

The Smarter LinkedIn Strategy

Win Leads, Close Sales, &
Grow Your Network
in Just 10 Minutes a Day.



A SMARTER SEARCHES E-BOOK



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Is This White Paper for You?

Not sure if LinkedIn is for you? Uncertain if LinkedIn will help your business? These statistics should help you make up your mind.

LinkedIn has a higher lead conversion rate than all other social networks combined.

There are 84 million active LinkedIn users in the US; there are more than 300 million worldwide.

It's a social network that's easy to master in just 10 minutes a day.



About the Author

After a decade in digital marketing, Courtney Herda has developed effective strategies for helping businesses grow by harnessing the power of the internet. As the CEO of Smarter Searches, a digital marketing agency in Knoxville, Tennessee, she works with business owners to improve website traffic, increase sales, and stimulate social media engagement. Mrs. Herda is an experienced speaker and instructor from Search Engine Strategies, ClickZ Live, the Online Marketing Institute, Marketing Profs, the American Advertising Federation, and Bigger-Brains.com. She has been interviewed by Forbes, CIO Magazine, and more. Most recently, she was named one of the Top 10 Digital Strategists of 2015 by the Online Marketing Institute.



Why Use LinkedIn?

Who Uses LinkedIn?

As of 2014, LinkedIn boasts over 300 million users worldwide, with more than 84 million of them residing in the United States. In fact, every day, over 25 million LinkedIn profiles are viewed by potential employers and other professionals looking for ways to connect. With nearly two million groups for users in the same industry or with similar interests to join, it is no surprise that LinkedIn has become the world's largest professional network!

What Do They Look Like?

It's useful to know that 80 percent of LinkedIn users are influencing today's top decision makers, but who are they? LinkedIn's user base consists of professionals of all levels, including entry-level, middle management, and executives. You can find everyone from college graduates looking for their first job opportunity to well-established CEOs.

These individuals typically fall in the median age range of 24 to 54 years old, and those who are more established in their careers generally fall between the ages of 30 to 49. While 59 percent of LinkedIn users are male, the female 41 percent is steadily growing.

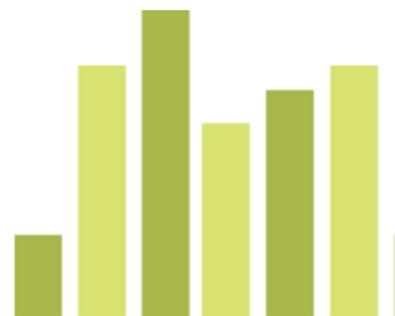
Every day, over 25 million LinkedIn profiles are viewed by potential employers and other professionals looking for ways to connect.

Does It Work?

With a lead conversion rate that is 2.75 percent higher than all other social media combined, of course LinkedIn works! Eighty-eight percent of recruiters and 85 percent of hiring managers use LinkedIn to scout out potential candidates for new job opportunities. In fact, nearly six

billion professionally oriented LinkedIn searches were conducted in 2012 alone. LinkedIn's users are also highly active. Two out of three LinkedIn users visit the website every week with 35 percent visiting it daily and 32 percent checking it a few times per week.

Plus, consumers trust LinkedIn more than other leading social networks, including Twitter and Facebook. Eighty-percent of consumers say that they trust information on LinkedIn, while only 28 percent trust Twitter and 23 percent trust Facebook.



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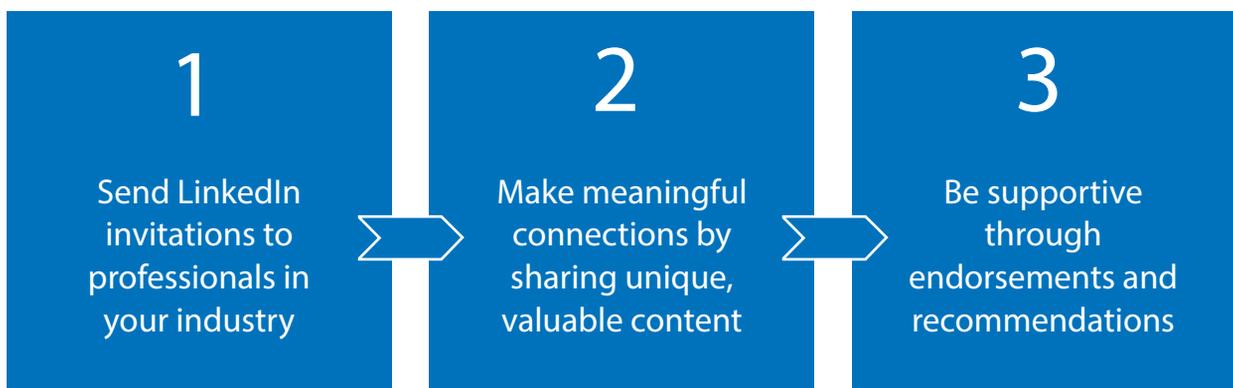
The LinkedIn Ecosystem

Like a fully operating ecosystem, LinkedIn's professional features are all interconnected. Personal, Business, Alumni, Interest Groups and Leads intertwine to help you create a personal and unique professional networking experience.

Understand Your Network

The interaction you create on LinkedIn is very different from other social media efforts. The emotional inspiration for using LinkedIn is diametrically opposed to what you see on Facebook and other personal-focused social media. For example, personal motivators for social media interaction on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram include nostalgia (#tbt), having fun (funny cat photos), and distraction (Buzzfeed quizzes and Candy Crush). In contrast, professional motivators for social media, particularly on a platform like LinkedIn, stimulates interaction based on achievement (through Endorsements and Recommendations), success (through Group participation), and aspiration (with new job searches and networking).

Having a purposeful mindset and engaging in meaningful interactions are paramount to being able to harvest the full benefits of the LinkedIn ecosystem.



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Taking the First Step.

Now you know that you need to use LinkedIn, what the motivators are for those who use it, and what the environment of users looks like. So what's next?

The next step is to figure out your own place in the LinkedIn platform: 1) what are you hoping to achieve, and 2) how do you want to present yourself in order to use the system to its full advantage? Before you can really begin networking and seeking those meaningful and profitable connections, be sure to follow our plan for building and developing a strong LinkedIn profile.

Developing Your Profile

There is nothing more valuable than making a great first impression; your LinkedIn profile is one of the first things an employer sees before you even step into his or her office for an interview! So how can you make sure that your profile doesn't get overlooked? Here are a few quick tips:



Upload a Professional Headshot.

Profiles are seven times more likely to be seen in search results if there is a professional photo. Miriam Salpeter at U.S. News & World Report says that if people land on your profile and see that you haven't uploaded a photo, they'll wonder why not, and also question if you even know how.

Update Your Security Settings.

Today, most browsers will update your URL to a higher level of security called HTTPS. This setting will help you protect your personal data on LinkedIn. You can make sure that your security is on this setting by clicking on your URL in the address bar and making sure it looks like this:

https://www.linkedin.com

rather than this:

http://www.linkedin.com

Your profile is the first and most important destination.

Use All 120 Heading Characters.

Instead of listing only a job title, use all 120 characters available to describe who you can help and how you can help them. Listing something along the lines of "Internet Marketing Intern at Smarter Searches, a digital marketing firm helping businesses build their online presence with SEO, social media, and design" is more informative than just a job title alone.

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Enhancing Your Profile

A strong LinkedIn profile consists of many components, including summary, experience, and examples of previous work. Taking the time and effort to perfect these sections will make your profile stand out in the eyes of potential employers and colleagues.

Make Yourself Look Good

Summary:

When writing your summary, use first person. Using first-person identifiers such as “I” and “me” will allow you to speak to and connect with your target market. The summary section of your LinkedIn profile is a space where you can share your story and market your skills to potential employers. Tell them what type of experiences you’ve had by inserting previous job titles; show them how you can help them through examples of your work. Don’t just list skills or your resume in paragraph form – use it to target your ideal leads, customers, and connections.

Experience:

In the section titled *Experience* (located immediately below the summary), you’ll want to elaborate on your experiences and skills. Under each job title, first list the responsibilities you held in that position. Then use keywords that will appeal to your target audience. For example, if your experience was in waitressing at a local restaurant but you hope to get a job in sales, you could include, “created a personal, memorable experience for a diverse consumer base through excellent customer service.”

Supplementary Content:

LinkedIn also provides users with the unique opportunity to upload their work. Upload video files you’ve helped produce, papers or articles you’ve published, presentations you’ve created, speeches you’ve filmed, downloadable reports or blogs you’ve written, and links to any external websites with your projects on them (such as Slideshare). Showcase your talent through your work. This is the spot where you can let your creative portfolio and social media skills shine!

Refining Your Profile

Now that you've started building your LinkedIn profile, it's time to expand it! How, you might ask? By making new connections and making your presence known. In the info below, we'll expand on the importance of contact information, status updates, and recommendations!

Expanding Your Reach

Contact:

Make sure all your relevant contact information is up to date. You want to make sure that whoever is looking at your LinkedIn profile is able to reach you. Nothing could be worse than losing your dream job opportunity because you couldn't be reached. Also, if your profile URL looks like a random combination of letters and numbers, change it! LinkedIn makes personalizing your profile URL unbelievably easy. Just click the little pencil icon next to your URL to edit it. Using your full name or business name is a popular choice.

Status Updates:

Like on Facebook, LinkedIn allows you to provide status updates for your colleagues. Here at Smarter Searches, we recommend updating that status daily to provide more value to your target market. Include relevant pictures and links to grab your audience's attention. However, be sure to only share valuable information that will benefit your target market. Remember, this is not the platform for your amazing pictures of your kids, your dogs, or a funny internet cat meme. This is about business and business people are busy. Stand out by providing utility, useful content, interesting content, and more.

Recommendations:

One of the best features on LinkedIn is its recommendations. You can request recommendations from colleagues, co-workers, and former employers to help provide positive affirmation that you are a great candidate for any job that you seek. The best way to receive recommendations is to give them. Be generous, considerate, honest, and genuine in your recommendations. If you've had a great experience with someone, share your testimonial! If you hope to stand out as a LinkedIn superstar, you have to share the love.

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Take the Next Step!

To make the most out of LinkedIn, you'll need to grow your network. The average LinkedIn user has 150 connections! Many users have more than 500 but can only recall about half of them. Building your professional network on LinkedIn is as easy as sending an invitation—because that's exactly what it is.

Grow Your Network

LinkedIn provides users with a default invitation: “I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.” However, these generic invites don't really have a good response rate. Instead, personalize your invitation with recall references and why you'd like to connect. Remember, this invitation is essentially your elevator pitch. Here are some examples of what to include:

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- **How you Heard About Them**

“Dear John, I am interested in learning more about brand management opportunities. My friend, Tim, attended your panel last weekend and recommended that I get in touch with you.”



- **A Personalized Message**

“Hello! My name is David and I've been reading your work on your blog. I loved your ideas on...”

- **How You Met Them**

“Hi Lisa, it was great meeting you at last night's networking event. Let's keep in touch! Would love to what you've been working on.”

- **Spelling and Grammar Checked**

This is a no-brainer! It doesn't take much to double check your spelling and grammar with these invitations. Always be careful.

The key to a good LinkedIn invitation is brevity. Make your invite tangible, authentic, and fast. Before you click send though, be sure to say thank you!

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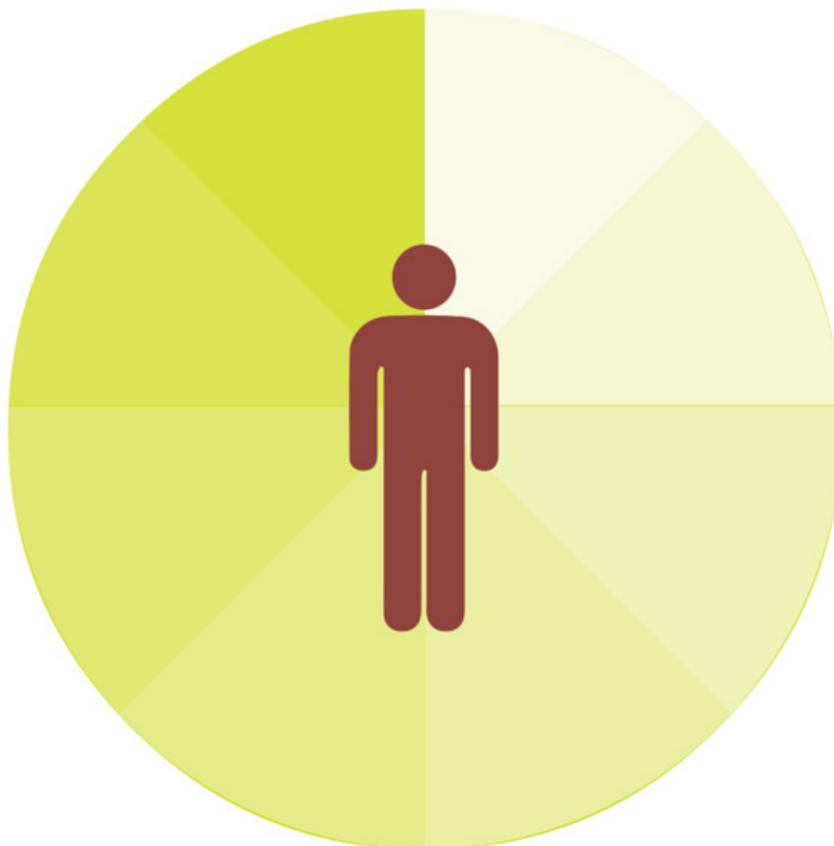
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Get Found!

Yes, you can receive invitations, too! You can send all the LinkedIn invitations that you want, but you can also increase your chances of receiving them through some strategic visibility efforts.

Our Savvy Suggestions:

- Join up to 50 groups that are centered on topics that interest you. This will increase your visibility to other users and help you gain more invites to connect. You'll be able to find groups focused on job opportunities, industry topics, and even networking events! Plus, these groups will allow you to engage in discussions with users who share similar interests.
- Initiate conversations by asking or answering questions in your status updates.
- Follow companies and thought leaders. Then engage in discussions with them. Your interest and genuine concern will be apparent!



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It's Called Social Media. Be Social.

LinkedIn is a great tool to build your professional online presence, but it's important to remember that it's also a social media network. In order to make the most of it, you need to be social.

Communication is Key.

LinkedIn is a social network, so you need to **b**e social in order to be successful. Provide your LinkedIn connections with answers to their questions and relevant news about your industry. Providing your connections with valuable content will help ensure that you won't become an irrelevant, empty connection.

LinkedIn also has a blog feature that you can **u**se to post and share your industry knowledge and experiences. These can be quick 300-500 word entries focused on anything from "5 Best SEO Practices" to "Facebook v. Twitter: Which Is Better For CRM?" These posts are awesome at directing traffic to your website, blog, or other social media outlets—just link and share them!

Be sure to also reciprocate interactions on LinkedIn. If you want others to share your content, share theirs too! Watch to see how your competitors, influencers, and industry leaders are communicating, and make sure that your company can measure up.

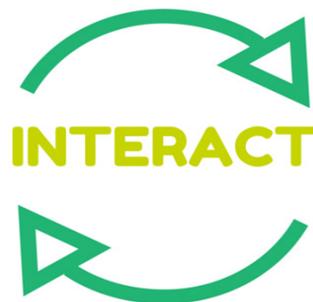
SHARE CONTENT



WRITE BLOGS



INTERACT



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Don't Make These Mistakes.

Now that you understand the basics of building a great LinkedIn profile, you need to know what NOT to do in order to keep your profile strong. Here are some LinkedIn definite DON'Ts:

Avoid the Pitfalls

DON'T give because you expect to receive.

Think of the Golden Rule here, but don't give just because you expect a return. Realize that interactions on LinkedIn will help build your relationships with other professionals, and that's where you should direct your focus.

DON'T refuse to give anything at all.

Not interacting at all with others on LinkedIn is a major no-no. If you aren't active on LinkedIn, why are you even using it? LinkedIn is for creating and building a professional network, which would be rather difficult to do if you aren't willing to be social.

DON'T wait until you have a need.

Consistently be proactive on LinkedIn.

If you aren't active on LinkedIn, why are you even using it?

BEWARE!



Don't wait until you have a need to start building your professional relationships. I can't even begin to explain how many times I've heard that people didn't touch their LinkedIn profiles until they needed a new job. That isn't the time to pay attention to LinkedIn. Build those connections on a consistent basis. Whatever your need may be, whether it be a new job opportunity or the opportunity to network in an unfamiliar city, more than likely, your connections will be able to help. However, if you haven't been present online, your connections' desire to assist you will be minimal.

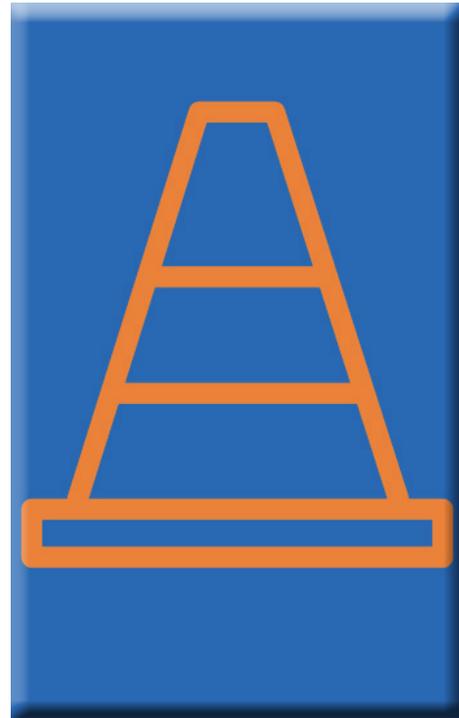
DON'T forget where you are.

Always remember that LinkedIn is a professional platform. Keep your posts, comments, and other content LinkedIn-appropriate. You can wait to post that funny cat video on your Facebook profile instead! (Unless you are a professional cat whisperer trying to connect with other cat enthusiasts.)

DON'T not care.

Do your best to respond to comments, replies and messages as quickly as possible, and always make sure your spelling and grammar are accurate. Paying attention to details tells your potential employer that you care- which can make all the difference - while overlooking them could give off the vibe that you are lazy, inattentive, or that you don't know how to use social media at all.

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the difference.**

**DON'T ignore your team's work.**

Always be a team player. Congratulating your peers on their hard work reinforces positive morale and a great work ethic. Plus, we can't reiterate enough how important it is to build relationships on LinkedIn. What would be a better way than to give your colleague a congratulatory LinkedIn high-five?

DON'T let your content become generic.

Keep your content valuable. Posting generic content will bore your target audience. Having unique, attention-grabbing content will help you stand out in the spotlight.

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The LinkedIn Work Week

Mastering LinkedIn is simple to do once you understand how it works. In fact, you can make a substantial difference in your profile if you work on it for just ten minutes a day, each week. Our recommended timeline has proven to be very effective at building networks, driving leads, and creating sales. Check it out!

A Little Can Go A Long Way

Monday

- Start the work week on a positive note and leave positive recommendations for two of your colleagues.
- Accept any LinkedIn invitations to connect.
- Review the “Who’s Looked Over Your Profile” feature and send them a quick, personalized note and invitation to connect.

Tuesday

- Write a unique post for two LinkedIn groups - something relevant to industry news, useful information, or an event, webinar, or new article that might be of interest.
- Accept any LinkedIn invitations to connect.
- Send thank you messages to any accepted invitations to connect.

Wednesday

- Explore possible new connections and save any searches that might prove useful in the future.
- Send invitations to connect to at least three people.

Thursday

- Post a comment on three to five posts made by your connections.
- Accept or review any alerts that you may have.

Friday

- Curate, select, and schedule content to be shared throughout the next week.
- Review new connections, targets, leads, groups, or people who have reviewed your profile. If they require more time or a mutual introduction, prepare your plan to facilitate an introduction.

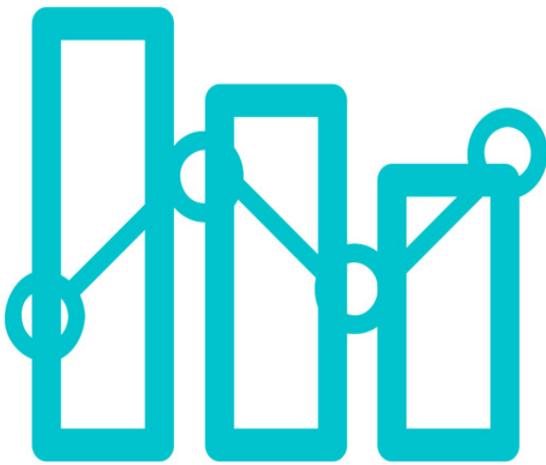
You can make
a positive
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Did It Work?

How can you tell if the changes you've made to your LinkedIn account are working to your benefit?



Goal-Setting with LinkedIn Premium

If you have a specific goal that you'd like to achieve, such as unlocking sales opportunities, landing your dream job, finding and contacting the right people, or finding new talent to hire, LinkedIn can help with its Premium features. Through Premium, you can select a specific plan to help you reach your goal. These prove useful for job seekers, recruiters, and businesses alike. Each plan has its own unique features, such as bumping you up to the top of recruiters' applicant lists, lead recommendations, and lead builders.

Measuring Your Success

To see if your LinkedIn account is working, you will want to keep an eye on the size of your network. With each connection you make, there comes a number of opportunities to connect with second and third tier connections. The more connections you have, the more chances you have to connect with the right opportunity.

Like on Facebook, the more notifications you receive the better. An increase in engagement from your target audience is always a good sign. These engagements can include the number of new invitations, the number of profile audience views received from your target audience, and the number of social interactions from other users. An increase in notifications indicates that people in your network are finding you interesting and valuable.

Also, take note any changes occurring with your business performance. Is your business experiencing an increase in sales? Leads? Phone calls? Website traffic? These are all indicators that enhancing your LinkedIn presence is working. In your CRM, indicate if a particular lead or sale was due to LinkedIn (either in part or in entirety). If you find success with a customer due to LinkedIn, trace back what worked and use your successful strategy to duplicate those results.

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Keep the Momentum.

One of the key aspects to remember about LinkedIn is to stay social. Maintaining your online presence by consistently providing content that is relevant and valuable to your target audience will help you build a stronger and more memorable identity in your LinkedIn professional network.

How to Maintain and Improve Upon Your Results Over Time:

- Continue to build upon your network by adding new connections and reaching out to other professionals in your industry. The more connections you have, the more opportunities that will be available for you.

So do you think you've built the ultimate "All-Star" LinkedIn profile? Hopefully, our Smarter Searches guidelines and recommendations have helped you get there!



Connect with our Smarter Searches team on LinkedIn to stay up to date on how you can improve your online presence. Be sure to check out our blog and YouTube channel for more insider tips!!

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