

## **LinkedIn for Business**

It is not what you know but who you know that counts. It's a saying we've all heard before and most of us have had an experience when a connection proves to open doors that a standalone credential couldn't. However, the days of the paper Rolodex are long gone and in a digitally connected, mobile society, businesspeople have a plethora of tools to turbocharge their ability to manage contacts and grow their network globally.

LinkedIn is a powerhouse in this respect, leading the field as the top professional network. Sometimes hailed as the modern resume, LinkedIn offers a host of opportunities from job seeking and recruiting to networking and generating sales leads. One of the powerful value propositions that sets this network apart is the professional context. Generally speaking, any social network can be used for business purposes. However, the headspace of a LinkedIn user is completely different to that of a Facebook user. On Facebook, the average user is in a headspace of social interaction and entertainment. However, the LinkedIn user is in a professional oriented frame of mind from the moment they open the network on their desktop or mobile device. This makes it the optimum place for showcasing business related products and services, increasing industry authority, growing professional networks and generating business opportunities.

### Getting started on LinkedIn

To get started on LinkedIn you must create a personal profile. This is the foundation for all activities on the platform and you will not be able to create a page for your business without an active personal profile.

The profile is a page you can (and should) continually update as your goals, experience and career develops. Think of it as an editable and searchable resume. However, it's not just a jobseeker tool. It's a digital billboard telling the story of who you are, where you have been and where you are going.

To start creating your personal profile you will need to login or sign up as a new user. If possible, use the email you use for professional purposes. This will display by default on your profile and while [glittercat739@hotmail.com](mailto:glittercat739@hotmail.com) might have seemed like a funky username at the time, it won't support the professional credibility you are aiming to build. Secondly, third party apps like Rapportive help users find LinkedIn contacts without leaving their email. If your professional email is connected to your LinkedIn, it will help you build your network more efficiently without even opening the LinkedIn platform.

The next step is to fill out your profile. You may want to take some time to research profiles of similar job description or industry. This will give you an understanding of "good" or "bad" examples or simply some inspiration on how you would like to personalise your profile.

### Filling out your profile

It's important to articulate your *why* for this profile. Like building a resume, all of

the included information should support your main purpose. What is it that you want to achieve? Consider the following.

Are you looking to move up the ladder in your current industry? Include your relevant experience, education and any transferrable or “soft” skills.

Are you looking to change industries? Use the summary and professional headline to highlight what you can bring to the table and the motivation behind your change.

Are you looking to network? Think about the type of people you want to attract and which kind of connections you want to form. Join groups that suit your professional interests or that are in your area.

Are you building thought leadership? Use your experience to position you as an expert and utilise the personal publishing tool. Tailor your skills and endorsements around the areas of expertise.

Are you looking for volunteer opportunities? Include this in the volunteer opportunities section and use your summary to emphasise this further.

Are you looking to generate sales or build awareness for the business? Fill out your profile in a way that explains your involvement in the company, highlight company projects you have been involved in and share company updates. Ensure that it is evident if you are a decision maker or what support you provide.

Once you have articulated your *why*, work through each of the elements of the profile. LinkedIn will indicate how complete the profile is through the Profile Strength Indicator in the right column on your profile page. The indicator circle will fill with blue as the strength of the profile increases. Aim for an “All Star” profile strength.

### The profile checklist

Profile picture: The general rule is to include a professional but friendly profile photo including your face. Seeing an image of a person’s face can help build trust. Choose the photo wisely as this is your “first impression” in digital form.

Don’t make these common mistakes:

- Including more than one person in your photo. This is not the place for couple shots or family photos. It can also confuse users as to who owns the profile.
- Displaying an overly casual photo. Don’t include a photo at the family barbeque or another casual social situation unless it is strategically on brand.
- Using a pet photo or miscellaneous image. This screams SPAM! If you are interested in displaying your company logo, use the business page, wear apparel displaying the logo or utilise the background image on the profile instead.

Background Photo: It’s not mandatory but it is a better avenue for promoting

company/business images than your profile picture. It still forms part of your “first impression” so use it to express a part of yourself or your style that is important to you.

**Professional Headline:** Tell people what you do or the industries you are involved in. Think of this in regards to search terms and keywords as LinkedIn uses this information to show your profile in other user’s searches.

**Contact Info:** Ensure this is completed with up to date information where people can contact you for professional matters.

**Experience:** This is your showcase of past work. Important elements are your role, achievements, responsibilities and projects.

**Skills & Endorsements:** Cultivate a list of skills that others would legitimately be able to endorse you for. They don’t hold as much weight as a written recommendation but they are still important and highlight your main skills at a glance.

**Education:** Include institutions, achievements and qualifications.

**Certifications:** This is the place to highlight industry certification at a non-tertiary level.

**Summary:** Do this last! Remember to link it back to your *why* and add a personal touch. This is what sets apart your profile from someone else with a similar list of credentials.

**Additional Sections:** Customise what you display by adding additional sections such as publications, courses, projects, supported organisations, patents, honours and awards.

**\*\*Other profile tips\*\***

- Turn on the option to ‘Notify your network of updates’ if you want new experiences or projects to appear in your connection’s feeds
- Add a location to be found more easily
- See how many profile views you are receiving and who is viewing your profile. Upgrade to a premium for the full data view as the free account will only show a sample

### Building your network - connecting

The main avenue to build a LinkedIn network is through adding connections. 1<sup>st</sup> connections are direct connections. 2<sup>nd</sup> connections are those with a mutual friend and 3<sup>rd</sup> connections are those with more than two degrees of separation. To form a 1<sup>st</sup> connection (generally referred to as ‘connections’) both individuals must opt in. One party must initiate the connection. The other party then has the option to accept or ignore the invitation to connect. When the invitation to

connect has been accepted, each user will be listed in each other's connections and they will see updates and receive notifications about that person's activities.

LinkedIn is designed for connections to be made easily between users and there are many avenues for initiating these connections. When a new account is created there are prompts to kick start this process. One of the easiest ways to find relevant connections is to import email contacts. It will then show contacts who are already LinkedIn users and offer the option of inviting other contacts to join the platform via email. For those who are spread sheet savvy, there is the option to upload a file of contacts. This is useful for users who have contacts in different places and want to consolidate them, or those that have large contact lists that aren't connected directly to an email account. This feature can be accessed at any time under the 'My Network' tab.

Another way to add connections is to search for them using the search bar. The advanced search functionality lets you filter the search by company, job titles, location and more. This is helpful for finding specific people or for finding new connections who are in a desired industry, role, location or company.

As your network grows, LinkedIn will recommend connections that you may know but are not currently connected too. It will also show how you are connected through mutual connections or a series of connections. Instead of a cold invite, you may be able to get a warm introduction.

As with any social context, there is certain etiquette that applies.

DO's:

- Send a personalised message instead of the default message.
- Include where you have met them before if relevant
- Include a specific reason for connecting with them
- Make the message short and sweet (the character limit will max out at around 300 characters!)
- Select how you know the person

DON'Ts:

- Go on large adding sprees of connections you don't personally know. This can max out your ability to invite connections
- Send the default invitation message
- Start adding connections without adding your photo, name and professional headline to your profile
- Try a hard sell in your invitation message. Connections are about relationships before sales

**\*\*Other connection tips\*\***

- Adding 500 connections will display the '500+' connections on your profile no matter how many more connections you make. Most power users have 500+

connections

- The limit on 1<sup>st</sup> degree connections is 30,000. This shouldn't be a problem for most people. However, high profile individuals with celebrity type status might find that it is better to allow individuals to 'follow' their updates instead of being connections
- Often pressing the 'connect' button on the mobile app will automatically send an invitation without letting you write a message. To send a personalised message, press the three dots on the top, right side of the app.
- Use an app like Rapportive to turn contacts into connections without leaving your emails
- Reverse engineer this process and export your LinkedIn contacts into a .CSV or .VCF file

## Updates

On the Home page there are three main ways to publically share to your network. The first option is to share an update. It's similar to posting a status on most other social networks. Similarly, it will show in the feed of your connections and are able to comment, like or share. Your own feed will also show other updates that your connections have interacted with. This dictates that the more engagement your updates receive, the more people your update will reach. Plus, authentic engagement is an indicator of good content and real, valuable conversation. On a network based on relationships, providing conversation, value and expertise means more than vanity 'popularity' metrics.

What should you share an update about? Common updates include industry articles or news, company updates and announcements or questions and conversation starters. Most of these types of updates will be applicable to any industry; however, they should always support the *why* of your profile.

To share an update, simply click the "Share an Update" button found on the Home page. Add a URL to share a link or upload a photo to add a visual element to the post. This makes it more eye catching and makes your update more visible in the feed. You also have a choice to keep your update exclusive by only sharing it with your connections. The default sharing setting is public, so you will have to click the dropdown arrow to change this option.

Third party apps can help you share updates more efficiently by scheduling in advance. This is especially useful for content that is being shared across multiple social networks. A personal page and a company page will be treated as different accounts because it is sharing as a different 'person'. Try one of these tools:

- Hootsuite
- Buffer
- Sprout Social

Strategically, sharing updates keeps you top of mind as an authority in your industry. However, going too far and spamming everyone's feed is going to be more annoying than insightful. Considering LinkedIn is a professional network,

most interaction is going to happen on weekdays. With the aim of not being seen as annoying or spammy, a good general rule of thumb is to post no more than once per day. This equates to around 20 posts per month. In saying this, it's important to always test what is right for your audience and how that behaviour changes. Keep an eye out for decreasing engagement and other hints indicating you have reached a threshold and your audience is feeling a bit of content fatigue.

### Publishing a Post

The publisher feature was rolled out to LinkedIn Influencers before being rolled out to the masses. It's one of the best ways to share long form ideas and build your credibility. Unlike posting an update, a published post will be visible on your profile (in chronological order) and your connections will receive a notification when it goes live.

It essentially operates as a blog with an extremely user-friendly interface. It then connects with Pulse so others can find your article if it is relevant to one they have been reading. There are three main components to the post:

1. Image
2. Headline
3. Body

The image will act as a header when the post is opened, as well as the feature image for the post preview. Choose something eye catching and relevant to the post. Additional images can be added in to the body, but they will not display outside of the full post.

The headline or title is one of the most important elements. This is what will entice a user to click through and actually read the rest of the post. Use active language, ask questions or use unexpected language to cut through the noise of the rest of the content in people's feeds.

The bulk of the content sits in the body. The easy editor allows you to write and edit like you would in a Word document plus adding image, video, slides, snippets and links. Basic text formatting is available such as bold, italics, bullet points, quote blocks, sub headings and hyperlinks. Overall the personalisation is more available in the visual elements than in the text. Despite this, the simple and consistent formatting makes the posts easy to read and even easier to create, leading to a positive user experience from both ends.

One of the best things about publishing a post is the stats that are available. On a basic level it shows the number of views, shares and likes the post has received. Although helpful, it's the other data that really tells a story about who is viewing your content. LinkedIn lists data about your readers based on:

- Industries
- Job Titles

- Locations
- Traffic Sources

It's important to note that these stats are based on viewers who have available data on LinkedIn, while non LinkedIn users will still be counted in the traffic stats.

\*\*\*Tips for personal publishing\*\*\*

- A call to action. When you have people's attention in a professional context, give them some direction as to how to continue the conversation. It could be a link to your website, an offer or asking them to get in touch.
- Incorporate your contact details into the post. Make it easy for readers to get in touch. Don't make them sift back through your profile – list your preferred contact details in the post.
- Use it as a testing ground for new content ideas. If you want to try something different but don't want to put it on your website, try LinkedIn publisher to gauge the reaction and interest level from your audience
- Add tags so more readers find your posts according to topic
- Embed content. Make it interesting! Embedding slides makes your post more interactive and memorable. If you are embedding video, remember that lots of users view video with sound off. Include subtitles or design it to be understood without sound.
- Cross-promote to other channels. Nothing happens in a vacuum – get more eyeballs on your post by sharing on other social channels where your audience would be interested in that style of content.

## Groups

Groups are located under the 'Interests' category. There are two types of groups. The first is findable under the 'Discover' section and you must request to join. The second type is a group where you can only be invited to join and the group is not discoverable by name. Under 'My Groups' there are listed the groups you are currently in and those where your admission is pending. Leave groups or create a new group of your own from this page.

Groups are typically formed around interest, industry or location – sometimes a combination. It's a space for discussion, news, networking and sharing ideas. Unfortunately, in the past some groups have become very spammy. This is part of the reason that each request to join a group must be approved. Most groups are also very strict on deleting any posts that are purely self-promotional. If sharing a link or article from your own business website, ensure that it is of great value and interest to the group.

The real value in groups is in content marketing and relationships. By starting a conversation, you gain exposure. Each conversation displays the profile picture, name and title of the user who starts it. This puts you in front of all of the group members, especially if your conversation receives lots of engagement. On the flipside, responding to other's questions and engaging with their posts will send

a notification to that user. The principle of groups is the classic content marketing premise of building relationships (and future customers) through providing value before you sell. This builds trust and awareness, so that when a particular person is looking for a provider of your service, you are top of mind and an easy choice as you have an existing relationship.

\*\*\* Tips for using groups \*\*\*

- Download the LinkedIn Groups app to interact with your favourite groups on the go
- Ask open questions to generate interaction from other group members and get new ideas!
- Start private message conversations with group members where relevant and with those who provide a mutually beneficial relationship
- Start your own group if you can't find one that suits your needs
- Ask a friend for an invite to a hidden group

### Slideshare

Slideshare can be found under the 'Interests' tab. Slideshare is a whole experience and marketing tool in itself! Put simply, it is a platform for uploading, sharing and discovering interesting slideshows. There are two main ways to utilise it in your LinkedIn strategy.

Firstly, use it as a showcase tool. Slideshows can be embedded in the LinkedIn profile or personal publishing posts. Rich media is a great way to make your profile stand out, to showcase projects and show thought leadership. People looking at your profile will be able to process this visual information faster than a large block of text. Use your slideshow to communicate information efficiently, especially if your industry, role or project is complicated. It also speaks to your personal branding, style and personality. Visually design each one to compliment and support the style of your profile and the personal brand you are communicating.

Secondly, Slideshare can be used to prospect for interesting content to share as updates. Sharing content that is genuinely useful, interesting, inspiring or educational will generate engagement, keep you top of mind and increase thought leadership (even if you didn't create it!).

### Company Pages

Company pages showcase an overview of the business and also allow access to a host of business features such as paid advertising. A company page must be created from an existing personal profile. Contrary to popular belief, the admin profile won't be displayed publically as connected to the company page unless that profile has the company page listed as a place of employment.

Company pages make it possible to post from a branded account instead of posting a personal update. It also provides analytics on the activities such as

impressions on posts, engagement, clicks, followers gained and interactions. It's likely that these posts will be a part of a larger social media posting strategy and a lot of time can be saved by scheduling through a third party tool. Try some of the following:

- Buffer
- Meetedgar
- Hootsuite
- LinkedIn

Having an active company page assists in turning staff into brand ambassadors. When employees are linked to the company page through their experience section, users who view their profile will be able to click through, see more about the company and potentially click through to the website or follow the page for updates. Level up and encourage employees share updates from the company page. Keep in mind the content needs to be top notch for employees to happily and willingly share!

The company page can also be used to attract future employees. LinkedIn is designed to advertise career progression opportunities. The 'Add job' button is easily accessed from the dropdown menu from the 'Edit' button on the company page. This takes you to the recruiter tool where you fill in the details of the job. The tool hosts other features to streamline the recruiting process such as candidate shortlists and InMail messages to contact candidates directly through the platform. Anything to make that dreaded resume sifting a little easier.

\*\*\*Tips for Company Pages\*\*\*

- Create a compelling page that encourages users to click through to the website
- Publish high quality updates on a regular basis

### Advertising

Paid advertising is one of the great benefits of an active company page. Like most social channels, this is the easiest sure fire way to get your brand in front of as many eyeballs as possible. Unlike other social channels, logged in users are in a business frame of mind and therefore less likely to feel interrupted by advertising. Starting out the main focus is two types of sponsored content:

Sponsored Updates – This is where updates published on the company page are sponsored and served to more users according to the budget and audience targeting set.

Direct Sponsored Content – This is where content served up to users without being published on the company page. This type of sponsored content allows for multiple campaigns to run simultaneously or similar ads to be split tested and optimised.

It's important to always plan BEFORE creating any paid advertising. There

should be a purpose behind each piece of sponsored content. For example, an update could be sponsored because there is a breaking company news story that you want lots of people to see AND you would like it to still be visible on the company page after the campaign has run its course. Alternatively, direct sponsored content could be created to split test 4 different ad variations specifically trying to encourage users to click through to a landing page.

It should be noted that on average, LinkedIn advertising tends to be more expensive than a Facebook or Instagram advertising campaign. This is not to say the minimum spend is tens of thousands of dollars, but rather, the cost per thousand views and cost per click tends to be more expensive than that of other platforms.

\*\*\* Tips for paid advertising on LinkedIn \*\*\*

- Test different versions of the sponsored content, especially the ad image
- Cross check the LinkedIn analytics with data from Google Analytics. LinkedIn traffic might be more expensive but higher time on site and more page views = higher quality traffic!
- Remember LinkedIn is a professional network and more users will be active on weekdays

There are so many opportunities available through LinkedIn that it can almost seem overwhelming. If you're profile needs some work, set-aside time to lay this foundation for the rest of your activities before biting off more than you can chew. It's important to tackle each element of the platform one step at a time. Trying to bite off more than you can chew will often feel too hard and unsustainable. Find a rhythm that works for you and take advantage of all that LinkedIn has to offer!