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# LinkedIn — a job search necessity

**B**ased on Wikipedia research, as of June 2013, LinkedIn showed more than 259 million users in more than 200 countries, has become the social networking tool of choice for professionals and is an incredibly important strategy in conducting your job search. If you aren't on LinkedIn, it's time to take the plunge. As many users will tell you, a profile presence is very easy to create and maintain, and can reap many benefits for your career.

In this article, I will share 10 basic strategies for creating and building your brand on LinkedIn.

1. Upload a professional picture. LinkedIn profiles without photos are far less effective than those that include one. There's something about seeing that faceless box that makes it much more unlikely an employer or recruiter will click on your profile to read more, or that potential connections will accept your request to connect. The key is to have a recent professional headshot where you are smiling and looking professional and approachable — make the same impression on people as if you were greeting them personally.

2. Develop a professional headline. This 120-character section should be used to showcase your expertise, specialty and your branding statement. Be specific, speak to the audience you want to entice and use key terms someone searching for your area of expertise might use to find you on LinkedIn. Check the

Internet for sample LinkedIn profile headlines.

3. Write a professional summary. Think of your summary as a brief commercial about yourself, a branding statement. It should be approximately 250 words, written in the first person and talk about what you're good at. The summary is your opportunity to stand out from the crowd, to differentiate yourself in a memorable way. It should answer a hiring manager's question of "Why would I want to hire you?"

4. Create a custom public profile URL. Use this custom URL on your résumé, business/networking cards and in your email signature. Simply go to [www.linkedin.com/profile/public-profile-settings](http://www.linkedin.com/profile/public-profile-settings) for the setup details.

5. Fill in your experience. Your experience section needs more than just where you worked, how long and your title. Use information from your résumé including targeted keywords and accomplishments.

6. Spotlight your skills and areas of expertise. You can highlight up to 50 current and relevant skills and areas of expertise. This section is important because your LinkedIn connections can endorse those skills, which will add to the overall quality of your profile.

7. Pursue endorsements and recommendations. LinkedIn has made this process so easy. Simply review your connections and determine which persons — such as co-workers, past supervisors, clients and

others who know you well — may be willing to help add information that will boost your reputation and make you stand out among other job seekers.

8. List contact information. An email address, your customized LinkedIn URL or links where you are sharing industry-specific professional information and updates will work.

9. Keep your profile current. If you want to be found by others while conducting your job search, you need to make sure your data is complete and current.

10. Join groups. LinkedIn groups are a great resource and can aid in your job search. By joining groups in your profession/industry, you will be connected to individuals, as well as to relevant discussions in your field. There are thousands of groups within LinkedIn, and most of them are free to join with few or no membership prerequisites.

To help you get started using your LinkedIn account, or to learn more about LinkedIn features and functionalities, I highly recommend you sign up on the site for a few of the free online presentations, such as "LinkedIn 101: The Basics of LinkedIn," "Job Seekers: Tips for Using Your LinkedIn Account to Help You Land Your Next Great Opportunity" and "LinkedIn Search Techniques."

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