



## CREATE A LINKEDIN PROFILE



The Internet has made a significant impact on how we search and apply for new jobs, but nothing compares to how LinkedIn has dramatically changed the way a potential candidate is screened and selected for a position. LinkedIn has over 675 million users and over 20 million job postings.

LinkedIn is not just another Facebook. LinkedIn is a tool that is designed to be used exclusively for professionals. The service is not a place to share about your weekend travels or photos of your family. It is a tool to help brand and promote individuals and businesses and more importantly, to help professionals build a strong network that can be leveraged to land a new job, advance their career, or promote their business.

How many times have you or a co-worker left an organization and lost touch? Can you imagine how strong your professional network would have been, if you had been able to stay connected to the majority of the business contacts you gained throughout your career? Well now, thanks to LinkedIn, it is possible to maintain and nurture your past, present, and future business connections, forming valuable networking opportunities. College grads...take note!

LinkedIn offers the job seeker a personal web page to promote their professional presence to the business world. An effective profile serves as an organic complement to your formal resume and allows you the freedom to express your personality and passions in the world of work. It is incredibly easy and free to join LinkedIn and to build a profile. The possibilities for self-promotion on LinkedIn are limitless, and as you build your headline, career summary, specialties, skills, experiences, and education, you are guided each step of the way.

LinkedIn offers both companies and recruiters effective tools to help them identify potential candidates and it is a fact that companies and recruiters actively use LinkedIn as a means to pursue future employees. Having a presence on LinkedIn shows that you are a savvy business professional who is up-to-date on the latest trends in technology. But just having a presence is not enough, your profile must be complete and effectively brand you as a strategic player in your area(s) of expertise.

In order to be found, you must create and maintain an applicable profile for your targeted career. LinkedIn offers a dynamic resource center to help you build a profile on your own (**LinkedIn Profile Overview**). Within this module, we will break down the LinkedIn profile into sections, and provide insight on how to best approach each.

## Optimizing LinkedIn: The Headline



The LinkedIn Headline falls just below your name. You are only permitted 120 characters to effectively promote your professional brand to the LinkedIn community. If you are currently employed, LinkedIn will default to your current title and company. This may suit you, but the headline is a powerful tool and you are NOT your job title! Keep in mind that your name and headline are the only two things that others on LinkedIn view when you leave comments in discussion or Q&A forums, or when you show up in connections listings. Therefore, the headline deserves your thoughtful attention. When establishing your headline, it is very important to consider the audience you wish to attract and the message that would compel that audience to want to learn more about you. Below are a few tips that will help you develop your headline.

**Define Expertise in Keywords:** Generate a list of common keywords that describe your primary area of expertise and pick the ones that do the best job of explaining what you do. Job titles can often be confusing or too generalized, so consider removing them from your headline - even if you are currently employed. Don't worry, your current title shows up just under the headline in a search.

**Be Specific:** The business world today does not want a generalist; they want an expert. Too often, headlines are generalized and ambiguous. Functional areas such as Human Resources, Information Technology, and Logistics have many different experts, under the same umbrella. Be clear about what you offer!

**Add Another Layer:** Are you targeting a specific geographic market or region for your profession or job search? You may want to add it to your headline as it will help increase the probability that the right people will find you. In addition, if you have unique specialties or particular industries that define your expertise, the headline is another way to get a little extra punch and power into your overall profile.

**Use Proper Capitalization, Grammar, and Spelling:** Nothing looks more unprofessional than improper use of capitalization, grammar, and spelling. Take a little extra time to do it right! When developing your personal strategy, always consider what may work best for your targeted audience and create a headline that will entice a prospective employer to want to learn more about you. Perhaps these headline sample will spark your creative thought process:

- Web Guru, Computer Technician, Patient Teacher, Business Owner
- Every geek's favorite Business Analyst
- Logistics Professional that has managed internationally and knows the key to success is empowering employees

- Human Resources professional with extensive Recruiting, Training and Development, and General Management Experience

## Optimizing LinkedIn: The Photo

For decades, Career Coaches have advised clients not to put a photo on their resume. The reason was to help the candidate avoid being screened out, due to personal judgment of their image, from the prospective of the hiring manager. LinkedIn's use of a photo as a standard part of the professional profile forces a firmly held position to be thoughtfully reconsidered, at least in respect to the use of a photo of yourself as a part of the job search strategy.

Omitting the photo on your LinkedIn profile is considered a faux pas, and in this professional social media forum, not only does it look odd if you don't have one, you may be screened out of a prospective opportunity if you are not visually represented. I learned recently that hiring professionals have a tool that allows them to filter out profiles that do not show a photo. Why would they even want to do this? Would it surprise you to learn that they are wondering what you have to hide? So, how does the job seeker comply with the standard profile set-up, and still avoid concern about not getting an interview because of their appearance, if they believe that is an issue? The answer is simple...consider the image that you want to convey towards your targeted goal and make sure that you meet that objective.

Your LinkedIn photo sets the foundation for brand "YOU", but you do not have to spend a small fortune with a professional photographer to obtain your desired results. A quality image from a good digital camera will work. The following are some tips and strategies to consider.

**Image:** The image you upload to LinkedIn should be a current photo of yourself; not your kids, not your dog, not you fishing with your buddies, just you. Reserve the funny, social images of yourself for Facebook.

**Focus:** The focus of your image should be a clear, well-lit shot with a primary emphasis on your face. You should take up at least 3/4 of your photo - anywhere from the waist up. The more your face fills the screen, the better.

**Background:** A professional image shot in a studio setting is perfectly fine, but you may want to break away from tradition, by having your photo taken outside in front of a business building, or a fountain. A photo taken inside an office is fine, but avoid sitting at an unkempt desk with a busy background, which is distracting. Again, make sure the focus is on your face, but capture energy and mood from the background.

**Clothing:** Wear appropriate, neutral clothing, that conveys the image you want portrayed to a potential employer. If you are an executive or manager, a formal business suit is recommended. If your objective is less formal, wear appropriate business attire. Avoid bright colors, and excessive jewelry, which can be distracting.

**Color:** A full color photograph will always present a better image than a black and white or sepia image. As the eye scans a list of prospective candidates, it will be the photos with color that will catch the eye. Make your photo appropriately POP!

**Smile:** One of the most important elements of your photo is to show your personality. Add a smile to your photo and you will brighten up your image and invite the world to get to know you. Below are some of our favorite images from our LinkedIn network. These professionals did a great job with their LinkedIn photos! We would like to personally thank each of them for allowing us to use their images in this module.



### **Optimizing LinkedIn: The Summary**

The LinkedIn Summary falls just below the main LinkedIn header box. This area, commonly known as the “About Me” section, allows the individual to communicate the essence of their professional brand to the business community. LinkedIn allots 2000 characters to this important segment of the profile, for the user to share their personal career story and aspirations.

It should be written in the first person and showcase professional highlights, values, differentiators, and goals. As with all areas of the LinkedIn profile, the Summary should effectively speak in a tone and style that speaks directly to your targeted audience. For example, creative professionals may add a touch of pizzazz and flair, and human resources professionals may include content about relationships, while engineers may take a less personalized and more technical approach.

If you have a strong profile summary developed for your resume, this may serve as a good foundation for your LinkedIn summary. However, you will want to shift the tense of the text to the first person and expand the content to show your personal style. Be sure to incorporate summarized career accomplishments to display your unique value to the workplace and demonstrate why they should hire you. The Summary may be as short as a single, powerful paragraph or as long as three paragraphs. Just keep in mind that length is not as important as the strength and effectiveness of the content.

## **Optimizing LinkedIn: Experience**

The Experience section of LinkedIn is where you provide documentation to support your unique value to the business world. It may be tempting to simply copy and paste the contents of your resume into the fields, but a better approach is to incorporate your personal voice into your profile with a first-person narrative for each. Since it is critical to upload a PDF copy of your resume to the LinkedIn profile, it does not make sense to have duplicate information. So, take a more creative approach to this section.

As you begin to add experience, you will first enter the company name for your most recent position. LinkedIn will begin an automatic search as you type. If the correct company shows up in the list, simply click to confirm. This will tag the company's website and primary information. If the company is not found, type the full name of the organization and the web address in the fields provided.

Next, you will enter dates of employment for the position you are describing. It is not necessary to enter month and date, but you must select at least a starting and ending year. If you have had long tenure at an organization, it is better to only enter the year.

For the job title, enter a job title that will be easily recognized by the business community. Often, companies develop creative names for various roles. Use a generic job title to help readers better understand what you did at the company. Always spell out the full job title, i.e. Human Resources Manager, not HR Manager. This will help with keyword branding.

As for the description; this is where you can get creative. In the first paragraph, enter a brief description of the company. In the following paragraphs (2-3 max), describe your tenure in that position. A helpful strategy to consider is what you would say in an interview to describe your role at that organization – translate this same verbiage into a narrative and you are on your way to success.

Keep your description narratives powerful, brief, and positive in nature; tell interesting stories that weave in your career accomplishments. Always speak to your passion for the kind of work that you do.

Continue this same process to complete your experience history. For jobs you held over 10 years ago, you may omit descriptions if the position is not relevant to your targeted goal. However, if older positions provide critical support to your target, you may opt to include a complete description.

## **Optimizing LinkedIn: Education**

Utilize the Education section to enter your earned degrees or those in process. You may also list specialty training that is relevant to your targeted goal. If your degrees were earned many years ago, only list the year you received the degree. You may also opt out of including dates if you wish.

## **Optimizing LinkedIn: Uploading Your Resume**

In edit mode, you may upload a PDF copy of your resume. You may also attach other documents that may support your candidacy such as a portfolio.

## **Optimizing LinkedIn: Customizing Your URL**

Select “Me” on the navigation bar, settings & privacy, edit your public profile, and then select edit your custom URL at the top right. Click the pencil and customize it with your name. Voila, now you have your own customized URL.

**Action: View the LinkedIn Profile Overview:** [This link can be found under Meridian Career Compass.](#)