



Why Should You Be LinkedIn?



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Social networking has boomed over the last five years and more and more people are using social networking websites in their daily lives. Social networking took off with Facebook and has expanded with Twitter and LinkedIn and continues to expand. While social networking is a great way to stay in contact with friends and family, it is also a great way to network with other professionals and another way to market yourself and your services.



What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with over 100 million members and it continues to grow rapidly. It is a place to publish your professional profile and is a great way to stay in touch with friends, family, colleagues and business affiliates. It also opens doors to new networking opportunities through shared contacts. LinkedIn is a way you can view other people's profiles and contacts and converse with other professionals. The key identifying factor with LinkedIn is that it is targeted towards *business* relationships, including networking, marketing and knowledge sharing.

Why should you join?

As an experienced professional with influence on a company's well-being, it is continuously important to find ways to help market yourself and build a strong reputation. There are many reasons to use LinkedIn to accomplish that:

- It's free and easy to set up
- Way to increase your business contacts and client/customer base
- Post career or internship opportunities
- Simple way to have access to millions of professionals with wide array of expertise
- Easy way to give and receive referrals
- Additional resource to articles and discussions about topics you are interested in and/or that relate to your industry
- Opportunity for free advertising of your company and services offered
- Another way for people to find you and your company
- By having only 100 connections, you typically have access to over 12,000 connections through your connections' connections and over 1 million contacts through third degree connections.
- It's a great way to continuously network without having to go numerous networking events. Though you should still attend networking events, you can easily cultivate those connections through LinkedIn.
- Great way to find other professionals or services

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How do you sign up?

- Go to www.linkedin.com and select “join today”
- Start setting up your profile using your resume as a starting point
- Personalize it to make yourself and company more marketable
- Start connecting with:
 - Family, past and present employees and employers
 - Other professionals (CPA’s, bankers, attorneys, investment advisors, etc.)
 - Follow LinkedIn’s profile set up as it will help you maximize your profile

Maximize the Benefits of LinkedIn

Start by setting up your page and following LinkedIn’s profile completion tips to try and get your profile to 100 percent complete. It’s a great guide to help you get the most out of your account. Some additional recommendations include the following:



- Add a professional picture to your profile so it’s easier for people to connect a picture to a name.
- Link to people you already know and do business with such as CPA’s, attorneys, bankers, friends and family
- Don’t be afraid to ask for or give referrals to people you are connected with.
- Use key words throughout your profile to maximize your search potential. For example, use words such as your profession, certifications, business location, and specialties. This will lead to more opportunities for people searching on LinkedIn.
- Include your company’s website link on your page. That way when they are directed to your page through a search, it might lead them to visiting your company’s website.
- Use LinkedIn to market yourself in a positive manner. People tend to be drawn to companies and those associated with that company who grab their attention and have something above-and-beyond the norm to offer.
- Work with your company and employees to help them maximize their profiles.



How often should you update your profile?

This depends on how involved you want to be. At a minimum you should spend an hour or so every other week looking for new contacts or groups you can join. You should update your profile when you change titles or for new updates for your business. The more time you spend on LinkedIn the more beneficial it will be to you and your company.

Other Benefits

You have the ability to join tens of thousands of groups and associations as a great way to stay current on various changes to your industry. Within these groups you are able to post questions you may have about things such as software or regulation changes to your industry. You are also able to answer other group members' questions to help increase your credibility and show off your expertise

LinkedIn is also an easy way to send a simple congratulatory message to a contact on a new position or keep informed on who your contacts are connected to. By following groups and other professionals, you have the ability to learn more about business development tips and ways to better yourself professionally.

Overall, LinkedIn is a great resource that offers no boundaries to what it can provide you and your business. Even a small investment of time can help further your existing relationships and expand to new contacts. LinkedIn is over 100 million professionals strong worldwide and growing by thousands every day. While you do not need to be on the cutting edge, you *want* to be a part of the evolution of social marketing into the business to business world.