LinkedIn: How to Create a Professional Profile

Profile Picture

*Don’t skip the photo!* You want people to be able to put a face to your name. If you do not have a picture, employers and others might not trust you or feel as engaged. You don’t want to seem like you are hiding anything.

*Make sure the photo is professional!* You want to be recognizable, and dress appropriately. Dress as you would to an interview if you want to err on the side of caution. Lastly, make sure the photo only includes you (not your family, friends, significant other, or pets).

Headline

*You only get 120 characters here, so make them count!* Describe what you do and who you serve, not just your job title. If you are a student and/or looking for career employment, make your headline reflect that. Don’t put “Unemployed” or your previous job title. Use keywords of the job you are targeting to increase the probability your profile will be seen by an employer/recruiter.

“*Seeking position in Social Media Marketing, Professional*”
Summary

*Use keywords and anything that makes you stand out!* The summary section is where the LinkedIn algorithm searches for keywords so that employers and other professionals can find and connect with you. Fill the summary with information such as your education, skills and knowledge, years of experience in the field, and any other information you think your target audience wants to know. This section could be considered your personal statement (it can be several paragraphs long!). You may want to be personable and show some of your personality, while still being professional, of course!

*Add media, if appropriate for your field!* Types of media you could include are: YouTube videos, jpegs, presentations, blogs, articles, or other media that gives you credibility regarding your skills, knowledge, and experience. Again, keep anything you add appropriate for prospective employers to see and make sure it is relevant.

Experience

*Go beyond the résumé!* Your résumé may have bullet point statements for your experiences that give short descriptions about some of your skills and accomplishments. On LinkedIn, you can expand upon these by providing even more details. Write a short paragraph or two about the kinds of things you did in that job/position/project. Add quantifiable data, such as how many customers you worked with on a daily basis, what percentage you improved efficiency by on your engineering project, or how many people you led in a group or class. You can also share relevant media in this section to make your profile more attractive.
Connections

You don’t need to have hundreds or thousands of connections! People to connect with on LinkedIn to grow your network may include: fellow students that can speak to your professional qualities, fellow alumni, experts in your industry/field, former colleagues, professors, friends, and family. You don’t have to connect with everyone you know, especially if you think certain individuals will not be helpful to your professional network (perhaps a brother or sister that may post something inappropriate and include your name—out of typical sibling love or rivalry, of course!)

Connect, but don’t forget to be personal! When you want to add someone to your network that you don’t know, be sure to add a message indicating why you want to connect with them.

Contact Information

How much information do I give? You don’t have to give out all of your personal information if you don’t want to. It is up to you how easily you want your connections to get in touch with you. If you are not comfortable putting your phone number on your profile, just use your email address (or an alternative email address/phone number). Make sure you include some way that contacts can connect with you, so you don’t miss out on any opportunities. Never put your street address online.
Get a custom LinkedIn URL so you can share with others easily! Usually, you will want to use your first and last name, or whatever is closest (maybe include a middle initial). You can then add your custom URL to the top of your résumé in your heading! This shows you are up-to-date and technologically savvy. If you do include your URL on your résumé, make sure there isn’t anything you wouldn’t want employers to see on your profile.

Volunteering, Publications, and more

Stand out from the crowd! Here, you can make yourself stand out from other professionals and job candidates with additional information. Are you a part of any groups on campus? Professional/student organizations? Have you received any scholarships, awards, or recognitions? Do you volunteer or are you interested in volunteering? What are your research interests? There are endless possibilities of ways you can highlight your uniqueness. Keeping that in mind, you only want to fill out sections that are relevant to your field or the audience you want to engage with.

Updates

Stay up-to-date! Keep up with your LinkedIn by sharing, liking, and commenting on industry news and updating your profile when you complete a new project, volunteer, get a new job, etc. This will help you become more visible on LinkedIn and gives your network opportunities to engage with you.