

LinkedIn Part 2: Fundamentals

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Based on the “ripple in a pond” networking theory, the size of your LinkedIn network (number of connections) is very important. The more network connections you have, the more visible you will be when recruiters and hiring managers search for candidates.

That’s why it is so important to find and connect to key contacts in your field and in your local market. Reach out and ask them to connect with a personalized message, letting them know why you’re interested in networking with them. This technique can be even more effective if you already have shared connections. Even if they don’t know about job opportunities that would align with your search, being connected with them will expand your own network and increase your visibility.

LinkedIn is all about finding and being found by others. You do not need to add hundreds of people all at once. Just adding 5-8 a week can be a good start.

Go Broad or Go Deep?

The question of whether it is better to “go broad” or “go deep” in network building often comes up as people begin building their LinkedIn network.

Going deep means drilling down in your industry with vendors, clients, prospects, competitors, employees, associates, and partners. Taking a broad approach might also mean connecting with people designated as a LION (LinkedIn Open Networker) and everyone else you meet.

The best approach is to go both broad and deep. A too cautious approach defeats the purpose of LinkedIn. Adding connections helps you expand your reach and come up higher in search results. Every new contact has potential. The key is to be strategic when seeking and making new connections. Make sure to also add personal connections who are employed in other industries as well to broaden your network and build it out more completely.

Consider connecting with people who you may not have thought of as being potential network connections in the past. While that individual might not be the perfect connection for you today, someone in their network may be. It’s important to increase both the quantity and quality of your connections.

People frequently equate the size of someone’s LinkedIn network with the scope of that person’s influence. If you want to grow your network, you can’t sit on the sidelines waiting for people to notice and connect with you. Continue to build your network by connecting with the professionals you come into contact with in your everyday life and work environments.

When you are searching for a job, an impression that you are well-connected within your industry will boost your chances of landing a new position. A profile with even just 350 connections is far more impressive than one with only 40 connections.

Building Your Network Through Your Existing Network

LinkedIn allows you to sync your contact email addresses with your LinkedIn account so that you can connect to those you already know. This can ramp up your network quickly.

Mine the connections of your current network for anyone you might recognize. You can also connect with people individually, searching manually for them by typing their name in the search window.

Use the connections you already have for referrals and introductions to new contacts and recruiters at your target companies. Personalize the message and explain why you want an introduction. This might seem like a slow process, but it can be highly successful.

Building Your Network Through Company Pages

Search company pages for potential contacts. Keep in mind that 68% of LinkedIn users connect with past business associates; searching through the list of current and former employees of your previous employers is a great way to locate former colleagues. We also suggest searching through the company profile pages of each of your target companies for potential contacts.

If you already have connections there, these people can refer you or introduce you to hiring managers and recruiters at that organization. You can also search for new contacts at each of your target companies, through both the current and former employees.

Not only can these individuals possibly be a great referral partners, but they might also be able to help with insights into the organization itself, helping you prepare for future interviews.

Building Your Network Through Adding Groups

Groups allow you to connect easily with others and bypass having to be directly connected to a potential contact to find them. Groups are an excellent way to connect with those you would not otherwise come in contact with. In addition, recruiters troll groups looking for their next hot candidate.

Your profile is 5 times more likely to get viewed if you join and actively participate in groups. With over 2.5 million LinkedIn groups, your options for finding great groups for you are limitless.

LinkedIn will let you join up to 100 groups! The quantity of groups is an advantage – only 16% of users have joined the maximum number of groups allowed.

Expand your network by joining these types of groups:

- Alumni (both university and previous employers)
- Industry (both skills and job titles)
- Associations (professional, civic, and even some social)
- Local networking groups (based on your geographic target area)

Pick certain groups to be active in and begin to build your reputation as a Leader and Expert. When possible, mine the members of each group for recruiters or those working at your target companies. Members often post job leads, local in person events, and virtual networking events within groups.

Building Your Network Through Your Academic Alumni Network

Use www.linkedin.com/alumni to check out your academic alumni network. Find out where your former classmates work and which companies have a habit of hiring from your alma mater. This list can be narrowed down by location, companies, job functions, the focus of study, skills, and your connection level. This will open up a whole new set of contacts, companies, and types of jobs to target, all at firms that already like your school's talent.

If you do not have a degree- look at a local University/College near you or check out the college of your favorite college sports teams. You do not have to attend college to connect with people that work in your industry or have other shared connections. You may connect with them on a higher level because of your mutual LOVE for your favorite basketball or football team. BE STRATEGIC!

Building Your Network Through Who's Viewed Your Profile

Check out who has viewed your profile recently. Keep an eye out for those hiring managers and recruiters from your target companies that may be checking out your profile. If you see that a potential employer has viewed your profile send them a connection request. Once connected, start a conversation about the organization, a specific position, and/or your skills and qualifications.

"I see that you viewed my profile this morning. Is there any additional information I can provide you with about my background? Was there anything in particular that drew your attention? I always welcome communicating with peers about their own areas of interest and would welcome connecting with you."

"I noticed that you viewed my profile and I see that we have a lot in common and some shared connections. Do you have time for a quick conversation in the next week or so?"

It is important to note that for a Basic (free) ~~job-seeker~~ account, you are only given a very limited listing of those who have viewed your profile, but even paid premium accounts are not an exhaustive listing of those who have viewed your profile. Those who have changed their settings to "Anonymous" will still not be viewable.

Connecting and Communicating

Use the Connect and Follow buttons whenever possible!

Personalize the note that goes with a connection request, for the best results. Your messages should be positive and personalized to each individual. Be careful not to use spamming form messages.

There is a "law of averages" that goes along with this approach – not everyone will respond. Sending messages increases your chances of gathering timely information and connecting with the recruiters and hiring managers who are looking to fill positions that you are interested in being considered for.

Once you connect, you will be able to ask for introductions or set up an informational interview. Be proactive and reach out first, and then always follow up! Following up is the Key!

"Hi ____, it was great meeting you at the ABC event yesterday. I enjoyed learning about your expertise in ____, particularly your perspective on _____. I'd like to stay in touch via LinkedIn. All the best, _____."

"Hi ____, while researching product management professionals on LinkedIn, I came across your profile. It's always exciting to see fellow alumni of _____ find success in the field. I would love to connect with you. Regards, _____."

Consider using LinkedIn's messaging system to contact your existing connections directly to get their help as well.

- "You have always been supportive of me and my career so I wanted to reach out and let you know I'm in the midst of a job hunt. I had a great experience at _____, but it's time for me to explore opportunities at larger organizations, ideally managing a larger team. Would you have 15-20 minutes in the next week or so to connect? Given your experience in _____, I'd love to hear your thoughts on _____ as it relates to the types of roles I'm targeting."
- "I really enjoyed the article on _____ you posted last week. I found _____ particularly insightful. I am reaching out because I am in transition and was hoping that you would be willing to provide me with some guidance. I am interested in a position in _____ at _____ company, and I know you worked there for several years. Would you be open to a brief, 15-20-minute chat about your experience there? I would be very grateful for your time and *happy to return the favor in the future.*"