



LinkedIn Optimization

How LinkedIn Builds Your Business & Career

With over 150 million members, LinkedIn is arguably the most powerful social media platform for business today. It can be leveraged in many ways to strengthen business positioning, prospecting and career development, all contributing to your success. Research has shown that LinkedIn is the number-one lead generating social media site, creating three times the leads as Twitter and Facebook. To gain maximum benefit, companies need a strong online strategy that includes: enhancing the LinkedIn profiles of willing individuals within the company; building a strong company page for the business; and taking part in regular lead generating activities. When appropriately done, the results can be dramatic. Here, we will focus on creating a comprehensive LinkedIn profile and lead generating activities – building a company page will be covered in a future discussion.

How to Create Your LinkedIn Profile – Your LinkedIn profile is your individual page. It is an information resource that is all about you – the professional you. In addition to conveying a strong, focused message to your audiences, it can be very effective in helping you get higher page ranking on search engines. LinkedIn is one of the most powerful ways to help get you listed on the first pages of Google search results. Following are key elements in optimizing a LinkedIn profile:

Basic Information – completing your profile is one of the most important things you can do. To achieve 100% completion (as measured by LinkedIn on your profile), make sure to:

1. Use your full name.
2. Add a professional picture – a relatively close-up headshot with a smile is best.
3. Personalize your Headline – something that conveys your benefit to clients.
4. Add work history in the Experience section – This also adds to your expertise and includes some areas for SEO (search engine optimization).
5. Customize your LinkedIn URL – This is more professional.
6. Customize your website URLs – There are 3 of these. Use them all and customize each one.
7. Complete the education, specialties, skills, interests and honors and awards sections for a stronger profile.
8. If you have received any honors add them to your profile.
9. Add your Twitter name if you have one. If you don't have one, adding one and integrating it into your social media marketing will strengthen your presence.
10. Completing the Personal Information section is optional, but you may want to put your business contact information in this area.
11. Enhance your SEO by adding key words in the Headline, Summary, Company Description and Specialties sections.

A complete and professional LinkedIn profile will make it easier for clients and prospects to quickly find you. It will also make it more likely that your associates and acquaintances will want to connect to you on LinkedIn, which enhances your ability to gain leads and form valuable relationships with the right people.



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Take the Lead



Build Your Connections & Grow Your Network –

Contact friends, family, colleagues, customers and prospects and ask them to join your network. LinkedIn's tools can give you a list of all the people you know who are already LinkedIn members. The larger your network on LinkedIn, the more targeted prospects you will be able to find. Warm introductions via LinkedIn are much more effective than cold calling elsewhere.

Ask For and Give Recommendations – When appropriate, ask your connections, coworkers, clients and vendors to write recommendations for you on LinkedIn. This is an excellent way to build your credibility and be viewed as an expert. One of the best ways to get a recommendation is to provide one yourself first.

Join Groups on LinkedIn – Many companies, professional associations, alumni associations and others have formed special interest groups on LinkedIn. Identifying and joining those that match your target markets is an excellent way to find and network with like-minded people. Join the maximum of 50 groups to optimize your exposure on LinkedIn. For greater success, go where your target market hangs out rather than your vendors and colleagues. Start and participate in group discussions to attract attention, gain credibility and obtain leads.

Do Regular Status Updates – Regularly write and distribute status updates. These are on your Home page tab in LinkedIn. Here you can post useful information that will appear on the Home pages of all your connections. Status updates keep you top of mind with others and help to position you as an expert or thought leader.

Check Out Applications, Accounts and Settings –

You can enrich and enhance your LinkedIn profile utilizing an array of available applications. A good start is to share presentations, conduct polls, link a blog to your profile and collaborate on projects. As you become more experienced, you can add other applications. You can also customize your LinkedIn settings for privacy and functionality.

Proactively Approach Potential Contacts – The advanced search feature in LinkedIn allows you to find contacts by name, company, title, keyword, industry and geography. This capability is invaluable in identifying and requesting introductions to people and high potential contacts. Once you are connected, begin building a relationship.

Lead Generation Using LinkedIn

There are two main approaches to generating leads using LinkedIn:

1. **Direct Selling –** This is a more aggressive approach that may be appropriate in some situations, but it may also make prospects feel pressured.
2. **Indirect Selling –** Providing valuable information to your audience over time and occasionally driving them to a landing page on your web site is a more subtle and comfortable approach for many connections. A common and often successful tactic is to offer something like an eBook, whitepaper, free service, etc., in exchange for subscribing to your eNewsletter or taking some other actions, that enables you to continue building the relationship and ultimately making a sale.





Here are six excellent ways to use LinkedIn for lead generation:

1. LinkedIn Answers – where you can solve other people’s problems.
2. LinkedIn Applications – to enhance your visitor experiences.
3. LinkedIn Groups – for reaching target interest groups.
4. LinkedIn People – to find individuals who may be on LinkedIn or for finding out who fills specific roles in target companies.
5. LinkedIn Direct Ads – paid ads that are highly targetable based on many criteria.
6. LinkedIn Mobile – these are special mobile apps that enable you to use LinkedIn from your mobile devices.

Make LinkedIn An Ongoing Prospecting Strategy

A large percentage of new business opportunities come from networking. While personal contacts are always best, online networking is an efficient, cost-effective way to be visible and accessible to many more prospects than you could hope to reach face-to-face. It is quick and easy to find people and companies that could benefit from your products and services. It is also a great way to identify subject matter experts in target markets and organizations. There are many social media sites that can help you connect with prospects, but LinkedIn is the 800-pound gorilla – at least for now!

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