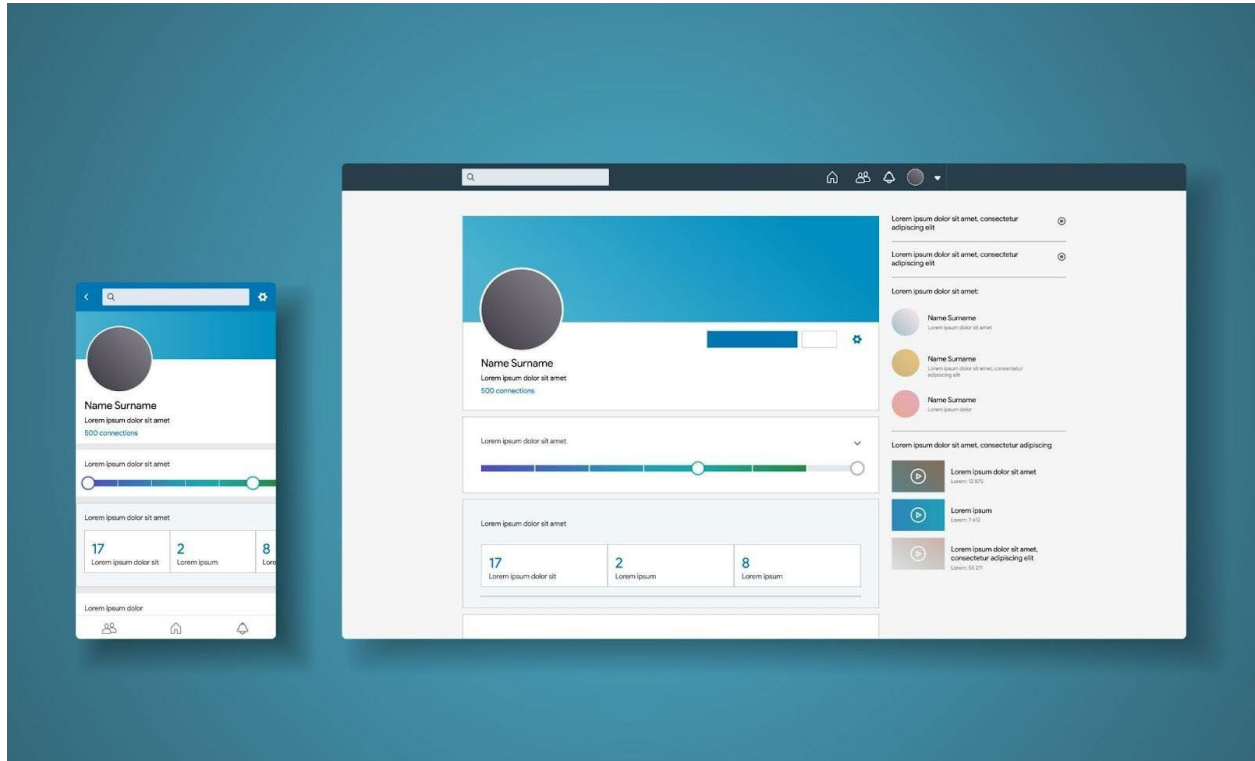


Chapter 4: LinkedIn Profile (Benefits and Features)

Your link to future career growth and success.

"If you want to go somewhere, it is best to find someone who has already been there."

Robert Kiyosaki, Coauthor *Rich Dad Poor Dad*



What this chapter covers

- Presenting your brand
- You're in sales (introduce Canva)
- 5-7 seconds (opinion machine starts running)
- Keywords
- Complete all sections.
- Growing your network
- Prepare your Basic Profile on LinkedIn
- Have someone look at your profile and give feedback
- Ethical considerations

Now that you know your unique story, your passion, and your purpose, and can sense your specialness, it is time to put this all together digitally. This is a digital representation of *YOUR* uniqueness, accomplishment, life goals, and interests, as well as your passion and purpose in life.

The LinkedIn Profile is where over 90% of human resource professionals go to learn about a candidate's fit for the position. In the case of a career position, this fit must be airtight. So, that means your LinkedIn profile must be an accurate representation of YOUR TRUE SELF

PUTTING YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD: PRESENTING YOUR BRAND.

By the Numbers

Over half of the approximately 900 million global LinkedIn users in over 200 countries are on the mobile platform, so you want to be mobile aware. Approximately 260 million U.S. adults are currently on board - that's approximately 75% of U.S. adults. That means the platform is pretty popular. Half of these users are on at least once a month, with many actively participating daily. The male-female split is about 57% male/43% female. 45% of U.S. users are in upper management. Another key figure is that it is estimated that over 90% of recruiters and human resource folks use it as they search for and interview candidates. It also doesn't hurt that 41% of millionaires also use LinkedIn. Take full advantage of your access to this network.

It's Your Career

As a career position candidate, you have a lot to offer, and this is what you need to showcase in your LinkedIn profile. You show who you are, what you have done, what skills you possess, where you have contributed, how you have learned and grown, and how you are poised to continue learning, growing, and contributing. This showcasing becomes YOUR BRAND.

If you don't share and brag (sometimes gently, sometimes aggressively) about your accomplishments, who will? Now is not the time to be modest. Readers want to hear YOUR STORY. Like the resume, which will be covered in a later section, your LinkedIn profile tells your story. But you need to impress your audience quickly. Both LinkedIn profiles and resumes need to capture the reader's attention in the first 5-7 seconds. The added benefit is that LinkedIn allows you to enter keywords that get you found without having to blast resumes around the globe. Many professionals say they prefer LinkedIn over the resume because of its accessibility and flexibility.

How do I stop the press and impress the reader with my profile and get found? Just like meeting somebody for the first time, your initial impression is crucial. The following items need to be at their best as these are the first things that are seen on your profile. The discussion below is not cast in stone and there are many exceptions to the rules. These foundational thoughts will get you kicked off in the right direction. It starts with making your profile searchable, and then when you are found, drawing in the viewer. If that sounds like storytelling to you, it is!

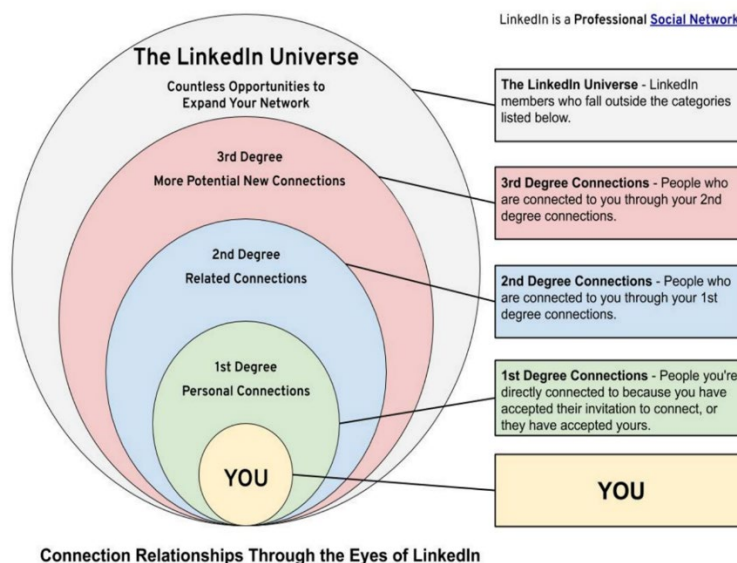
What does a viewer see initially when accessing my profile? Visually, your picture and background banner is the starting point. Then your name and headline, mostly text,

reinforces that first impression. The About sections give you more space than your headline to discuss what benefits an employer will gain if/when they hire you. The key to remember is that your profile is NOT about you, it's about what you can do for your potential employer. What do you bring to the table that will help THEM succeed?

The first rule of using LinkedIn is to commit the time and effort, ideally every day for at least ten minutes, to make it work for you. You also need to understand why you are using LinkedIn. You then want to make your profile inviting and SEARCHABLE through the inclusion of keywords that potential employers will be using to find you. You then proceed and make connections like crazy. Your target is to, in short order, exceed the 500-connection mark. This signals to active professionals that you are a serious LinkedIn user.

So, what is it about having more connections that help people find you? The term 1st-degree connection refers to people that you have invited to connect with, and they have accepted that invitation, or they invited you and you accepted. This gives you many benefits. You can now send InMail messages, LinkedIn's equivalent to email, for free. If you want to send such messages to 2nd-degree connections, defined as 1st-degree connections connected to your 1st degrees which you are not directly connected to, it will cost you.

The bigger advantage is best understood by knowing how LinkedIn conducts its searches. Let's say that a recruiter types in the keywords "Python", "data analytics", and "accounting" to find a potential candidate. LinkedIn will first search through the recruiter's 1st-degree connections, then proceed to search 2nd degrees, and then go beyond to the 3rd-degree connections. This means that if I had this recruiter as a 1st-degree connection and was also connected to you, the recruiter has a better chance at finding you. The recruiter would not be alerted to me because I do not have all those keywords but as a 2nd-degree connection through me, could find you. Here is a picture to help you visualize the relationships.



Hopefully, this helps you understand the value of gaining more 1st degree connections in your network. You might have heard or seen Kevin Bacon's 1993 movie "Six Degrees of Separation" highlighting how our connections can quickly get us to virtually anybody, including the President of the United States. To paraphrase an ancient Chinese proverb about planting a tree, "The best time to start networking was five years ago, the second-best time is now". Let's discuss further some of the specific elements that will make your profile shine.

Barebone Features

Picture - A picture is worth a thousand words. Your visual image projects your professionalism. Unless you are seeking to be a Harley Davidson mechanic, you probably don't want your HD tee shirt and Live to Ride tattoo on full display. Being in synch with the position you seek is most appropriate. A finance or accounting role would typically be a little dressier while a high-tech role might lean towards being a little more casual. It is typically better to overdress than to underdress which means you most likely don't need a tuxedo but do need to appear clean and professional. You do want a photo of just you, appropriately dressed, well-lit, and SMILING, typically including just your head and shoulders without any background distractions. Many people advocate a professional headshot which could be well worth the investment, but recent trends towards showing you as approachable allow for you to use your own camera/phone to take your photo. But do not take it as a selfie or take it while in your car unless you are seeking a NASCAR driver role, and even then, think twice.

Banner - The most underrated and largest piece of screen real estate is your banner. Leaving the default banner unmodified wavy image broadcasts "LinkedIn newbie". You want to take advantage of that large space to draw in your viewer. Using a tool like www.Canva.com allows you to import pictures, create images, and add text. Show off your brand with your banner. You can include a favorite quote, image, award, publication, or just an interesting picture that reflects the environment in which you are seeking to secure an opportunity. School spirit is fine if it is not too busy or distracting. What message do you want to send to a potential employer?

Reflect on that answer and then produce the banner that shows who you are or want to be with the reader.

Headline/Tagline - Highlights your personal brand. This is where typically the most valuable words on the page are found...no pressure. Well okay, a little pressure. We mentioned keywords earlier. Keywords placed in your headline get 3X-5X recognition when someone is searching for the attributes you have. What should be here is NOT the current position you have, but the position you seek. Think about it. Which do you think is the most effective headline: 1. Junior Marketing Major at XYZ University or 2. Cashier at Piggly Wiggly or 3. Aspiring Social Media Marketer Seeking an internship? I hope you selected 3! Your headline should be aspirational, looking toward the future position rather than your present or past position, unless you are seeking the same or similar role.

About Section - Now you can brag, though beware of being braggadocious! You want to make it easily readable and have it tell your story with an emphasis on what you can do for potential employers. You want the tone to be upbeat and positive. It should be in the first person. Visually you want bullets or shorter lines rather than long paragraphs. Such paragraphs tend to make it harder to keep the reader's attention. Always include your contact information, including email, and ideally phone towards the end of the body of this section. You also want to present your story. Accomplishments, achievements, and anything else that you can think of that employer might say "I want this kind of a person working with us. Sounds like they can make a positive difference". You also want to include a recommended CTA (call to action) to let the reader know the next step in reaching out to you should they desire to do so.

Experience Section - Include not only jobs, titles, and timing, but also accomplishments associated with each of the roles you have had. Ideally, you will quantify those accomplishments. This is another area to include keywords as found on job descriptions for the types of roles you are pursuing. Dates must be consistent with your resume. If you have additional experiences that may not be specifically jobs, you can and should include leadership roles in school clubs/organizations as well as volunteer activities in which you made a difference. Sometimes class projects can also be highlighted.

Education Section - Includes the institutions that you have attended. You can even put your high school if you choose. Additional details, such as honors and recognitions should also be included.

Skills Section - Highlight the skills that your potential employers are seeking. You can receive endorsements for those skills from your network. If you go to the **Demonstrate Skills** subsection, you can use the "Take Skills Assessment" to demonstrate your knowledge and ability to use tools such as Excel, Python, and a whole bunch more.

Other Sections - Highlighting licenses, certifications, languages, and volunteer activities will help to round out your profile giving readers a fuller picture of who you are. You also want to get AND give recommendations regularly. Readers not only see the recommendations you get but can also see those you give. LinkedIn makes it easy to request recommendations, but it may not hurt to have some drafts made when you seek a recommendation from someone.

Advanced features to make you shine

There are also some features that you might want to use that can only be initiated from a mobile device. Two examples of these features are the ten-second audio and 30-second video that can be attached to your profile. The audio is typically used for name pronunciation and when someone clicks on the microphone next to your name if you have made a recording, they will hear whatever you record. Instead of name pronunciation, as mine is pretty easy, I added an additional tagline about what I can do for the reader.

You also will want to change your URL name through the settings. Which would you find easier to remember: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/scott-dell-994669248/> or <https://www.linkedin.com/in/drscottcpa/>?

As you will ultimately be placing this on your resume, email signature blocks, presentations, and anywhere else you can, you want it recognizable and easy to remember. This is still part of your branding and messaging, so take full advantage.

>>> (Optional) You can go to the online course workbook. and complete the exercise: Complete the LinkedIn exercise found in [Module 4 LinkedIn Assignment](#)

So now it's time for the why and how of LinkedIn networking

So why is it important to network? You heard earlier that over 80% of internships and jobs are found through networking. Having a plurality of 1st-degree connections is advantageous, especially if you want to be found in searches, it's time to connect like a mad dog, assuming mad dogs use LinkedIn. Connect with friends, parents of friends, classmates, colleagues, strangers, exes, professionals, executives, faculty members, and even alumni from your school/s. Remember, everybody knows somebody, and those somebody might be looking to hire you.

To aid in networking and promoting your brand, you also want to be posting. A post is when you share your insights and invite others with similar interests to comment on your post. You can start by reacting and leaving comments on other people's posts. You WILL be noticed. You will also want to join LinkedIn groups in professional and personal interest areas. Once you join these groups and are accepted, you will have instant access to the membership list with whom you may want to reach out and connect.

Note: Make sure to personalize EVERY invite you make so that the potential connection knows why you might want to connect and what your common interests might be. Alumni of your institution are especially easy to gain access to. Would you refuse an invite like *"Hi Sam, I noticed on your profile that you have an amazing and unique financial background! As a current student and fellow Badger would be honored to be added to your LinkedIn professional network!! In appreciation of your consideration, Scott?"*

Most alumni would welcome the opportunity to help an up-and-coming future alum or current colleague from the same institution.

The Informational Interview

One of the most powerful ways to build your exposure and network is to conduct Informational Interviews with people at companies that are doing interesting things that may match your career goals. LinkedIn's alumni feature is one of my personal favorites

for making connections. You can see ALL alums, their pictures (if they include one), names, and titles, and ultimately click on them to access their profile.

The purpose of an informational interview is NOT to ask for a job or interview. It is designed to gather information, expand your network, and impress the potential connection while learning about their career path. Once accepted as a connection above, reach out with a message like:

“Thank you for connecting. I admire the career path that has taken you to where you are today. As a fellow future business professional majoring in finance, I would love to learn more about how you obtained your current role. Would you be open to a 15-minute virtual or live conversation to chat about your successes and challenges? We could set up an appointment at your convenience via <https://Calendly.com/DrScottCPA>, or you can respond to this request directly to coordinate a time. In appreciation, Scott”.

This informational interview is just that, informational. You want to discuss how they got to where they are and the path they followed. Believe me, if they get to know you/like you and are aware of any opportunities, they will volunteer for them - as they often earn cash rewards for referrals within their companies. One of my student's success stories is when he actually listened to this idea and executed it flawlessly. He reached out and set up the interview. After talking for over 45 minutes for what was scheduled for 15 minutes, he was told, “we have two internship opportunities that we are about to post. You would be ideal for one of those. Are you interested?” Any guesses as to what their answer was?

You are entering an exclusive club of go-getters that are interested in personal and professional growth. Wishing you much success on the journey!

Connecting on LinkedIn

When seeking to reach out to a potential connection, you want to make it easy for them to say yes. That does not happen if you are trying to pitch or sell something out of the gate. Once you are clear on your purpose, you want to share commonalities and give them a reason to get to know you. Though it might be possible to build your network by just hitting “Connect” without an introductory message, you lose an opportunity to start the relationship from a mutually beneficial perspective. You may be quite aware that you are seeking a career role when reaching out but asking for such a “favor” on a first contact is a stretch. It is like proposing (or accepting a proposal) for marriage after a three-minute conversation. Typically, this does not give the recipient a good first impression.

Ideally, you will be reaching out to build a relationship and develop rapport. To do this, you need to review their profile and find commonalities (same school, degree, hobbies, interests, or professional affiliations, participated in the same event). You only get 300 characters in the invitation to prove yourself worthy as a potential connection. A sample message might look like this:

Hi Scott,

Enjoyed meeting you at the XYZ event. As a fellow Badger (note: UW mascot) and financial professional, I would be honored to be added to your LinkedIn network. You might also enjoy the Forbes article at www.forbes.com/article.

In appreciation,

Jan

In the above example, you are giving context for where you might have met, the commonality of being part of the same institution, and you have taken the initiative to give before you get - the first rule of networking.

Another example of someone you may never have met, and it is okay to reach out to strangers, might be:

Jordan,

Congratulations on your success as a Big 4 staff auditor. As a current accounting major at your alma mater, I would be honored to connect with you.

Thank you for your consideration,

Alex

As you can see from the above examples, all you are trying to do is briefly share something in common in a positive tone, so they will accept your invitation. Once they accept, you have plenty of space for a longer message as you are not limited to 300 characters as in your original invitation.

Once you have established a connection, looked at their profile, see any posts they may have initiated (and hopefully reacted and commented on those posts), groups they may have joined (possibly joined the same or similar groups), or other activities they have participated in, you can then reach out to further build rapport. You are now ready to perform additional outreach. Again, you are not asking for a job or job referral at this point. Reaching out for an informational interview might be a great next step. Such as:

Bobbi,

Thanks for connecting. It looks like since graduating as a finance major, your career path has been exciting and interesting. As a fellow finance major, would you be available for a brief 15-minute chat to share your successes and challenges? I am graduating in a year and have learned the value of learning from others. Finding out about how your achievement led you to where you are today would mean a lot to me, and I could share additional insights about exciting things happening at your alma

mater. Are there any afternoons between 3 and 5 that could work for you if you might be able to spare some time? Please do not feel obligated if your schedule is full, but if you can find the time, I would be in your debt.

Thank you for your consideration,

Pat

By expanding your network on LinkedIn, you become plugged into an environment that professionals regularly engage in to grow their network and careers. Ultimately, it will enhance both for you.

AI ChatBot/ChatGPT Question:

The Question:

How do I put my best foot forward on LinkedIn?

The AI Response:

1. Complete your profile. Make sure all the information is up to date, that your photo is professional, and that you've included your experience and accomplishments.
2. Connect with people in your field and industry. Reach out to colleagues, former employers, and other professionals who could be potential contacts.
3. Participate in groups. Find and join groups related to your industry, and engage in conversations by commenting and sharing content.
4. Publish articles. Writing and sharing articles on LinkedIn is a great way to showcase your expertise and increase your visibility.
5. Build your network. Reach out to other professionals to expand your network and increase your chances of being discovered.
6. Optimize your profile. Use relevant keywords in your profile so that you can be found in searches.
7. Follow companies. Follow companies in your industry to stay up to date on news, job postings, and other opportunities.

Author's Comment on AI Response:

Bottom line. To grow your LinkedIn footprint and exposure, you need to ENGAGE. Reach out to colleagues and potential colleagues. Post and publish, starting with commenting on other people's posts will get you noticed. Connect to people that comment on your posts/comments. Reaching out and connecting to group members in your areas of interest, along with alumni from your institution, will go a long way in helping you network and build your base of connections. Don't forget the other social media environments that can get you additional exposure while providing you with valuable insights as you research companies and people.

