

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS USING LinkedIn

Making Connections and
Capturing Opportunities on
the World's #1 Business
Networking Site



Book How to Succeed in Business Using LinkedIn

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Eric Butow and Kathy Taylor
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Recommendation

LinkedIn, one of the Internet's top, business-oriented social networking sites, focuses on helping people build their professional connections for fun and profit. Authors Eric Butow and Kathleen Taylor provide detailed steps on how to use every feature, big and small, on the site. Supporting their instructions with numerous, helpful screen shots, they clearly explain how to exchange references, promote your company, set up a home page, look for employment, recruit new employees, establish and maintain your business network, and more. The book's disadvantage is that Web site logistics change in an instant; its advantage is that it offers the immediate, hands-on information people want so they can create stronger networks. *BooksInShort* reports that beginning networkers who want basic (actually, very basic), detailed instructions for using LinkedIn can link up here to get exactly what they need to know.

Take-Aways

- LinkedIn, the business network Web site, targets business owners and professionals.
- It costs nothing to use LinkedIn's basic services, but users who pay for premium accounts have extended options.
- You can build your online contact list by searching for people you know in LinkedIn.
- LinkedIn contains exclusive job leads that are not available elsewhere.
- Find recommended professionals and service people, from accountants to plumbers, with the "Service Provider" feature.
- Recommendations boost your profile, especially if you get more than three.
- The "Answer" feature lets you ask questions to get help and answer them to share your expertise.
- Make new connections by requesting an introduction from a common contact or by using "InMail," a premium service feature.
- Contacting members who aren't in your network can be beneficial, but you won't have as much information about them.
- Other Web applications complement LinkedIn to help manage your network.

Summary

Create an Account and Build Your Profile

LinkedIn's Web site (www.linkedin.com) debuted in 2003, but really took off in 2007. The social network service offers business professionals a way to promote their companies, network with each other and build complete profiles to boost their Web sites' search engine rankings. LinkedIn offers a place to find jobs or employees, and to make contacts. Start your journey with LinkedIn by getting to know the company on its Web site, where you can explore background information without having to join. LinkedIn's blog also covers its features for business users, provides tips for using the site, and offers news about the company and its services.

"The more connections you make, the more opportunities you have to help others and to get help yourself."

LinkedIn displays a chart comparing its available accounts, which range in cost from free to more than \$200 a month. You may not know at first exactly what you will want to do on the site, but you can try it for free to see how much you use it. Its "Help" function also provides answers to users' frequently asked questions.

"LinkedIn is only as effective as your contact list."

As you navigate the site, it asks how you want to use its services and how you want to help others – such as potential employers or clients – find you. When you register for an account, LinkedIn asks you to fill out a profile with your current job and at least two past positions, educational background, credentials, a summary of your professional experience, a photo and a note about your specialties. Add three or more recommendations from other LinkedIn members among your clients or co-workers. Then, add your Web address and any other relevant links so people can learn more about you.

“Stay focused on who you are and what you do when building your contacts.”

You can select precisely which data you want to share with everyone and what information you want to restrict to your list of contacts. To verify your public presentation, click “View My Public Profile as Others See It.” You can create a Web address (URL) for your profile. If you don’t want your current employer to know you are hunting for a new position, don’t select “finding a job” as one of the reasons you want to join the network.

Find and Manage Contacts and Jobs

To learn if your friends or associates have posted LinkedIn profiles, enter their names in the “Search” tool. To refine your results, use the additional fields from the “Advanced People Search” or “Name Search” tabs. Access these tabs from the search results page or click “People” in the navigation bar to enter more details, such as company name, industry and address.

“Without a profile that effectively sells you and what you do, people won’t be interested in working with you, either as a prospective employee or as a recruiter.”

The search tools also let you locate people you don’t know who share your interests, work in your industry or hold positions you want to target. For instance, if you work for a software company that makes a product for a specific industry, you can search for potential customers by industry and job-title keywords. Once you locate a prospect, see if you share any contacts. If so, you can ask your common contact person for an introduction to the prospect. Generally, it’s better not to contact people you don’t know unless you have an intermediary.

“The more potential employers or employees see that you are well thought-of by others, the more interested they become in working with you.”

Having a high-quality list of connections is much better than having a large list of low-quality contacts. To make the most productive use of resources you already have, LinkedIn lets you import contacts from your e-mail account contact list. You can then select those contacts you wish to invite to join your online network.

Linking Up to a New Job

LinkedIn includes an integrated job application tool for posting, finding and applying for jobs. The job search tool enables you to search for openings by geographic location, keyword, job title, company, job function and more. The search results page provides two tabs: “LinkedIn Jobs” and “The Web.” If you don’t find anything promising on the LinkedIn Jobs page, switch to the Web tab to broaden your search. The advantage of LinkedIn is its “JobsInsider” feature, which indicates whether you’re already connected to anyone at the company you want to target.

“One of the attractive features of LinkedIn is that it effectively eliminates the need for the so-called cold call.”

To apply for a job that appears on LinkedIn, write a standard cover letter to accompany the posted application form. Fill it in with your basic background and employment information. You have the option of uploading your resume (up to 200 kb). Check the poster’s profile to see if you have any common contacts, and if anyone recommends the company as an employer. A lack of recommendations could signify that it may not be an ideal place to park your career. Some corporate recruiters prefer applicants who have recommendations, so you can provide those links as well. Note that Web-based job offerings outside of LinkedIn’s purview will have independent application requirements and processes.

“Though you don’t want to seek a recommendation from everyone in your network, it makes sense to have more than three.”

Hiring managers and recruiters use LinkedIn to display available jobs, find candidates and get references. However, posting a job opening on LinkedIn isn’t free. The employer’s costs depend on whether the company lists one job or saves money by purchasing bulk credits it can spend for multiple listings. Companies also can use LinkedIn’s “Distribute New Job” feature to send e-mails that tell selected connections or applicants about a fresh job posting. If an applicant uses LinkedIn to apply for a job with your company, you can search for contacts who have worked with that candidate to solicit independent references.

Finding Service Providers

Are you dealing with a leaky sink? When you’re ready to get it fixed, LinkedIn’s recommendations and connections can help you find a qualified plumber. Access the “Service Provider” section under the “Companies” tab. LinkedIn lists top providers by category, such as plumbers, photographers, contractors, career coaches or real estate agents. You can ask it to sort the provider list by the date of recommendation, with the most recent first, and to tell you if anyone you know also knows one of the listed plumbers. For added security, check the profiles of customers who recommend the plumber or ask them about the service. To recommend someone – whether he or she is already on LinkedIn or not – use the “Make Recommendation” tab on the Service Provider page. When you write a recommendation, be honest so you preserve your credibility. And if you recommend someone who later leaves your sink still dripping, you can take the recommendation down.

Services for Service Providers

To set up your listing as a service provider, click “Request a Recommendation” and send an e-mail to each contact on your list so satisfied clients can provide references for you. Recommendations are most valuable when they come from clients on your most recent projects and from high-quality connections, such as senior managers from a company that purchased your services. Try to obtain recommendations from a variety of sources to highlight your ability to work in many different settings. Ask for a recommendation at the end of each project or assignment when the clients’ impressions of your work are still vivid and detailed. The length of a

recommendation letter doesn't matter as much as the information it provides. In fact, short can be better.

Work with “Answers”

The Answers section of LinkedIn lets members ask and answer questions related to specific industries, careers, technology and more. If someone posts a question about a service you provide, you can contact that person directly, or you can ask someone he or she knows from within your network to recommend you. In fact, mentioning your clients in Answers can pay off when they return the favor by hiring you again or citing your services. Questions that you ask on LinkedIn remain open for responses for a specific time and then close, so that no one else can add a response. The answers to questions you have may already be on the site. Search for them by using keywords before posing a fresh question. Questions fall into categories, so you can search through them to find the answer you want or to find questions in your area of knowledge that you can answer. If you don't want to respond to questions in public, you can do it privately. Here, members can share information within a trusted network instead of dealing with strangers elsewhere on the Internet.

Reaching Other Members

These avenues that LinkedIn makes available to you for contacting other members depends on the kind of membership you have. Premium members can contact other members directly using “InMail,” but the number of allotted InMails depends on your account level. The “Introductions” function provides another way to connect with someone through trusted intermediaries. Your account level also determines your maximum number of open introductions. Introductions contain two components. One lets you leave a message for your contact to ask for an introduction to the person you want to meet. The other lets you write the message intended for the person you want to reach. Your intermediary receives the e-mail, decides whether or not to make the introduction, and then forwards the message to the person you want to contact – or doesn't.

“You also can find people outside your network, reach out to people whose names you do not know and who don't have a connection with you or your network.”

The “Send invitation” feature helps you create e-mails inviting colleagues to join LinkedIn, or lets you connect to them if they are members. To send an invitation, enter the names and e-mail addresses of contacts from your Web-based e-mail account (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) or use Microsoft Outlook. Before LinkedIn sends the invitation, it gives you a preview so you can edit your e-mail. The invitation feature contains an option for accessing your address lists on other e-mail services.

“A constant thought to keep in mind when using LinkedIn is the give-and-take of the service and how you can help others so that it comes back to you.”

LinkedIn “Groups” connect members who are interested in the same topic. You can search for existing groups in subject areas that intrigue you or suggest new groups (although before a new group can move ahead, LinkedIn reviews the suggestion for appropriateness). People also use e-mail on LinkedIn to find potential employees, apply for jobs, request references and ask for introductions. While you may have a connection to a CEO or another high-level executive, that heavy hitter might not be the best person to ask for an introduction since he or she might not know your intermediary well enough or might be unwilling to be a go-between.

“Although LinkedIn suggests, as a matter of etiquette, not to ask a question to promote your business, many people do just that.”

When you get a message from someone unfamiliar, review the person's profile and references before following up on the request. Ask a common acquaintance if you should pursue the connection. Sometimes you might extend an invitation that someone ignores and rejects. That is just part of the normal course of events. The person could be busy. Perhaps your shared connection did not forward your message, or the new person doesn't want contact with strangers, doesn't remember you or sent the message to the junk folder. Don't give up hope. LinkedIn provides pages that let you review the status of all the requests you've received. Its inbox shows received, sent and blocked invitations, so you can resend, edit or withdraw unanswered ones.

Other Networking Sites for Business

At the moment, other online resources for enhancing your business network include:

- **Illumio** – This free software application keeps you updated on the groups and feeds that you select.
- **Doostang** – Recruiters and job hunters join this invitation-only community focused on a target market of young business professionals.
- **Plaxo** – This free service acts like an automated address book that notifies you and your contacts when information changes. The premium version synchronizes with your LinkedIn account.
- **Spock** – This site has indexed more than 100 million people, and can be more accurate than general search engines for finding your contacts online. It also lets you add tags and build a contact base.
- **Jigsaw** – This site works like trading cards except its members buy and trade business cards. Members earn points for entering detailed information into business cards on the site and use the points to obtain more business cards. You can skip sharing your business cards and pay a fee to receive business cards with contact details.

“Whatever the reason you are contacting someone, give the impression that you are truly interested in him, not just looking to network with him only to connect with someone else.”

These sites have the same goal as LinkedIn: to help you build your business network.

About the Authors

Eric Butow is a CEO and author of a dozen books. **Kathleen Taylor** is a co-founder of an executive talent firm.
