



THE PROFESSIONAL NETWORK: 13 WAYS TO USE LINKEDIN TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

While LinkedIn may have started out as “Facebook for grown-ups who wear suits to work,” it’s developed into a genuinely powerful recruiting tool for desirable companies the world over. More than 350 million professionals currently use it, and the vast majority of large employers consult it at some point during the recruitment process. In fact, some companies employ people only to use LinkedIn! Consult the follow tips to start taking advantage of one of the most powerful networking tools available to you.

1. Go public: While there are benefits to maintaining your privacy on the internet, your LinkedIn profile should be a public document. Because it will present your best attributes and experiences, you want potential employers to see your LinkedIn profile – even if they don’t know you yet. Be sure to reserve a unique URL (linkedin.com/in/yourname): it helps your profile appear in Google searches and makes it more elegant to include in your email signature or on a resume.

2. Make headlines: Think of your 120-character Headline as a condensed version of the best part of your cover letter. Yours should be a short, memorable, descriptive, and true statement that tells employers what you’re all about. Avoid adjectives that are difficult to prove. “Recent honours graduate and marketing enthusiast” and “Published undergraduate biologist” are more substantive than “Dynamic go-getter.”

3. Be picture perfect: Employers and connections are suspicious of profiles that don’t include a photo. Yours should be a clear, high-resolution shot that includes you alone. Look into career-building organizations on and off campus that offer free headshots. Dress smartly, but consider backgrounds and minor clothing details as subtle ways to inject personality. Avoid photos that are obviously from weddings.

4. Build a network: Be liberal. Consider family friends in the professional world, alumni working in the area/fields you like, previous coworkers or co-volunteers, professors with whom you have a strong relationship, and any contacts you can dig up in your email inbox. Consider asking former professors, supervisors, and mentors for a formal Recommendation. As well, Endorsements are valuable. Connections are more likely to endorse you for a skill if you’re already endorsed them.


5. “Creeping” is encouraged: It’s okay to search for companies that interest you and click “people.” The Alumni tool is an excellent resource for connecting areas of study with real-world work. Try searching for an alumnus who’s working at a company you admire (e.g. University of Windsor graduates who work for WFCU) and investigate his or her skills, connections, and experiences. How many do you have, any how can you acquire the ones you don’t? Even better, many alumni will helpfully respond to a polite email from a curious and motivated student. Ask for an informational interview, but never just ask for a job.

6. More is more: According to LinkedIn, members with complete profiles receive 40 times more opportunities. Spend the time to say everything you have to say about yourself.

7. Show the entirety of your experience: Rethink “experience”; virtually everything you’ve done during your university years adds up. Your LinkedIn profile should include more than just paid or full-time labour. List institutions you are attending or have attended, majors and minors, study abroad programs, activities, and any additional credit modules. Include your GPA or academic average if it’s in the A-range or better, plus any honours or awards you’ve won. Now is the time to brag. Standardized test scores are not always encouraged, but they are a possibility if they are particularly impressive.

8. Make a statement: Your Professional Summary Statement is important. It should be concise, confident, and written in a personal voice. Try to touch on both the past (your qualifications and experiences) and the future (your professional goals). Don’t forget to include internships, volunteer work, and extracurriculars, but don’t just list what you’ve done – describe why it matters. Use bullet points and short blocks of text to make your summary easier to read, and use Google to find strong examples for inspiration. (Never copy directly!)

9. Choose your words carefully: For the Specialties section, look for “keywords” in job postings and on the LinkedIn profiles of people who currently hold the positions you want. These are the terms you want to associate with yourself – if you honestly feel they’re appropriate.



10. Group on: Group badges, which appear at the bottom of your profile, as a useful way to visually demonstrate your enthusiasm for making connections. To start, join the University of Windsor's LinkedIn group and search out further groups on campus and industry groups related to your career goals and interests.

11. Practice active linking: Remember that your LinkedIn profile is a living document. It's easy to develop a LinkedIn profile once and then forget about it for months or even years. Be sure to keep yours up to date as you accumulate new experience, and aim to update your status frequently. Talk about major projects you're working on, professional books you're reading, and any news that might be relevant in a networking/professional development capacity. Post and comment on articles.

12. Act like a student, sometimes: LinkedIn offers several sections designed specifically for students and recent graduates. That's you! Consider adding Courses, Projects, Languages, Certifications, Causes, and Organizations. Most employers want well-rounded employees with productive interests outside of work. LinkedIn also offers a built-in blogging platform that allows you to "publish" short personal essays and respond to the news. There's a student calendar with monthly prompts if you need help getting started.

13. Link up with the real world: LinkedIn can come across as a world unto itself, but remember that your ultimate goal is to make real-world connections. Identify recruiters and message them after applying to a job or before a career fair you know they will be attending. These initial connections can help to forge meaningful long-lasting relationships in the real world.

Further reading:

- Student Jobs 101 (LinkedIn)
- LinkedIn for Students (LinkedIn)

Co-op, Career and Employment Services: www.uwindsor.ca/cces | mySuccess: success.uwindsor.ca



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CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES OFFERS A VARIETY OF RESOURCES TO HELP YOU LAUNCH YOUR CAREER:

Job searching • Career planning • Work experience • Career preparation workshops • Personal appointments • Resume critiques
Mock interviews • Interest testing and assessments • Job fair and networking opportunities • Volunteer Internship Program (VIP)



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