

THE BASICS OF OPTIMIZING YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

Basic Info

Headshot. Use a professional headshot with you as the only person in the photo. Your photo should help me recognize you if we meet.

Background photo. If you already have a strong personal brand, convey that in a cover photo – visually, verbally or through a combination of the two. It also could be something that reflects your personal and/or professional interests. Avoid poor quality or busy images and collages.

Headline. Identify keywords that go beyond a job title to communicate your specific expertise, interests and the value you offer. LinkedIn is a search engine, so you want your profile to be optimized for search.

Custom URL. The original URL assigned by LinkedIn contains numbers and letters. Edit it to show your name only (you may need to tweak how your name is displayed based on the URL availability).

Contact Info. Make sure your email and any URLs you list are up to date.

About

This section should sound more like your professional story rather than your resume. What is your value proposition? What do you bring to the relationship? What is your passion? Why do you do what you do?

- Write this section in the first person
- Use your professional statement and expand on it
- Follow your statement with a list of any tangible skills

Experience

List work history, including detailed information on any past experience that adds value. Focus your job descriptions on transferable skills and outcomes.

If you are still a student, include all jobs from high school and college, including internships. Add brief descriptions, including more details for the jobs that are more relevant to the jobs you are seeking. As you progress in your career journey, start deleting any jobs that are no longer relevant.

Other Sections

List your education, volunteer activities and add other sections that will help you identify common interests with others. Did you go to the same school? Are you supporting the same causes? These are valuable connection points!

Profile Visibility

Make sure your information is visible to the public by switching on “Your profile’s public visibility” toggle and options underneath (see “Public profile & URL” in the right sidebar of your profile page).

Making Connections

Have a Strategy

Connecting with people on LinkedIn is a virtual equivalent of face-to-face networking. The goal is not to have thousands of connections, but to build meaningful and personalized professional relationships with highly curated contacts.

LinkedIn offers a powerful search for targeting job titles, companies, industries, services, geographies and more. Narrow your searches using filters to zero in on the individuals who are in a position to help you professionally.

Connect with your peers, colleagues, clients, mentors and supervisors (and recruiters if you are looking for a job).

Connecting Best Practices

Based on your profile, LinkedIn will make connection recommendations. Each suggested connection has a “connect” button – don’t click on it, as it will immediately send a generic connection request. Instead, connect by going to an individual’s profile and connecting from there, which will give you an option to personalize your request.

Adding a personal note is a must. If someone doesn’t know you and you don’t meet their “desired connection criteria,” most people will not connect unless you give them a compelling reason.

Anticipate their question, “What’s in it for me?” Could you have met before? Did you go to the same school? Do you do work in the same industry? Make your note compelling and personal enough that people will want to connect with you.

Being strategic also goes for accepting connections. You don’t have to connect with everyone who sends you a request. But when you do connect, send a personal note through LinkedIn messaging – start building the relationship.

Hi [Name],

Thank you for connecting. I’m a student at [School], and I came across your profile while looking at alumni working in [field]. I’d love to learn more about your path after graduation if you’re ever open to a quick conversation.

Hi [Name],

Thank you for connecting. I'm currently studying [major] and am interested in [area of work]. I appreciated your post about [specific topic], and I'm trying to learn more about the field as I plan my next steps.

Hi [Name],

Great to meet you at [event name]. I enjoyed our conversation about [specific detail]. Thanks again for connecting, hope to stay in touch.

Hi [Name]

If you'd ever be open to a quick 15-minute call, I'd love to hear how you got started in [field]. Totally understand if now isn't a good time.