Advanced LinkedIn Strategies

LinkedIn represents a powerful tool for building professional connections and researching employers, industries, and opportunities. As of June 2016, LinkedIn includes 433+ million users within 200 countries and is considered the social media site for working professionals. The fastest growing demographic of users are students and recent college grads—currently at 40+ million. Review the Career Management Center’s guide and discover the features and benefits of using LinkedIn for career development. Note that all of the features included in this guide are available in the complimentary user account.

Did you know that 94% of recruiters use LinkedIn to identify candidates? (DMR Stats) In the career search, your LinkedIn presence will determine your visibility with hiring managers and recruiters. In other words, building strong profiles against job descriptions, deepening your network connections and promoting your personal brand makes it easier for recruiters to pull your resume out of the stack!

Maximize Your LinkedIn Experience!

Optimize your Profile

Make Connections
• Alumni
• Recruiters
• Hiring managers
• Employees
• Personal networks

Join Groups
• Home to people you want to connect with for networking
• Demonstrate your personal brand
• Enhance your knowledge and skills

Strengthen Your Network
• Participate in group discussions
• Share articles
• Publish original posts demonstrating your skills and experience
• Schedule informational interviews and discussions
• Endorse others
• Grow your network
• Follow target companies

The process outlined above are recommended steps to improve your networking efficiency on LinkedIn. Networking is a critical career search activity to help you position yourself as a competitive candidate and identify potential referral sources.

Read on for more information for each phase of the process. Also visit LinkedIn for Students (https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students) for videos, articles and other advice.
Optimize Your Profile

Profile Checklist

The goal is to include as much professional and academic information to your LinkedIn profile to attract LinkedIn recruiters and employers. Suggested items include:

- Background image
- Professional headshot
- Branded headline (120 characters)
- Compelling summary
- Experience
- Skills
- Education – projects, coursework, organizations
- Volunteerism
- Websites, blogs, YouTube channels

Action Items:

- Complete your profile to at least “Expert” status to be considered an active user. Set your profile to public to be viewable to individuals outside your network.
- Customize your URL to increase search engine optimization.
- Utilize a professional headshot and wear professional attire for your photo.
- List your most powerful bullet points from your work experiences. (Tip: quantify information to demonstrate success in previous work).
- Include your degree(s) and relevant courses and complete the skills and expertise section with up to 50 items that best describe your strengths and preferred responsibilities. (Tip: provide endorsements to colleagues to increase the number of endorsements you receive)
- Request 2-3 recommendations from past supervisors and colleagues that can strongly attest to the quality of your work and performance.

The Headline

The image below is an example of what others see in LinkedIn searches. The difference between a profile view and skipping your profile is the headline. When branded effectively, the headline lets others know your career goals and skills and experiences you possess to achieve them.
Action Items:

- Create a headline that is targeted to your area(s) of interest. It is recommended to include your major and potential job title(s) of interest.
- Research most common job titles for your career field of interest and mirror the text within the headline. Review the position description for the most common skills and include within the specialties section.

The Summary

The summary is your story, and for career seekers, the story lets recruiters and hiring managers know the types of problems you like and are good at solving, who are your target employers (or industry) and what are your skills and experiences that would make you a successful problem-solver. Career seekers should incorporate the following checklist into their summary:

- Experiences and motivation
- Technical and non-technical skills
- Timeline and opportunities pursuing
- Contact information

Action Items:

- To help you get started, review the Career Management Center’s Elevator Speech handout for content suggestions.
- Compose 4-5 sentences that articulate who you are and your career goals/interests.
- Include a list of your technical skills and non-technical skills, if applicable. Examples of technical skills include (Intermediate or Advanced) Excel, Microsoft Office Suite, SQL, Google Analytics, QuickBooks; examples of non-technical skills include project management, training, intellectual curiosity, public speaking, change management.
- Make your timeline for securing an internship or full-time opportunity clear based on when your internship eligibility and/or graduation date. List job titles you are seeking because this will also increase your visibility in candidate searches.
- Provide your direct contact information to make it easier for recruiters to contact you.
- Upload your resume and examples of your work such as papers, projects, certificates.
- Include professional Twitter, Blog, Pinterest, or Facebook profiles you maintain, you may include them on LinkedIn. (Only link to other social media platforms if they are professional).

For more help, check out LinkedIn University’s LinkedIn Profile Checklist for College Students (https://university.linkedin.com/content/dam/university/global/en_US/site/pdf/LinkedIn%20Profile%20Checklist%20College%20Students.pdf).
Make Connections

Connections symbolize the size of your network. Employers and decision makers make perceptions based on the number of LinkedIn connections you have, such as how influential you are or how many people are willing to listen to what you have to say using the tool. Too few connections could signal that other professionals are not willing to connect with you or you are not willing to connect with others. While the minimum number of connections to be at an Expert level is 50+, the Career Management Center suggests growing your LinkedIn network to 200+ connections.

Connection Categories & How Connections Work

- **1st Degree** – These are people you are directly connected with because you have accepted their invitation to connect, or they have accepted your connection request.
- **2nd Degree** – These are connected to you through your 1st degree connections.
- **3rd Degree** – These are connected to you through your 2nd degree connections. If their full first and last names are displayed, you can send an invitation to connect. If only the first letter of their last names is displayed, you do not have the option to connect.
- **GROUP** – These are members you are connected with because you are in the same group. See the “Join Groups” section for more details

Select the appropriate category to connect with others.

**Invite Alisa to connect on LinkedIn**

**How do you know Alisa?**

- Colleague
- Classmate
- We’ve done business together
- Friend
- Other
- I don’t know Alisa

**Include a personal note:** (optional)

```
I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.

- Name
```
Action Items:

- Sync email contacts with LinkedIn to send connection requests based on email addresses.
- To help you get started, review the Career Management Center’s Networking Strategies handout. Connect with:
  - Family, professors, classmates, mentors, supervisors, colleagues, and previous employers
  - Student and professional organizations
  - Internship and volunteer experiences
  - UT Dallas alumni and LinkedIn connections
  - Contacts from on-campus recruiting events including career fairs, industry forums, meet and greets, employer information sessions, and university symposiums and trainings
- Utilize LinkedIn alumni tool at www.linkedin.com/alumni to find more UT Dallas Comets
- Decide if you’d like to connect with everyone versus only people you know. This represents a personal choice; the CMC recommends reviewing the individual’s profile and seeing who he/she is connected with to ensure he/she would be a strong connection.

Requesting Connections from People You’ve Never Met or Don’t Know

To help you get your resume out of the recruiters’ stacks, identify potential referral sources, mentors or people who can share more about their experiences. Each of these will give you a better understanding about the company, the job and how to position yourself as a strong candidate.

Action Items:

Search

- Search for your target company and see “How You’re Connected.” This section will tell you how many employees are LinkedIn and how you are connected.
- Click on these numbers to see the list of employees.

Filter for Common Networks

- Apply filters to identify the employees you are connected with through your networks.
- School alumni and current students – The UTD Alumni network is 110K+ and growing!
- Current/previous employers
- Groups

Filter for Job Titles

- Depending on the size of the filtered list, filter for job titles:
  - (Campus) recruiters
  - Interns and employees holding your target position
  - Managers over the teams in which you want to work

Connect **

- Review targeted profiles and send connection requests with personalized messages.
**NOTE**: If you are connecting with people in the alumni/student network or who worked for your (previous) employer, select “Colleague”, “Classmate” or “We've Done Business Together”. If you do not share these networks:
- You must provide an email during the connection request, OR
- Request to be introduced through someone in your network

**Write a Personalized Connection Request**
Letting others know why you’re interested in connecting with them will increase the likelihood of a connection request acceptance.

Recruiter Connection Request example:

![Invitation to connect on LinkedIn](image1)

Alumni Connection Request example:

![Invitation to connect on LinkedIn](image2)

**Action Items:**

- Create a value-added and personalized invitation to each potential connection. Sell the value of connecting on LinkedIn and how you know or found the individual.
- Once you are connected, review the connections you have in common and identify additional individuals to pursue. Utilize the introductions feature for your connections to introduce you to someone new; the basic account allows 5 introductions.
- Review the Network Statistics Feature for a summary of your connections, the regions they are located and the industries employed. (Tip: strive for the highest percentage within your preferred industry and location)
Join Groups

LinkedIn groups offer opportunities for professionals in the same industry or with similar interests to share knowledge, get answers, post and promote jobs, make new business contacts and brand themselves as industry experts. This is where you will find your target audience—recruiters, people in the roles you want and hiring managers. All the activity on LinkedIn happens in groups; therefore, join as many groups as possible and actively participate in group discussions.

Group members can send 15 free one-on-one group messages to fellow group members for free each month, and this limit applies to all groups (not individual groups). To send messages, you must be a LinkedIn member for at least 30 days AND be a group member for at least 4 days.

Action Items:

- Search for groups by industry and join groups that possess 1000+ members (Tip: the HR and Talent Management group boasts over 200K members and is an open/public group and includes primarily HR professionals)
- There is no limit on the number of groups you may join and note that each group contains its own jobs board.
- There are several groups for UT Dallas and alumni. Join the following:
  - UT Dallas – Naveen Jindal School of Management – Alumni: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/97252
  - UT Dallas – UTD – University of Texas at Dallas: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/59116
  - UT Dallas Career Management Center: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4387822
- Complete an advanced search of the members within a group and discover potential connections by employer, industry, university attended, and location. (Tip: this is the best method for finding and building new connections)
- Visit your LinkedIn profile daily and actively participate in group discussions and submit invitations to connect.

Strengthen Your Network

Connecting with someone on LinkedIn is the same as collecting a business card. Remember, collecting business cards in a traditional networking setting is not establishing or building a relationship—it’s the follow-up after. To strengthen your network, it is encouraged to get to know your network and promote your brand.

Action Items:

- Review the student resources available within the LinkedIn Learning Center to learn more about additional features and networking strategies: http://university.linkedin.com/career-services/resources#videos
- Inmail connections to request informational interviews. To help you get started, review the Career Management Center’s Informational Interview handout.
- Develop and brand your LinkedIn profile to your chosen career field.
- Share interesting articles and/or publish original posts relevant to your desired career to promote your brand. Consistent LinkedIn activity increases your profile views and demonstrates to recruiters and hiring managers your genuine interest in your field.
- Arrange your endorsement according to what you want recruiters and hiring managers to know about you. Delete or hide irrelevant or unimportant skills as necessary.
- Consistently endorse those in your LinkedIn network, which also increases the number of endorsements you will receive.
- Request recommendations from current/former employers, coworkers, team members, professors, etc. so recruiters and hiring managers can learn about how you perform and work with others.
- Follow target companies to learn about their new opportunities and news-related information.