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Concept Paper

Ten Simple Rules for Easily Establishing Your First Professional Social Media Page for Job Hunting

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Abstract: In the age of social media your personal branding is critical to find a job. Information is highly available and handy for everyone looking for a job as well as for people trying to recruit employees at all levels. Currently, there is a first e-impression that encompasses employee education, qualifications, and relationships. This e-impression is given by your social media, specifically those websites that were built to facilitate interactions between employee and employer during the job-hunting process. There are different websites that enable you to establish a social network. For example, meet, Xing, Bark, Opportunity, Lunchmeet, and LinkedIn among others. This article is written by a group of young undergraduate and graduate researchers, who have noticed the importance of social networks to apply for graduate school and industry jobs. This manuscript offers ten simple rules that include resources to facilitate the journey on LinkedIn-like social networks, hoping that you have a successful career description in the most popular professional social networking site.

Keywords: Social media; professional network; linkedin

Introduction

The most used social network for job hunting is LinkedIn. This professional social networking site has proliferated in recent years. In 2019, LinkedIn had 660 million members (Davis et al., 2020a). To date, LinkedIn has 810 million members in more than 200 countries (LinkedIn, 2021). LinkedIn is among the most visited sites on the internet, just behind the major search engines (Zide et al., 2014a). A recent study published in Personnel Psychology deployed LinkedIn as a new selection method to match candidates with a job opening (Roulin & Levashina, 2019). LinkedIn also offers new channels of communication, providing novel networking opportunities among people around the world. Usually, the number of contacts is directly correlated with potential career benefits (Davis et al., 2020b).

This tool is useful for gathering information about coworkers and potential employees. Table 1 shows the principal recruiting agencies in the world as well as their number of employees. All these companies highly rely on social networking sites to recruit people.

Table 1. Most socially engaged firms on LinkedIn with headquarters in the United States.

Firm Name	Headquarters	Stock price (USD)	Revenue (USD)	Employees	Year founded
ManpowerGroup	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	\$74.66	\$20.72 billion (2021)	600,000	1948

Robert Half	Menlo Park, California	\$80.09	\$6.46 billion (2021)	14,600	1948
On Assignment	Glen Allen, VA	\$95.22	\$4.01 billion (2021)	1,001-5,000	1985
Aquent	Boston, Massachusetts	NA	\$380 million (2020)	10,001+	1986
Motion Recruitment Partners	Boston, Massachusetts	NA	\$68 million (2021)	501-1,000	1989
Kelly Servies	Troy, Michigan	\$14.93	\$4.52 billion (2020)	7,100	1946
Airswift	Houston, Texas	NA	\$1.3 billion (2021)	800	1979
Addison Group	Chicago, Illinois	NA	\$100 billion+ (2021)	1,001-5,000	1999

LinkedIn also hosts scientific profiles of researchers in academia and industry. Those profiles are useful to disseminate new findings and achievements in both the industry and academia. The public nature of LinkedIn enables users to present their qualifications, achievements, and personal information (e.g. pictures) in a dynamic format. Because of that, having an updated and well-developed LinkedIn profile plays a key role during recruitment and job hunting.

This article is written by a group of young biotech researchers undergraduate and graduate students, who have noticed the importance of LinkedIn for graduate school and industry job applications. This paper offers ten simple rules that include resources to facilitate the journey on LinkedIn , hoping that you have a successful career description in the most popular professional social networking site (Figure 1).

Rule 1. Personal info

In Settings & Privacy, one can edit their profile information including name, location, and industry. It is important you have the correct first and last name on your profile, just as you would in your resume or curriculum vitae. Your headline, industry, and education should all be updated constantly with your most up to date information because this will determine if a recruiter views your full profile (Table 1). Another important determinant in recruiter views are keywords; keywords can be industry-specific or experience related. Keywords can also simply describe your job position. Profile Information is the most important section in your LinkedIn account because this is the first information your audience will know about you before reading about your background, skills, and experience.

An accurate and updated LinkedIn is not only important for corporations, but to the government as well. An example of the importance of a LinkedIn profile is reflected by how the Department of Homeland Security collects “social media profiles of potential immigrants as part of its evaluation process” (Sreenivasan, n.d.).

Catchy profile picture. Your profile picture is also one of the first things that catches the attention of your audience when looking at your profile, therefore, it’s important to have a picture that draws the attention of your audience without it being distracting. A professional headshot provides a picture of who you are in the business world. Tend to avoid distracting backgrounds as this might lead viewers to be drawn into other things that are not representative of you. This not only increases the likelihood of your profile to be viewed by others, but it will also be your first impression to recruiters. Your profile picture should ensure that you are the focal point. In addition, the way you pose can largely influence your audience's views toward you. Use your profile picture as an opportunity to show that you are likable and friendly, attributes that employers seek in hires. A study of 800 profile pictures viewed people as more likable and influential if their picture included them smiling (Abbott, 2022). Some useful advice when choosing a picture include the following: neutral background, natural light, professional attire, avoid filters, and high resolution.

Banner. The LinkedIn background banner or photo provides a visual opportunity to demonstrate who you are and create a positive first e-impression. Some examples of banners include workspace, landscape, logo of your company, your city, inspirational quote, or an abstract image (Darstaru, 2021). LinkedIn provides users with built-in banners; however, personalized banners have a greater impact on your target audience. Some ideas for selecting a background image include a landscape, physical architecture, mission, or workspace. Adding pieces of information like this allows you to give someone a visual representation of what exactly it is that you do and/or are passionate about (Liu, 2019). Additionally, a banner can be made to visualize your company's goal or business card. Some resources for creating a banner include PicMonkey, (Arruda, 2014), Fotor, Canva, and Adobe (Chown, 2017).

Rule 2. About

The "About" section of your LinkedIn profile is the most opportune place to display personality along with individual merits. For instance, a graduate student should briefly describe research focus, significant accomplishments, future goals, skills, professional interests, and personal interests. An undergraduate student could possibly describe volunteering experiences, skills, professional interests, and personal interests/hobbies, internships, and awards. Imagine this section as a condensed personal statement or cover letter; creating a narrative is vital to conveying your message. A catchy introductory sentence will keep the reader's attention and invite them to read more. This section allows readers to see who you are, where you've come from, and where you want to go. Remember to keep this section concise as you are limited to just 2,600 characters. Creating an outline before writing your "About" section will help you visualize what's important and what's not. You should include things like your own personal background and how it intertwines with your relevant industry skills, professional goals, and research interests. Briefly discuss current projects, responsibilities in your current job, and future ambitions or goals. You should be creative, avoiding simple lists as much as possible. At the end of your personal statement, try to have a "call to action" that can be an invitation to connect or a link to specific pieces of content you want to advertise. A great resource for examples of a clear and concise personal statement can be found in the article "Writing your personal statement: view from a careers adviser" (Fussey, 2015).

Rule 3. Experience & Education

The experience and education section of your LinkedIn profile should be focused on your academic resume as well as experiences that apply to the job/field you wish to get into. When adding your list of education, it is important that you remember to include only information that is above a high school level of schooling. If you are planning to apply for graduate school or fellowships having this data handy will facilitate your application process. For example, when applying for funding to the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health, Department of Energy you will need to create a biographical sketch also referred to as biosketch with all the information in this section.

This information will also help to make connections easily within your alma mater in many ways from research, teaching, past students, guest speakers, etc. For your Experience description, stick to information that gives you an advantage or makes you stand out for the specific opportunity that you want to apply for – feel free to tailor your information. Although the idea of having a lengthy list of experience sounds good in theory, people will only gravitate to those experiences that you have that can be applied to their expertise. Because of this, it is important to rank your list of experiences wisely.

Furthermore, a great explanation on what to focus on for the Experience and Education section of LinkedIn can be found on EXPAND.IO (Smulders, 2022). For example, some good practices to keep in mind are to: cater your writing to industry personnel and

companies that apply for your career interests, briefly include your achievements or promotions from current or past jobs, use clear and concise bullet points for formatting, make sure your job experience section pulls information from your summary and headline section, and lastly, just keep it simple. There is no need to have your experience and education section convoluted with information. This might overwhelm a future employer or a new connection that is looking at your LinkedIn profile.

Rule 4. Interests

The Interests section has the goal to allow the user to connect with its target audience on a personal level (Serdula, 2017b). You can describe who you are outside of work or school. The interest section should list personal and professional passions, hobbies, and interests. This section is important because it can encourage relationship building, connection forging, or even be used as a conversation starter (Zide et al., 2014b). You can attract your target audience and form new connections that might lead to new career paths.

You should be as clear as possible during the process of listing your interests. This will avoid sparking concerns. For instance, politics and religion are interests that might be best to leave off your profile. Another important tip when listing your interests is to ensure to separate them with a comma; this will allow LinkedIn to successfully link your interests to other profiles who share those interests (Serdula, 2017a). Being honest is key. A study published in 2012 states that LinkedIn users are often most deceptive regarding interests and hobbies (Guillory & Hancock, 2012).

Rule 5. Publications

This section can be challenging to address for undergraduate students, however if you are in a university in which research is carried out. You should join a lab to work towards your publications list. Scientific publications will show the specific accomplishments you have made in your field. This section is a simple version of Google Scholar.

If you have a prominent publication list try to organize it by impact factor and relevance. These are the common metrics that can help you select your publication list. For more information about all metrics of scientific publications check. Make sure to use proper formatting and include the DOI numbers. While it would be acceptable to simply list any publications you may have, adding annotations after each listed publication would keep the reader interested and inform them of the significance of each article. If you have a long list of publications, select 2 or 3 impactful articles to briefly annotate. If you have a shorter list of publications, you can annotate each one in a more in-depth manner. The annotation should be a short concise summary of the main goal of the article, the major findings, your role in the project, and its relevance to the field. You'll be able to create an impactful statement that complements your research publications well (Dymarz, 2021).

Rule 6. Organizations

The organizations section of your LinkedIn profile should be a record of any professional institutions you may have or are already a part of. This section is vital to showcase that you can be an essential component within your given industry or professional career. Furthermore, it is important to only list the organizations that are relevant to your target audience. In the sense of a career in research, you would want to list institutions that are affiliated with biotechnology, clinical studies, government research laboratories, university research laboratories, and start-up companies.

If you think that your organization list is small you can always start building a stronger network. For example, at San Diego State University there are over 25 different clubs that you can join (College of Sciences Student Council, 2022). Additionally, it is important to include positions held and titles as you are listing out organizations that you

Rule 7. Skills

Rule 8. Projects

Rule 9. Honors/Awards

The Honors and Awards section of your profile is the place to list any accolades one might have received throughout one's career. Any awards from undergraduate studies,

graduate studies, past careers, or outside organizations that are relevant to your career should be included. Additionally, any honors and awards that one has received that displays any strong character trait should be included as well. It is very important that you provide detail to your list of honors and awards because employers want to see how your accolades are relevant to the job. As a precaution measure, it is a good idea to provide any certificate or letter that proves you are the intended receiver of the award. This section allows you to showcase any positive recognition that tells employers what you are capable of and who you are as a person. Furthermore, listing any accolades that encompass professional and personal achievements will only benefit your pursuit in your career of interest. The article “LinkedIn Awards and Honors” provides tips and talks about what should be listed in the Honors and Awards section (Samuel, 2021). Your Honors and Awards section is a way for you to highlight your accomplishments to potential people of interest that wish to make connections with you. These accolades you showcase should serve as a reminder about the things you’re most proud of and can be used in the field you wish to partake in.

Rule 10. Connections

The Connections section is an essential component of your profile. This section enables the networking process by reaching out to other social media users. This section is where you want to prioritize connections with professionals who are in your career field rather than individuals who you are friends with for the sake of increasing the number of your connections (Coursera, 2022). While larger networks may be less personal, they can also be extremely valuable. Aim for at least 500 to maximize your profile “completeness” from LinkedIn’s perspective (Botticello, 2018).

An important tool on LinkedIn is the “My Network” tab. This tab is where you can look for colleagues and peers on LinkedIn and make connections with individuals who share the same interests as you.

Connecting with someone on LinkedIn is a two-way process, and if the other individual accepts your request, it is often encouraged that you send them a personal message. In this section, it is also a good idea to connect with recruiters for jobs that are relevant to your career interests. Additionally, a connection with recruiters will provide you with an update about any new job opportunities. Also, the connection section is where you want to build relationships with colleagues and industry peers. So, keeping in touch with your connections is an important tool that can only benefit you and your career in the future. If you are a new or current user of LinkedIn, a helpful article providing tips about the Connection section of LinkedIn can be found here: (Hu, 2019)

In addition to interacting with others to make significant connections you can use, you can make yourself look just as interesting by inviting engagement on your posts. A major component taking part in this is by posting often. By posting often it allows your content/interests to reach a wide range of people who might take a similar liking. This leads to them liking, sharing, or leaving comments on your posts. The major upside to this is that when someone interacts with your posts, their connections are much more likely to see your posts on their feeds as a result.

Making connections is a lot more than testing the waters and trying out your luck by interacting with others (Wilhelme, 2021). As we have discussed above, LinkedIn offers users with many free features to create a platform for professional growth. Nevertheless, LinkedIn also provides additional features based on four different prices. The different tiers, costs and features can be seen on the table below (Table 2).

Table 2. LinkedIn Premium different tiers, costs, and features.

LinkedIn Premium Option	Cost/ Month	Features
Premium Career	\$39.99	● 5 InMails per month

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Who's Viewed Your Profile from the last 90 days • Open profile
Premium Business	\$44.99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 InMails per month • See Who's Viewed Your Profile from the last 90 days • Unlimited People Browsing • Open profile
Sales Navigator Professional	\$79.99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales Navigator Platform • 50 InMails per month • See Who's Viewed Your Profile from the last 90 days • Unlimited people browsing • Custom lead and account lists • Advanced lead search and account search • 10,000 saved leads • Lead recommendations and saved leads • Open profile
Recruiter Lite	\$139.99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiter Lite platform • 30 InMails per month • Access to your 2nd and 3rd degree networks • 20+ advanced search filters • Candidate search alerts • Candidate recommendations daily • Search with smart suggestions • Personalized outreach with saved templates • Post a free • Projects for organization and tracking

It is important to note that LinkedIn Premium allows a one-month free trial to give users an idea of its additional features (Roth, 2022). In addition to the features listed in Table 2, LinkedIn provides its Premium users with job and applicant insights, top applicant job recommendations, company insights, salary insights, 16,000+ LinkedIn Learning courses, and full access to Interview Preparation tools.

According to Forbes, InMail messages, Who's Viewed Your Profile, job and applicant insight, salary insight, and learning access are the five most beneficial features of LinkedIn Premium (Homegardner, 2020).

InMail messages allow LinkedIn Premium members to contact people who are not first connections on LinkedIn. This can be useful when you need to contact a hiring manager about your job application or ask about a job position. Job and applicant insight allows LinkedIn Premium users to gain information about who else has applied to a job and allows applicants to see what a hiring manager is looking for specifically. Salary insight provides members with an idea of what salary to expect for a given job. This is helpful information to know prior to being interviewed or asked for an expected salary range. Lastly, LinkedIn Learning Access provides users with multiple training videos that can help demonstrate skills.

A useful marketing resource that helps companies analyze, engage, and grow through several social media platforms including LinkedIn is known as Buffer. Buffer also has a 14 day free trial "to experience what it can do for your business" (Lua, 2022).

Conclusions

First e-impressions are important. Nowadays your LinkedIn profile is often the first e-impression that a potential employer or new collaborator may have of you. In any circumstance, the person viewing your LinkedIn simply wants to know more about you. Having a neat, organized, and professional profile is vital to sending the right message. You should think of your profile as an extended resume. LinkedIn offers many tools for you to list relevant personal information, past accomplishments, and future aspirations in a concise and eye-catching manner. Your profile is a way to create a personal-brand, and it is something that you should invest a decent amount of effort and thought into. In the end, you are marketing yourself to whoever may be interested, don't sell yourself short.

By following these 10 simple rules, you'll be able to create a respectable LinkedIn profile that reflects both who you are personally and professionally.

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