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A Guide to LinkedIn



In this guide updated in February 2020 you will discover how to:

- Optimise your professional profile
- Make meaningful connections and grow your network
- Promote yourself and your business without selling
- Avoid mistakes that will harm your reputation

But first things first, here's some facts about LinkedIn itself.

LinkedIn Facts

LinkedIn is the world's number one professional networking site and the 30th most visited website in the world!

Now owned by Microsoft which acquired the platform in 2016 for €26.2 billion, in 2019 LinkedIn had a turnover of over €6.8 billion.

Did you know?

- There are 575 million registered users of LinkedIn
- The UK has over 25 million LinkedIn accounts
- 40% of LinkedIn users check the site daily for updates
- 2 million posts, articles, and videos are published every day on LinkedIn
- 91% of executives rate LinkedIn as their number one source of professionally relevant content
- 30 million businesses have a LinkedIn company page
- 60% of businesses actively use their LinkedIn company page
- 50% of buyers refer to LinkedIn before making B2B purchasing decisions – this might be checking the Company's LinkedIn page, profiles of employees, thought-leadership posts and promotions

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LinkedIn is too big to ignore. Getting the most out of LinkedIn is a must for professionals and business owners everywhere.

Optimise Your Profile & Make Meaningful Connections

There are 575 million user profiles on LinkedIn.

You need to stand out from the crowd.

Here are 7 steps to creating a powerful profile:

1. Show your face

LinkedIn is a social media site. People and photos of people are everywhere and the most important photo of all is your profile photo.

This photo needs to be a head and shoulders shot that shows you as a professional person. So please save those pictures of you in holiday attire or with friends, family or your pet for Facebook.

And don't be tempted to put up a picture of your product, your premises or your logo. Save this for your LinkedIn company page.

LinkedIn profiles with professional headshots get 14x more views than other profiles.

2. Have a human headline

Don't be a corporate clone or a job title.

There is no value in a headline like: "Owner at Logic Digital"

Instead take the opportunity to explain exactly what you do and most importantly, how you can help.

The owner of Logic Digital is Alex Clifford.

Here is his LinkedIn headline:

"Helping Businesses to Grow | SEO Services | Web Design | Lead Generation"

It is clear what Alex does and what's great about his headline is that it also contains keywords that will help him to show up on LinkedIn searches.



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3. Expand on who you are and what you can do for others

Your summary is unique to you. Don't be a carbon copy of someone else. Avoid clichés and empty promises.

Describe the real you in your own authentic voice. Explain concisely why you do what do and how you help others professionally.

This is the written equivalent of your elevator pitch. Get this right and people will read on.

4. Back this up with evidence

You have valuable experience and expertise so make sure that your highest educational qualifications are highlighted as well as your full professional history.

Convey your successes, not your responsibilities.

Make sure that your profile includes endorsements and recommendations. What others say about you has a powerful effect.

Also, don't be shy about showcasing your awards and professional achievements. You can add videos and photos to your profile. Seeing is believing.

Profiles that feature skills and endorsements on average get 13x more views than those without.

5. Add credibility by joining groups and following influencers

No man (or woman) is an island.

We are moulded by those that influence us.

Do you have any business heroes? If so, find them on LinkedIn and follow them. This way, you will regularly get updates from them and they will appear on your profile. This also creates connection with others who might also be followers.

Join and participate in LinkedIn Groups. The group logos will show on your profile underlining your areas of interest and expertise.

6. Be social and engage

It is estimated that 90% of LinkedIn's content is generated by just 1% of LinkedIn's users.

By sharing information with your connections, participating in conversations on groups and writing articles on LinkedIn Publisher you will get your profile more widely seen and grow your professional network.

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There are four main types of content that you can share on LinkedIn: text, video, images and documents. Mix up the formats though so there's plenty of variety for your followers and connections to see. And, if you want to aim for thought leadership write long form articles.

7. Set up your company LinkedIn page

If you are a business owner, you should also set up a LinkedIn company page for your business.

Please bear in mind that company pages have more limited functionality than profile pages. They can be useful to showcase company achievements like awards or the launch of new products and services.

You can also post updates and articles as well as attracting followers independent of your own personal profile.

Grow Your Network & Promote Yourself on LinkedIn

Once you've created a LinkedIn profile that accurately represent you and your personal brand you are ready to build awareness and generate leads.

A word of warning.

Whilst LinkedIn is a great place to engage with prospective customers, don't start by selling.

Start by building a relationship, giving value and genuinely being a person that your connections get to know, like and trust.

Here are 7 steps to promoting yourself and your business on LinkedIn.

1. Grow your network

Size matters on LinkedIn.

However, as you build your network do bear in mind that ultimately quality is more important than quantity.

Contact all the people that you know and connect with them first.

2. Start sharing

LinkedIn is a social media site. Don't be one of the many that "connect and forget". Sharing is caring.

Start by liking or commenting on other peoples' posts and engaging in group conversations. Move on to sharing helpful hints and tips. Give endorsements and recommendations.



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3. Publish articles

Raise your profile as a subject matter expert by writing about trends in your industry.

Give your views on a hot topic of general interest to the wider business community.

Or simply write about the challenges that you've faced, opportunities you've seized or good advice that you've been given.

4. Upload Presentations to SlideShare

Do you do speaker engagements, presentations or video training?

If so, upload your content to LinkedIn's sister site SlideShare. There are already over 70 million presentations, videos and infographics on this site. Best of all you can share your content on LinkedIn and even add it to your profile.

5. Ask for endorsements, recommendations and referrals

As you help your LinkedIn connections you can ask them for favours in return.

Endorsements and recommendations on LinkedIn are as powerful as selling ratings on eBay or product reviews on Amazon. Make sure that your LinkedIn profile passes the social proof test.

And continue to grow your network by asking your connections for introductions to people that you don't know but with whom you potentially share common interests.

6. Make yourself approachable

It is amazing how many profiles don't contain any contact details at all.

Make sure that you highlight your phone number, email address, website and Skype details.

Make it clear on your profile, on your posts and your articles that you are interested in engaging with others and that you are open for business.

7. Use LinkedIn messaging for value-added selling

Once you have built your network and gained the trust of your connections you can of course make them aware of products and services that you feel may help them in their business.

A direct and personalised approach through LinkedIn messaging often works best. It is less obtrusive than email and is the natural progression to the conversations that you will already be having.



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NB: Don't be tempted to post promotions or offers in groups or to share these in your status updates as these are likely to backfire.

Reputation Damaging Mistakes

LinkedIn is a professional network. LinkedIn has its own etiquette and it pays to play by the rules.

Your connections are looking for opportunities to keep their knowledge up to date and to interact with new people who will help them to find solutions to their work or business problems.

Like you they don't want to be stalked, spammed or sold.

Here are 7 mistakes to avoid:

1. Treating LinkedIn Like Facebook

Pictures of your children on their first day at school or cute images of your pet pooch are out.

Resist the urge to show off how clever you are by posting brain teasers and quizzes.

By all means, mention how delighted you were to attend the industry awards dinner but resist the urge to tell your connections publicly about the boozy post dinner party that followed.

2. Using LinkedIn to ask for Facebook "Likes" or Twitter followers

If you want likes for your Facebook business, it is better to become Facebook friends and to ask for likes through that platform. You and your LinkedIn connections may want to keep your professional and personal social media relationships separate.

3. Criticizing, berating or belittling others

There is no place for negativity on LinkedIn. Be polite and professional. Respect others and always give helpful advice.

4. Posting too frequently

Sharing high quality content helps to build your professional credibility. Avoid putting too much out there all in one go and clogging up your connections' newsfeed. Aim to post no more than once a day.

5. Spamming LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn groups are there for professional debate and information sharing not for self-serving content or promotional offers.



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6. Accepting connection requests from random people

Be selective about who you invite into your professional network and exercise caution when you receive invitations from people who want to connect with you.

Ask yourself. Do you have common interests? Can you help each other? What's in it for me? What's in it for them?

7. Asking for recommendations or endorsements from people who don't know you well enough

There is huge value in recommendations from the right people at the right time. If you haven't worked with a person in the real world, don't ask for testimonials to display in the virtual world.

In Summary

You may have set up your LinkedIn profile some time ago and be coasting along in "set and forget mode".

If so, you will be missing out on the powerful impact that an active and engaged profile can have on your professional image and your business opportunities.

LinkedIn continues to grow and develop. It is quite simply the best online platform for professional connections and business insights.

There has never been a better time to update your profile and re-engage with your connections. So what are you waiting for?



About the Author

Chris Dunn is passionate about the power of digital transformation and customer experience to create brand value, customer loyalty and competitive advantage.

His career stretches back 35 years during which time he has developed fast growing, profitable businesses serving B2B and B2C markets in the UK and internationally.

His company Chris Dunn Consulting Services Limited provides business coaching and management consultancy to companies to help them drive change management and business development.



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Chris is a long-standing mentor on the Cambridge Venture Project run by the Cambridge Judge Business School.

He writes a regular blog to pass on business advice as well as posting handy hints and tips through regular posts on LinkedIn and Facebook.

