributing a comment by selecting the “Comment” button. As part of your Comment, you can highlight the poster’s profile by including @<name> when including their name.

Posts will receive a boost if you “Repost” their post and add your thoughts. Similar to “Like” and Comment”, this button is at the bottom of the post.



Post Content

Sharing your thoughts and experiences about professional topics increases your visibility on LinkedIn. Interested, but not sure what to post? Consider commenting on industry news, LinkedIn posts, and related content on other social media platforms. YouTube and TikTok have content that you can share as a recommendation, while providing attribution and visibility to the source creator.

To grow the visibility of your posts, respond to anyone that comments on your post. Comments are a signal to LinkedIn that a conversation is taking place which attracts more user view.

Discuss Professional, Not Personal

LinkedIn is a social media platform that is built on professional opportunities, relationships and discussions. Refrain from posting on purely personal activities and updates better shared on consumer focused platforms.

This does not mean you cannot post about personal topics. Consider what the personal topic has to do with a work focused platform. Examples include work-place relationship dynamics, mental health, and mentorship.

Questions

Do you have LinkedIn questions? Send us your questions to info@DrivingForward.org with the subject line: “LinkedIn questions”.