

Getting Started on LinkedIn and Building a Professional Network

LinkedIn is considered the most important social media site for working professionals. This guide will help you learn how to develop a strong profile and use LinkedIn effectively to grow your network and build your career. All the features discussed in this resource are available in the complimentary (free) user account.

Let's look at the steps you should take to develop a strong profile.

Step 1: Develop your personal brand through a compelling Headline and Summary.

Your **Headline** is a 120 character 'hook' that helps you get noticed in a LinkedIn search. It should be focused on your value proposition and enticing enough for someone to click on your profile and read more. The default Headline in LinkedIn is made up of your role and company (i.e. Business Analyst at JPMorgan Chase). Should you edit/change your headline to reflect your skills and area/industry of interest? Absolutely!

The Headline is your opportunity to communicate your skills and capabilities to potential employers in a couple of concise phrases using key words that recruiters search on when looking for candidates. Consider the difference between these two examples:

<p>Joe Smith Senior Business Analyst at Fidelity Investments</p>	<p>Joe Smith Business Analyst Data Enthusiast Innovative Content Writer</p>
---	--

Consider the following advice when developing your Headline:

- Use potential job titles for your career field (tip: conduct an Indeed search to learn common titles for your industry)
- Develop a word cloud from targeted job descriptions and use the most common keywords to showcase your skills

For career seekers, the **Summary** is the story that lets recruiters and hiring managers know the skills and experiences that make you successful, the types of initiatives and/or problems you like to tackle, and your target industry and/or employers. Write your summary in first person format (I, me, my) and include:

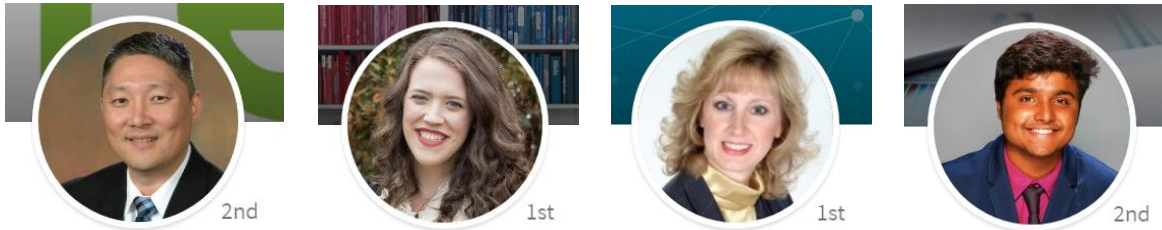
- Overview of career goals and interests (4-5 sentences)
- Technical and non-technical skills (bullet list format)
- Timeframe (graduation date or internship availability)
- Opportunities pursuing (job titles)
- Contact information
- Links to your Blog, Twitter Profile, and other social medial platforms *if they are professional.*
- Resume and examples of your work such as papers, projects, certificates, presentations

Be sure to craft an engaging introduction that will encourage the reader to expand this section of your profile.

The final component of your Headline and Summary is a professional photo. Here are some tips for capturing a great headshot:

- Dress for your target market – either professional or business casual. Solid colors tend to work best on camera.
- Choose the right expression. You want to appear warm, friendly and approachable.
- Choose a background that isn't distracting. Make sure you are the focal point.

- Crop the photo so that your face fills the frame, usually from the top of your shoulders to just above your head.
- No Selfies! Have someone else take your photo.



Step 2: Add your past Experience and Education.

Experience is a broad category that can range from part time jobs, to internships, to special projects and volunteer experiences. Think broadly about ways you can showcase the skills and capabilities you’ve developed through real-world experiences. In addition to your job title and start/end dates, provide a brief description that outlines the scope of your role and your most relevant accomplishments, with keywords woven in. The information in this section will usually be similar to what is on your resume, but try to create some differentiation between the two documents.

In the **Education** section list your past degree(s), and the degree you are currently pursuing, in descending order from highest to lowest. In the “To Year” field, list your anticipated graduation date.

Step 3: Request endorsements and recommendations.

Endorsements validate the skills listed in your profile by allowing your connections to verify that you possess those skills. To help ensure the endorsements you receive match the skills you want to highlight, we recommend you list the top 10-15 skills that that best reflect your personal brand and target role.

One of the best way to get endorsements is to *give* endorsements to others in your network. Often they will return the favor without solicitation, especially when LinkedIn prompts them to do. It is worth noting, Linked In will automatically list your skills from greatest to least based on the number of endorsements you have. However, you can manually reorder the list to display the skills most important to your brand first.

Recommendations, on the other hand, are more specific and personal. Like a letter of reference, a great recommendation will showcase the value you bring to an organization by sharing first-hand knowledge of your accomplishments and capabilities. We recommend you collect a variety of recommendations from different people who have worked with you – managers, colleagues, direct reports, even people outside the workplace who know you well.

Both Endorsements and Recommendation are valuable to have in your profile so we suggest you make the effort to collect them.

Step 4: Showcase your other accomplishments.

There are a number of opportunities to highlight additional accomplishments on your LinkedIn profile. Consider adding one or more of the following sections:

- Volunteer Experience
- Publications
- Certifications

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Patents | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Scores | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honors & Awards | <input type="checkbox"/> Languages | |

Additional Tips

- Complete your profile as much as possible. The more you fill out, the easier it will be for others to find you.
- Customize your LinkedIn URL to increase search engine optimization. Try to make your email address, LinkedIn URL and other social media handles consistent and professional. To create a custom URL, click on *Edit your public profile* in the right column of your profile page.
- If you are actively pursuing job opportunities we recommend that you make your profile visible to everyone. You can further define which aspects of your profile are visible to the public on your Public Profile page.
- There are several changes to your Privacy Settings you should consider making:
 - **Sharing profile edits:** Any time you make extensive changes to your profile, set this option to *No* to prevent notifications from being sent to your network. Once your profile is complete change the setting back to *Yes* so that your network is informed of the periodic activities you perform in LinkedIn.
 - **Viewers of this profile also viewed:** Set this option to *No* to keep potential employers from being directed to your completion when visiting your profile.
 - **Let recruiters know you are open to opportunities:** Set this option to *Yes* to appear in recruiter searches matching your career interests. **Note:** if you are currently working, be aware that complete privacy is not guaranteed.

Start Networking

Connecting with professionals on LinkedIn is a great way to make connections, learn about different career paths, and gain referrals for internships and jobs. Here are some ways to get started in building your professional network:

- You can always “follow” someone on LinkedIn, which will allow you to see their public posts. If you “connect”, you will be able to send them a private message. Not everyone will accept a “connect” request, so “follow” is an easy option to stay up to date with their activity.
- Use the search function to seek out recruiters, and review their activity (open profile and click “activity”) for events and job postings. Suggested search terms: campus recruiter, talent acquisition, college recruiter, early career recruiters.
- Use search function to seek out students who have recently accepted an internship. Suggested search term: “incoming intern”. You can filter by “posts” or “people”, and you will often come up with a list of students who will be starting a new internship soon. If they have posted about the internship, review the comments to find others on their new team. Both the new intern and their team members may be willing to answer your questions!
- Search the company and select the “people” option. This will allow you to filter by The University of Texas at Dallas, Jindal School of Management, Dallas/FT Worth, job function, etc. You can easily find alumni in this way.

Send a Message

Recruiter: Opening Message -

Hello – I have applied for an internship posted in Handshake and would like to be a part of your network. Thank you!

Recruiter: After Accepting Connection Request –

Thank you for accepting my connection request. I have applied for the position of Data Analyst Internship, Job # 12345 which I saw posted on Handshake. I'm currently a Business Analytics major and have worked on two Excel projects last semester.

If you are still accepting applications, I would very much be interested in having a conversation about my skills. Thank you for your help.

555-555-5555

jobseeker@utdallas.edu

Alumni: Opening Message –

Hello,

I'm from the Jindal School of Management at UT Dallas and am exploring careers at (COMPANY NAME). I would like to be part of your network. Thank you!

Alumni: After Accepting Connection Request –

Mr. Alumni,

I am exploring internship opportunities at Toyota and was happy to see a UTD Comet in the career that I'm interested in. I recently started at UTD and am currently part of the Data Science Club. This semester, my main project revolves around Power BI in my data visualization class.

Would you have 10 minutes available next week to meet over Microsoft Teams to talk more about the company and your career path? Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to hearing back from you!

-Name

-Email

-Phone