

LinkedIn – Building a Better Profile

Your LinkedIn profile is one of your essential marketing tools. Even if you don't actively search for jobs via LinkedIn, assume that any recruiter following up on a traditional application will review your LinkedIn profile.

Getting started

Turn off activity broadcasts, so you don't notify every contact every time you edit your profile. (Look under "Privacy & Settings" in the "Accounts and Settings" section)

Browse for good ideas. Look at profiles of alums, classmates, and especially people further along your target career path. Write down good ideas about words to use, styles to mimic, etc.

Start with the material on your resume, but use the space LinkedIn provides to expand and explain. For career changers, in particular, use the more open format of LinkedIn to better explain why you are right for your new career.

Expect to update regularly, but complete the basics discussed below as soon as possible.

Headline Section

Photo – Unlike resumes, a photo is considered essential on LinkedIn – not having one affects your search rankings, and recruiters expect to see one. Include a professional photo, but it is ok to show a little creativity.

Headline – Prime real estate – 120 characters. Your Brand Essence statement is great for this. Advertise your expertise, target function &/or industry, etc. It is fine to mention "MBA Candidate," but give the reader something unique as well.

Custom URL – Make a custom URL for your profile (go to profile, → 'edit profile', → 'edit' next to your current url, under your picture). Add your custom url to your resume and other materials to connect your various platforms.

Summary Statement

This is where you can **expand on key themes** -- like a cover letter. Use your summary to explain your skills, accomplishments and motivations. It should be written in the first person and conversational. Use short paragraphs and bullets. Refer to your brand attributes statement for useful ideas.

Automated recruiter searches on LinkedIn include the Summary section, so include **key words** for your target functions and industries.

Attachments/videos/power points – Uploading presentations and videos, or adding links to any of these you have available is an excellent way to shine.

Experience & Education

Experience – For each job, begin with your accomplishment bullets from your resume. Expand with more information about projects, links to illustrate accomplishments, or other details and awards.

Education – Can be similar to resume version, but is also a great place to expand and include details demonstrating skills not shown in ‘experience.’ Consider listing courses and projects that directly illustrate your fit for your future function or industry.

Skills & Recommendations

Skills – List them and collect endorsements. Aim to display skills relevant to your target career, not just anything and everything. This section is particularly targeted to automated search engines. Though not a deep demonstration of your skills, it affects your ranking in LinkedIn search results. You should have 10+ skills listed, each with plenty of endorsements (ideally 10+).

Recommendations – Very helpful and more like traditional references. These should be detailed, with mention of specific accomplishments if possible. Work with references to craft these to be sure they don’t just say “She is great!”

Tip: You can hide/display skills & recommendations on your public profile as desired.

Groups & Companies

Groups – Join many (20+). Great for networking, a great place to build your reputation by joining discussions, and a great place to keep up on new trends in functions and industries. But on the profile side, groups are also a simple means to show recruiters your active interest in targeted fields and skills.

Companies – Follow companies to receive updates on their latest news, and to demonstrate the type of employers you are interested in joining.

Tip: You can adjust the frequency of notifications from groups & companies you follow to avoid being deluged with updates.

Extras

Order your sections to highlight your strengths. (ex: move education up if experience is thin)

Be selective about additional sections. Include other sections, if and when relevant to your career plan.

More advice -- There are no shortage of articles online about perfecting your LinkedIn profile. Start at:

<http://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students.html> , but don’t stop there.

Look for a different tip sheet on using LinkedIn to search for jobs and network.