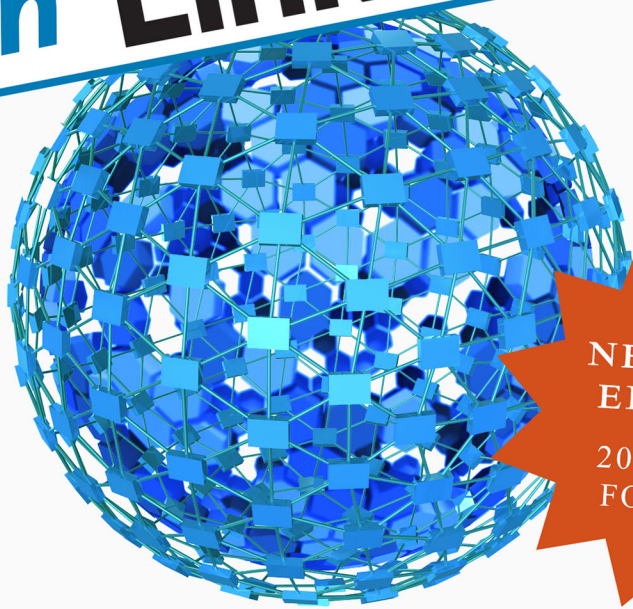
DAVID J.P. FISHER

Networking in the 21ST Century on LinkedIn™



NEW 2ND EDITION

20% MORE FOR 2019!

"Creating a digital presence with your business objectives in mind is a powerful tool for the modern networker. In this easy to follow guide, David offers tons of practical advice for staying relevant through online personal branding and communication."

—Amy Heiss,
VP of Marketing – Charles Schwab

NETWORKING IN THE 21ST CENTURY… ON LINKEDIN:

CREATING ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

DAVID J.P. FISHER

A RockStar Publishing Book

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For Chrissie, Colette, and Amy
Still my cheering section for all these years

Contents

Section 3 – Craft a RockStar LinkedIn Profile

Section 4 – Find and Engage Your Network

Section 5 – Share Your Message

Introduction to the 2nd Edition

It was just going to be a few small tweaks. That's what I told myself.

But as it usually goes, once I dove into writing I found there was so much more to say. In the time since the first edition of this book came out there have been many changes to the LinkedIn platform. It's gained over 150 million members around the world, added or changed countless features, and even got itself bought by Microsoft. But more importantly, how people use LinkedIn has continued to change and evolve. We're still experimenting, adapting, and finding new ways to leverage our newly created online world.

I had to change a lot of material in this book, both to capture LinkedIn's new functionalities and the new ways that we've agreed to use it. But what hasn't changed is the overall mission of the book: help people build their professional relationships and their network using LinkedIn. My original intent when first writing this book was to provide an overall context for how to use LinkedIn to move business forward. That remains the same. In today's hyper-connected landscape, your network is a key tool to find success.

How you engage with others, or how you fail to engage with others, has a profound impact on your available opportunities. Whether

you are a salesperson, business owner, entrepreneur, executive, or anyone else, your ability to create connections is a huge asset that can help you achieve your professional goals. And LinkedIn remains a powerful tool to help you do just that.

In ***Networking in the 21st Century on LinkedIn***, you'll still find a host of tactical steps to craft your online brand, build your network, and share content with your connections. But more importantly, you'll find the strategic map to think about how your LinkedIn activity fits into your business life. If we thought of your professional success as a building, LinkedIn is a hammer for you to use in the construction. And in these pages, I want to provide the blueprints that allow you to use the tool that is your digital presence to catapult you to real-world success.

See you on LinkedIn!

David J.P. Fisher May 2019

Introduction

When I tell people about my first book ***Networking in the 21st Century: Why Your Network Sucks and What to Do About It***, they assume it's about using social media. They're surprised when they find out that technology is only one piece of the puzzle. That's because good networkers use social media to support their offline activity, not replace it. Used correctly, technology creates a wide range of additional options to add to the communication mix. But without a solid foundation for branding and relationship-building, social media often causes more problems than it solves.

In ***Networking in the 21st Century***, I only spend a small amount of time talking about how to use social media. Our relationships still unfold in the offline world, and that's where we should focus most of our networking efforts. My goal with that book was to help professionals along the path of creating a foundation for their networking relationships. With that foundation they could leverage social media to help, and not hurt, their ongoing networking activities. But that doesn't mean that we can ignore the digital space. In a modern business world that is chaotic, noisy, and busy, technology and social media support the development of a strong network. It's critical to look at best practices that allow us to connect with each other.

And there are many social media platforms that can help build a robust professional network. LinkedIn is certainly one of them. In less than twenty years, it has gone from a scrappy tech start-up to a household name. And with over 600 million members around the world, pretty much everybody who is doing business has at least a profile there.

In this book, we're going to examine the strategies and tactics that will help you take LinkedIn from just another thing on your to-do list to a key tool in engaging with your network. Our focus is on using it to improve your business relationships, both the ones you already have and the ones you are hoping to start. No matter your professional goals right now, your network is important. You could be a salesperson, executive, jobseeker, artist, or attorney and the reality is the same: *Who you know is an important part of your career success*.

I think that LinkedIn should play a central role in any professional's social media strategy. It's a good "gateway" into social media use, and the competencies you develop there can translate to other platforms. LinkedIn has secured its place as the pre-eminent professional social media platform. While other sites like Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook play a role, the LinkedIn community has retained its seat as a business hub. The LinkedIn profile has become a trusted information source about the people we interact with in our daily business lives. The LinkedIn profile has become our online "professional record of note" that precedes us into our interactions. The different features on LinkedIn: sharing status updates, participating in groups, and using the search feature to find other professionals, have become commonplace business practices.

I started training and coaching people on LinkedIn in 2007. In the early days, I wasn't so much training as I was evangelizing. I remember having to tell people, "It's LinkedIn.com. No, it's not Linked.In or Linked.com". I was also the Director of Training for Ajax Workforce

Marketing, the first company to be an official partner with LinkedIn for training and branding in North America. In my time I've trained and coached thousands of professionals from fields as such as sales and marketing to accountants, executives, and recruiters.

You might have noticed that there are many LinkedIn books out there. That's because a platform this big, with a wide variety of users, isn't going to be a one-size-fits-all affair. There are many ways to approach social media and LinkedIn. You can approach it from a marketing perspective to become a "thought leader" and develop a following. You can take a social selling approach that uses it to develop a strong customer pipeline and find useful business intelligence. Or you can look at it as a collaboration tool that allows for easy dialogue with people around the country and globe.

My approach in this book is to look at LinkedIn as a tool to augment your professional networking. As I said, your network is the foundation which underpins all your other professional activity. And the stronger that foundation, the more opportunities will come your way. Everyone from veteran CEOs to fresh-out-of-school newbies needs to strengthen their connections offline and online to find success in today's business world.

At the same time, this book isn't meant to be completely comprehensive. The social media world moves super-fast and is in a constant state of evolution. If I dove into the minutiae of using all the social media sites, it would be out-of-date before the book got to print. That's why I'm not going to look at every single button and feature on LinkedIn. Because this isn't a book about the LinkedIn website itself. This is a book on defining yourself as a professional, connecting with others, and sharing your message. LinkedIn is simply the medium to do that.

My goal with this book is to connect your activities on LinkedIn with your on-going efforts to find, start, and build relationships with

other professionals. It's an amazing tool if used correctly, and I want to help you move the needle. If you are a newbie, let's get you comfortable in the online world. And if you are an expert, let's tweak and refine your process to get the most out of LinkedIn with the least effort.

Ultimately, this book isn't just about LinkedIn. It's about getting things done by using LinkedIn. It's about the results you can drive from your online activity that will allow you to create the professional life you've always wanted.

How to Use This Book

This book is a strategic and tactical roadmap to guide your LinkedIn activity. But it's not designed to be a step-by-step manual on how to navigate LinkedIn. The site is in a constant state of flux so if I tried to do that it would be out-of-date before it even got printed. Features, capabilities, and the user interface are always changing.

You will find that some of the sections are hands-on and do explain different functions. But with all adjustments and new features, it's easy to get lost. If there's a question that the book can't answer, I recommend doing a quick Google search on "LinkedIn _____". That way you will get the most up-to-date information. I won't even be offended if you look on someone else's site!

Each of the chapters in this book can stand on its own. In fact, many started their lives as articles and blog posts on various sites. That means you can dip in and refer to sections out of order and you will be just fine. Think of it as a cookbook that has the recipes for your social media success. Where you should start will depend on a lot on what you are trying to "cook". It's OK if you don't read it straight through. Feel free to skip around to the parts that are most relevant to you right now.

But there is a method to the madness and each section of the book builds upon the previous ones. You will be rewarded when you start at the beginning and read through. This is especially useful if you want to create a cohesive LinkedIn strategy. If you have been cobbling together an approach to LinkedIn, now is the perfect time to go step-by-step and create a strategic process.

We start with Section 1, where we will explore how to fit your online activity within the broader context of your professional life. To maximize your effectiveness, it's crucial that your LinkedIn activities align with your larger business goals. From there we explore your online personal brand in Section 2. We will walk through the questions you need to answer to create a clear and targeted online presence. And that naturally moves us into Section 3. That's where we look at the tactical steps that will allow you to communicate your brand through your LinkedIn profile.

If you stop right there, you'll be ahead of most professionals. But there are a lot of activities that pay big dividends on LinkedIn. Once you have the presence, the next step is to grow your network. Connecting with other professionals and sharing information with them is one of the main uses of LinkedIn. In Section 4 we'll look at how to find, connect, and engage with other professionals on LinkedIn. And in Section 5, you'll learn the tools and tricks necessary to share content with your network.

These five sections will give you all the tools necessary to engage fully and meaningfully on LinkedIn. But there's no "perfect" way to use LinkedIn and there's no "perfect" way to use this book. The key is to make it perfect for you!

Online Resources

This is a relatively rare book on social media because you won't find any pictures in it. There's a reason that it's not full of screenshots with arrows and circles that walk you through each feature and functionality. LinkedIn is well known for consistent and regular updates to their user interface. It's also common for LinkedIn to roll out features in stages, which makes it very possible for two users to have a different experience at the exact same time. Any screenshots I included would be outdated and irrelevant within weeks.

But fear not! I've got you covered. Visit the website for this book where you can find up-to-date screenshots that provide walk-throughs for all the tactical chapters. Just click on the chapter that you are looking for. In fact, I suggest having it open in a browser on your device:

davidjpfisher.com/linkedinnetworking

Even if you don't have access to the screenshots, what you find in this book will make sense. We're not going to focus on what buttons to push, but on how to reinforce and leverage your online relationships in a way that moves business forward.

Section 1

CLARIFY YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKING STRATEGY

LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook. Oh my!

It's easy to get overwhelmed with all the digital tools that are available. There are just so many options. To be successful, you need to approach your social media and LinkedIn activity with a clear strategy. It's important to look at your online presence within the context of your broader business goals. This is the critical step that will take LinkedIn from a timewaster to a key part of your daily business life. In this section, we are going to look at the strategic questions and answers that should precede your tactical activities with digital communication.

1.1

Social Media Changes Everything (And It's Not Going Away)

Let me set the stage. It's the fall of 1960. And for the first time in American history, two presidential candidates, Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, are going to debate each other publicly on a new-fangled invention: television. Both are capable candidates and experienced politicians, but that's not what the electorate would see in that debate, and it became a deciding factor in the election.

Kennedy is widely regarded as having "won" the first debate. Presenting himself as poised and confident, he had the aura of a movie star. He had spent the previous days with his campaign team planning for the debate and rehearsing his responses. Nixon had just finished a grueling campaign tour and had recently been in the hospital. He came off as tired, pale, and disheveled. He didn't want to have any make-up, so when he started to sweat under the lights, he looked sweaty and just, well, bad.

Kennedy and his team had understood the power of the new medium. The opportunity for the charismatic politician to communicate with so many people at once wasn't to be underestimated. And

they put the time into getting it right. While it wasn't the only factor in Kennedy's win, the debates influenced many of the American voters. Considering the outcome was determined by less the 125,000 popular votes, it's easy to see that a different outcome in the debate could have swung things in Nixon's favor.

You might not be running for President of the United States, but my guess is that you have goals that you are trying to accomplish in your career. As a professional you are trying to communicate with your colleagues, your clients, and your potential clients. Whether you like it or not, social media is the new media. It's the way that we are going to communicate with each other moving forward. And it's going to continue to become more important.

I talk to many professionals who don't think they have a social media problem because they can't see it. They don't see the prospects and partners going elsewhere after visiting a poorly built LinkedIn profile. They pay lip service to building their social media competence and presence, but rarely take action because they are "too busy", "company rules won't let me", or because "their network isn't online". They are happy to keep doing things the way they've always done them. There's only one problem: They are going to wake up one morning in the very near future and they will have become irrelevant.

You have two paths to choose from. You can be proactive and make sure that you communicate effectively with your network online. Or you can refuse to acknowledge the shifts in how we communicate and hope for the best.

Which side of history do you want to be on?

1.2

Technology Is a Tool, Not a Magic Pill

As you go through your workday today, you will focus on solving as many problems as you can. For most of us, that is what our work consists of: solving challenges that pop up through the day. Luckily our society has advanced a bit so the problems that we face aren't the dire ones that faced our ancestors, like mystery blights destroying our crops or hordes of marauding barbarians. For us, it might be finding prospective clients, balancing the books, or managing different personalities on a project.

Just like our ancestors, we consistently look to technology to solve our problems. They used irrigation and walls. We use social media and high-speed internet connections. However, if we think all we need to do is add technology, we'll wind up disappointed. Technology is a very useful tool, but it's *just a tool*. For example, it's not the hammer alone that helps construct the building. It's the hammer in the hands of someone who knows how to use it that can build a house, a hospital, or a library.

LinkedIn and other social media sites are fantastic for professional networking. Used correctly, these sites are incredibly useful and help build stronger networks and individual relationships, which leads to

more and better business. But anyone who is bad at networking and relationship-building and tries to put the Band-Aid of LinkedIn over the problem just becomes someone who is bad at networking with less time on their hands.

Don't look to technology to be the shortcut solution to business problems. That new website, iPad app, or payment service might be a part of the solution, but it can only be a *part* of the solution. If you don't put in the effort to solve your challenges at a foundational level, they'll just pop up again down the line. For example, if your organization is incredibly chaotic, just giving everyone a new time-management program will only be a short-term fix. In the same way, if you don't have enough clients and think a LinkedIn profile will solve all your problems you are going to be disappointed. You need to focus on the roots of a problem (which is rarely easy and rarely quick). You need to develop the skills and abilities that will determine how well you use the technology, just like the craftsman must learn how to use a hammer well.

There are no easy answers to the challenges we face. The empty promise of social media is that it is the only answer you need. Don't be fooled. Yes, spend time developing your LinkedIn chops. But also devote the time necessary to improve your general relationship and communication skills. Then the social media tools at your disposal will amplify your efforts to build better relationships.

1.3

Social Media Should Add Communication Options, Not Replace Them

There has been an ever-growing number of communication tools available to us over the last century, and even more in the past few decades. It used to be that the only way to talk to someone was to find them and actually *speak* to them (or maybe mail them a letter). Now with the rush of new technologies, there's a virtual buffet of options when you want to reach out to someone.

It's important to remember, though, that not all forms of communication are created equal. This is especially true in the business world, and even more critical when having a conversation where your goal is to influence someone else's actions (for example, a sales call). Business success is often based on relationships and relationships are based on communicating. Don't get trapped in using a communication method because it's convenient. It might not be that *effective*.

Think of the various communication tools that are available. What are the scenarios where they are appropriate and effective? Where are they a bad fit?

- Face-to-Face Conversation
- Skype/Video Conferencing
- Telephone Conversation
- Written note/letter
- Voicemail
- Email
- Text Messaging
- Social Media Direct Messages
- Facebook Wall Post
- Tweet

There will be some variations based on circumstance, but there are general rules of thumb to follow. For example, it is better when we can see the person we're speaking to. A great deal of interpersonal communication is in our body language and facial expressions. But if that's not possible, it's still more effective to hear the tone of their voice than to not. Texting or emailing is easier and can be done in environments where you wouldn't be able to hear or talk, but they don't have as much depth.

Does it mean that every time you want to effectively communicate with someone you need to speak to them face-to-face? Of course not. But it does mean that you need to be strategic with how you choose to interact. Tools like LinkedIn add a lot of options to the mix, but it's important to ensure that they fit with the conversation you are trying to have. If you need to ask somebody for an important introduction, a LinkedIn InMail might not be the best choice. Do you have a quick update on a project that you would like everyone to know about? Then the status update feature is perfect. By using the proper tools and technologies, you'll find it's much easier to communicate and influence others.

We all know someone who hides behind online communication. Don't be that person.

1.4

Use Social Media to Build Know, Like, and Trust

It's easy to be overwhelmed by social media. It seems like there's a new platform popping up every day, the established sites are constantly adding features, and the experts keep sharing new ways to use it. There are always new widgets, new buttons, and new functions. It would be tempting (and easier) to write off social media as a fad or just throw up your hands in surrender. But it's an immensely powerful business tool. You probably don't need every website *de jour*, but underneath the sometimes-confusing veneer are new and exciting ways for you to connect with people.

Many professionals haven't gotten to the point where they feel comfortable using social media for business on a daily basis. They can't get past square one because they don't know how to start. They "pull an ostrich" and stick their heads in the sand and ignore the world as it continues to evolve. Don't fall into that trap yourself! Even if you haven't jumped in yet, know that there's a place to start that's accessible to everyone. Instead of getting stuck in the features and buttons, take a cue from one of the basic sales lessons I learned when I was new to the business world.

I got my professional start selling cutlery in people's kitchens (and there isn't anything as old school as direct in-home sales). One of the best pieces of advice I received in the beginning was the sales adage: "People only do business with people they know, like, and trust. To be successful, the people you want to work with have to know, like, and trust you."

Here's my suggestion: let this be your guiding principle with social media. Don't freeze when you think of what steps to take online, simply ask yourself this question, "If my job depends on helping people know, like, and trust me, what functionality on LinkedIn will help me accomplish that?"

This gives you a foundation that allows you to create an effective online strategy. It will be one that is uniquely suited to your needs. It allows you to move forward with confidence because each step you take is influenced by your end goal. LinkedIn is a great place to start for most new users and you can build from there. Maybe you also want to learn about using YouTube to create educational videos. Or maybe you work with a product focused on women. It would make sense to spend time on Pinterest because it has a high percentage of female users. There isn't a right or wrong answer. Just go back to whether it will help the people you want to do business with to know, like, and trust you.

The pace of growth and change in social media isn't going to slow down anytime soon. In fact, it will continue to accelerate. It's not going to pause to let you catch up. If you are overwhelmed now, well, it's just going to get worse. The best strategy is not to try to understand all the technology. Rather, know what you want to communicate to your audience, and use the appropriate tools to do that.

Use the technology to help people know, like, and trust you. Make it your friend, not your enemy.

1.5

Why You Should Master Static and Dynamic Online Strategies

When I work with professionals on their social media strategies, the most common questions I get tend to be around what people are supposed to do with all the new platforms that have popped up. They say things like, "OK, fine, I gave up and got a LinkedIn profile. Now what do I actually do with it?" Or, "I've had a Twitter account for six months, but I've never tweeted. Should I?"

These are important questions. They are also hard questions to answer because these aren't one-size-fits-all platforms. Everyone will and should approach social media in a way that supports their overall business goals. And that will vary. Asking what to do with social media is like asking what you should do with email. It's simply another communication tool you can use to engage and interact with your clients, prospects, and partners.

A good place to start your decision-making with social media is to understand that there are two main areas of social media use: static and dynamic. Finding success with social media is about balancing your focus on these two areas. You can't do one and forget about the

other. It's like a basketball coach would say, "You have to play both sides of the ball –defense and offense".

Playing defense on social media means that you focus on the static content you create. You could consider it "passive" because it waits for your network to consume it on their own schedule. This works because the internet provides an information source that's open 24/7. The people looking you up might be potential clients, colleagues, or partners. Think about the last purchase you made or the last service provider you hired. I'm sure that you did your due diligence before you went forward. Your prospective connections are doing the same thing.

This is why it is so important to create an optimized social media presence! It's the passive part of social media. People are looking for, and finding, information about you without you even knowing. And they are looking for you whether you like it or not. You want to ensure that you are sharing the message that you want them to find. When you create an online profile that shares your professional message, it's always on and available. You put forth effort up front, but once it's up and running you only need to tweak your presence over time. Your LinkedIn profiles, both individual and company, are a key component of this presence. Your organization's website adds to this, as well as any online content such as a blog or YouTube channel.

Playing offense on social media is a little bit of a misnomer. You certainly don't want to be offensive on social media! However, you do want to engage in activity that connects you with your network. This is the dynamic part of social media. Being active on social is about developing a dialogue between you and your network. This is an extension of the conversations you are having in the offline world. You can share ideas, answer questions, and build trust just like you would in the "real" world. And online conversations can be much more efficient and scalable.

Even though there isn't one perfect social media strategy, an effective one will consist of both static and dynamic strategies. Michael Jordan is considered one of the best basketball players to play in the NBA. He could do amazing things when scoring points. Many people forget, however, that the key to his success lay in the fact that he was also a dominant defensive player. He could play both sides of the ball! You don't have to fly through the air to be successful. But if you want social media to be an effective part of your business, make online tools part of your daily activity.

1.6

Avoid the Time-Wasting Rabbit Hole of Social Media Surfing

Like most things in life, the rise of social media platforms has been both a blessing and a curse for professionals. There is a host of new opportunities to create meaningful engagement. And lose hours of productivity. Our approach to these platforms goes a long way to determining whether they really help us in our professional lives.

For example, my wife surfs Facebook after a long day to connect with her friends and see what people have posted. I play video games. Both are totally valid forms of relaxation. But I don't play video games in the middle of the day. And you shouldn't mindlessly surf LinkedIn and pretend that you are working.

It's important that you are deliberate and intentional with your work time on social media platforms. Here are ways that you can be more effective with your professional online activity.

1. Schedule your work and set a timer.

Before clicking on LinkedIn, plan out your activities. Know how much time you are going to spend there and what activities you are going to do while there. That way you'll have a guidepost to focus your activity. And more importantly, you'll know when you are done and should log off.

2. Don't go on social media when you don't need to.

Digital platforms have given us an amazing ability to connect in ways that we haven't had before. But that doesn't mean that all our work needs to involve LinkedIn. Know when it's time to market, comment, or collaborate, and when it's time to put your head down and do your work.

3. Turn off your notifications.

Every moment you aren't using their social media platforms, companies can't sell your attention to advertisers. Luckily for them, we give them permission to keep tempting us back by turning on our notifications. Every little "ding" calls us back like the Sirens called Odysseus. Unless your job is to directly monitor an account for possible negative activities, there aren't any emergencies on social that you need to respond to immediately. Turn off your mobile and desktop notifications.

4. Create opportunities for self-awareness.

Get in the habit of asking yourself, "Do I really need to spend my time doing what I'm doing now? Is there a real professional reason for me to be here?" If the answer is no, move on to something else. You can even set a timer to remind you if you find your social media sessions stretching too long.

1.7

Choosing to Upgrade to LinkedIn Premium

A common question about LinkedIn is, "Should I pay to upgrade to the premium LinkedIn account?"

It's a great question and one that doesn't necessarily have a clear-cut answer. I don't work for LinkedIn, so I don't have a vested interest in someone anteing up for the paid accounts. On the other hand, I do help people use LinkedIn and social media to improve their businesses and careers. For that reason, I think it makes sense to engage with the platform as much as possible. In the end, my answer is usually some variation of, "Yes. *Eventually*."

Let me tell you the exact reason why you shouldn't upgrade your account: Because you think that doing so will make your LinkedIn presence more effective without any additional work.

It's an easy mental trap to get caught in. Many professionals aren't completely comfortable with social media. When they look at their LinkedIn use, it's easy to throw a lifeline at the premium account. People hope that by paying for LinkedIn it will somehow magically work. The thinking goes something like, "It's hard to believe that LinkedIn can offer their really fantastic tools for free, so the good stuff must be in the premium account!" Too many professionals think that the secret to

using LinkedIn is behind the magic curtain of a paid account. But then they sign up, start paying… and nothing different happens.

While the premium account does give access to some very powerful features (more about that in a second), it doesn't do any of the work for you. You can have a premium account and still have no idea how to use LinkedIn effectively. Having access to these features doesn't guarantee success in itself. You still need to approach these features strategically and execute on a tactical level. It would be like thinking a new voicemail system would somehow make new prospects call you out of the blue. It just doesn't work that way.

How do you decide whether and when to upgrade to the premium account? Here are three steps to follow:

1. Understand what you get with the premium account.

You can view a full list of the premium features on LinkedIn's site. There are some fantastic tools, including an expanded "Who's Viewed Your Profile" section and additional search filters. LinkedIn isn't foolish. If it has an incredibly useful feature that they think people will pay for, they are going charge users!

2. Maximize the free account.

Before you pay for the premium, leverage all the free tools. Is your profile complete and optimized? Are you regularly sharing content through the status updates and engaging in conversations in at least a few of the groups? Have you used the search tool to find other profes-

sionals? You can get a lot done by using the basic account and putting a little attention on your LinkedIn activity.

3. Get frustrated by the limits of the free account.

This is the best time to upgrade to the premium account: when you have bumped up against the ceiling of what you can do with the free account. That's when you know that you're using all the available opportunities, and it's time to open the net a bit and gain access to additional functions.

While there isn't a right or wrong time to upgrade to the premium account, a few minutes of honest analysis will probably let you know where you are with your LinkedIn use. Just like a new piece of exercise equipment won't do your workouts for you, the paid features aren't going to connect and network for you. The LinkedIn premium account, while incredibly useful, isn't the magic pill for your social media use. You and your efforts are still going to be the driving force behind its value.

1.8

Is LinkedIn Sales Navigator for You?

Besides the Premium account, LinkedIn has also continued to refine and promote its specialized accounts: Recruiter and Sales Navigator. While Recruiter remains the go-to account for a select group of recruiting professionals, there has been a push to make Sales Navigator accessible beyond enterprise sales teams. Because there are a lot more salespeople than recruiters, Sales Navigator has created a much larger footprint.

For many salespeople, and professionals who need to sell such as entrepreneurs, business owners, and freelancers, Sales Navigator is a tempting option. And the same rules apply for deciding whether to get the Sales Navigator upgrade as they do for the Premium account. You aren't going to create sales by magic just because you upgrade. There are some powerful tools that the Sales Navigator license can unlock. But you need to ensure that you are using all the capabilities of the free account as well as the Sales Navigator account to make it worthwhile. Make sure that you are using LinkedIn to its full capability if you want to take advantage of them.

To get the most out of it these advanced features, start by maximizing the capabilities in your free account that we cover in this book.

Create a complete and targeted LinkedIn Profile. Build your network of existing and aspirational contacts. Start posting content that is meaningful to your network to allow others to engage with you. And engage with the content that your connections share as well. These don't require the Sales Navigator license, but they are necessary to create the foundation for your sales efforts.

For example, one of the Sale Navigator features is a much broader and deeper list of "Who's Viewed Your Profile". It allows you to track your activity and visitors to uncover prospects and other business opportunities. But too many professionals forget that visitors have gotten a first impression based on the profile. Did what they find encourage them to continue a conversation or decide that they don't want to have anything to do with the person they just read about? You can see why the foundation is incredibly significant.

But if you have created that foundation, and you are actively engaged in reaching out to prospective clients and creating new customers, Sales Navigator can provide some powerful tools to amplify your efforts. The ability to see everyone who has visited your profile allows you to see who is responding to your marketing and prospecting efforts. The robust search features, like advanced filters and saved lists will allow you to build better prospecting lists. You will have more access to tools like InMail to engage with potential prospects and contacts. And if you are working on a team, there are also features that allow you to engage with each other's network more effectively to leverage existing relationships.

These tools are incredibly valuable as you build and cultivate your sales pipeline. At the same time, you can use them to build your overall network. Beyond prospects and customers, you can use these tools to connect with influencers in your field, potential partners, or even potential team members if you are looking to expand. If you are selling, there are a lot of great things that you can do with the Sales Navigator license, but don't take any shortcuts.

1.9

Being Strategic with Your LinkedIn Privacy Settings

One of the most powerful and least used pages on LinkedIn is the **Privacy & Settings** section. (see 1.9.1 and 1.9.2) Privacy is a complex topic, and as a concept it's in flux right now. No matter what your personal approach to the information you share with the world at large, though, the ability to navigate the various privacy settings online is important.

On LinkedIn there are several ways that you can control how and what you share. Ultimately, what you decide to share and what you decide to keep private is largely dependent on your comfort level and on your goals for using LinkedIn. Focus on finding a balance between your privacy and security and being open to opportunity and connections. Networking, and by extension LinkedIn, works because it fosters new relationships. You can't do that if you don't share information. That would be like going to a networking event or conference and refusing to talk to anyone.

As the site and its functionality evolve, the exact methods for controlling what your network and the public can view will change, but there are a few key areas to pay attention to:

1. Who can see your profile and what can they see when they visit?

This is mostly controlled by the Public Profile setting, which allows you to hide part, or all, of your profile from being seen by non-connections. (see 1.9.3 and 1.9.4) You can also control how your profile headshot photo is displayed. In specific circumstances it can make sense to block certain information from being seen on your public profile, such as hiding the dates of your education/previous jobs if you are in a job search and are afraid of age discrimination. For most of us, however, it makes sense to allow your profile to be viewed by the public. Why spend time optimizing your profile if nobody sees it?

2. Who gets updates on your activity?

You can determine who sees changes made to your profile (like education updates or new jobs) in the How Others See Your Activity Section. You can also manage whether other LinkedIn members can see if you are active online. (see 1.9.5) Turning your activity broadcasts on and off can be useful when making a large number of changes to your profile. Turn it off as you are making the changes to prevent each one from popping up on your connections' newsfeeds. Switch it back on as you make the last change and your connections will be alerted to your shiny new profile. Currently, it's also possible to determine who sees your individual posts on a post-by-post basis.

Limiting the reach of your activity feed doesn't make a lot of sense if you are trying to share your brand with a wide audience. However, if you feel more comfortable sharing with those close to you, share your activity with only your direct connections or immediate network.

3. Who can see if you've visited their profile?

The "Who's Viewed Your Profile" feature gives you a list of those who have looked at your profile. It also lets the professionals you visit know that you have stopped by. (see 1.9.6) If you want to check out others anonymously, change Profile Viewing Options from your full information (name, picture, and headline) to the Private setting. If you are doing a lot of sales or recruitment prospecting, it can be helpful to go anonymous. However, if you are visiting profiles to get more information you should leave it open. It acts as a digital calling card and lets the other person know you care enough to do some pre-meeting research. If your setting is on "Private" you won't be able to see who has viewed your profile. LinkedIn likes to keep things fair. Balance your desire to stay hidden with the usefulness of seeing who is checking you out.

4. Who can see your connections?

Normally, your first-level connections can see who else you are connected to. It's possible to change Who Can See Your Connections so your connections can't see the rest of your network. (see 1.9.7) It can make sense to hide your connections for confidentiality reasons if you are in a profession where you are connecting with clients or patients. For example, if you are an attorney and doctor you might

want to hide your connections. Also, some salespeople prefer to hide their connections if they have both competitors and clients in their network.

5. Who sees your email address?

Most professionals don't control their email addresses very well on LinkedIn. It's important because most have their primary email set to the personal address that they used when they first set up their account (and I've seen a lot of old ones like AOL and Hotmail). You can add multiple email addresses to your account in the Add & Manage Email Address section. (see 1.9.8) I would suggest setting your work address as the primary address. This is the only one that the system will send emails to. And you can control who sees that email, from only your first level connections all the way up to every LinkedIn member.

Section 2

DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL ONLINE BRAND

Your personal brand is how others perceive you as a professional. Whether you know it or not (and whether you like it or not), you already have a personal brand. When others think about you, they have a certain opinion of you. That's your brand. Or maybe other professionals don't think about you much. Unfortunately, that's your brand too!

It's impossible to control how others view us, but it is possible to influence their perceptions. The first step is to create clarity on how you want others to perceive you. What brand would encourage others to connect with you and engage with your message? Finding those answers will help inform your LinkedIn work. They will determine everything from how you write your profile to who your connection strategy to how you share content on LinkedIn.

2.1

Create Brand Through Visibility and Reputation

When we worked for the same company our entire careers, the idea of a personal brand wasn't important. These days, with shorter job stints and a "free agent" economy where it's common for professionals to bounce from employer to employer, a strong brand is incredibly important. But how do you manage your personal brand and still get everything done on your to-do list?

Here comes social media and LinkedIn to the rescue. Your brand is based on how you are viewed by your network, the people that you know and the people that know you, i.e., your LinkedIn connections. There are two main pieces that make up your personal brand, and LinkedIn can have a huge impact on both.

The first is **visibility**. As our networks get bigger and as more information fights for people's attention, it can be harder to be seen. We don't always have the time to meet for a business lunch, and we might not have a close enough relationship to give people a call just to catch up. But by connecting with our network online, we are given permission to talk to them through LinkedIn. Every time you show up on the homepage of your 1st-level connections, you get a visibility bump.

It's called top of mind advertising. For example, Coca-Cola spends millions of dollars every year advertising a product that everyone already knows about. There is a reason for this. When you get thirsty, the first thing they want coming to your mind is "I want a Coke." When your network thinks about your field, specialty, or niche, the first thing you want them to think about is you! And with LinkedIn, you don't have to spend those millions of dollars.

How your network sees you is based on your **reputation,** which multiplies the power of visibility. It's not just how many times they see your name, but the ideas and emotions that get attached to your name when it's seen. Do they think you are competent, experienced, and connected? Or do they think the opposite? This is why thinking about the content of your online activities is a valuable use of your time.

It's important to have a clear thread that connects your LinkedIn profile, your status updates, and all your online engagement. Talk about your areas of expertise and interest, share tips and information, and occasionally add in something personal that humanizes yourself. Be consistent with the themes of your activity and you'll create a strong identification in the minds of your connections.

By reinforcing visibility and reputation on LinkedIn, you'll find benefits that reach well beyond your online activities. In the real world, your network will have a clearer idea about the problems you solve, and more and better opportunities will come your way. And that's when you'll know that your brand has value!

2.2

Write Online Like You Speak Offline

There's a huge mistake that professionals make when thinking about their personal brand. They get stuck thinking of it from their own point of view. And they end up making assumptions, using lots of jargon, and creating complicated ideas that only make sense in their own head.

I read a lot of LinkedIn profiles. I've seen great profiles that really let me know who a person is and what they are all about as a professional. And I've read profiles that… well, that leave me scratching my head. For example, this is a sentence that was really on a LinkedIn profile. (I've changed details to protect the uninformed.)

> "I enjoy vectoring in on product/marketing strategy and taking intelligent risks to further my company's mission. Constantly aspiring to work in an agile and effective manner across real and perceived functional boundaries to demonstrate leadership, leverage, and results."
> What!?

Here's the deal. This person is highly capable, highly qualified, and successful. I've met them. But that doesn't come through at all because it's lost in jargon and business euphemisms. This happens frequently because of LinkedIn's roots in résumés and technical writing. Unfortunately, your readers don't want to slog through all that mumbo-jumbo to figure out what you actually do. They aren't looking for your autobiography, they want to know if you can help them with whatever problem they are trying to solve.

Here's my rule for online activity. It applies to all platforms, and it applies to LinkedIn profiles, status updates, and other content. I call it D. Fish's Axiom of Proper Language on Social Media Platforms:

"If you wouldn't say a sentence in the real world,
don't write it in your digital communication."

That's it. When you are sharing your brand, double-check that you are being accessible. When you write something on your LinkedIn profile, say it out loud before you publish it. If it doesn't work when you say it, then you should go back and rewrite what you just wrote. Make your profile clear, concise, and understandable. If you force your visitors to decipher what you have on your profile, no one will care if you are brilliant or not. They will have already stopped paying attention.

2.3

Outlining Your LinkedIn Brand Message in 3 Steps

At the root of every ineffective LinkedIn profile and wasted status update is a lack of planning and forethought. Even with over 600 million users, most people are still on LinkedIn in a reactive capacity. They created their profile because others invited them to connect. And if they post it's because they heard that they were supposed to. They are missing the strategic component that will enable them to leverage their time. They haven't thought through what they are trying to accomplish and therefore they accomplish very little.

Asking and answering a few simple strategic questions can go a long way to making your LinkedIn experience much easier, more effective, and more efficient. It's important to know what you are trying to say before you look at the ways that you can say it. A clear focus is the biggest differentiator between a good and bad online presence.

Before you work through your profile and subsequent interactions on LinkedIn, there are three important questions to examine.

1. What are your most important business goals?

It's important for you to articulate the goals that you are working towards in your career. Can you clearly spell them out? Though they may seem obvious to you, if they remain vague ideas, then you will struggle to communicate them. It's not enough to say, "I am trying to advance in my company." Or "I want to get more clients." Be exact. Write the answer down, you'll find the exercise requires you to take the fuzzy ideas in your head and make them concrete.

It doesn't have to be complex. It can be as simple as saying, "I want to develop relationships with the leadership in my company so that I can get a promotion in the next 12 months." If you are in sales you could say, "I want to increase my pipeline of high-level prospects so that I can close five additional deals this quarter." Looking for a new position? How about, "I want to increase my visibility as an expert in my field."

2. Who is the most important audience for you to communicate with?

There will be many different people viewing your profile. If you try to speak to all of them at the same time, your message will be very muddled. Identify the most useful group that will see your message. Your profile and content should focus on this group.

That doesn't mean you should exclude everyone else outside your target audience, but they will understand your message (and who it is for) if you are clear enough. For example, executives who focus on the decision-makers at their client companies will still be understandable to their peers and other industry professionals. Those "third-party

observers" will realize the main intent of the message and still get valuable context.

3. What message does that audience need to hear?

Once you know exactly who is in your target audience, consider what they need to hear from you. The best communicators focus on the information their audience needs to receive, not just on what they want to say. This is the core of your personal brand. Understanding how you want to be perceived is a critical step towards sharing effectively on LinkedIn.

If you are struggling with this, pretend that your ideal profile visitor is physically with you. Maybe they're sitting across the table or you are talking to them at an event. What would you say to them? What would you want them to know about you? Would you highlight your experience, your passion, your unique ability to solve their problems, or something different? This will give you the foundation for building your brand message.

These three steps create the strategic underpinnings of an effective LinkedIn presence. When faced with questions about what to write on your profile or share with your network, go back to these answers. They will point you in the right direction by creating a focus point for your activity. The tactical decisions you need to make daily become that much simpler.

2.4

The Power in Defining Your Business Niche

I'm going to let you eavesdrop on a conversation I've had with hundreds of people while talking about networking and their LinkedIn presence:

> Me: *"So who are your ideal clients? Who's the target market you want to work with?"*
>
> Well-Meaning Professional: *"Everyone! Which is why I'm totally confused about why I don't have more opportunities!"*

It's sad but true that I usually have this conversation with professionals who are struggling to find success in their chosen field. It's ironic, but whether they are a small business owner, a salesperson, or an executive for a large company, someone who thinks that everyone is their customer is usually short of customers.

They might think that they are keeping their options broad. They often think they are "opening the net". In reality, they haven't put the time and effort into defining who they serve. Or they are afraid of committing to a specific demographic and cutting themselves off from

future opportunities. By doing so, they make themselves an unmemorable commodity to their prospects, clients, and peers. If you know your economics, you know that a commodity's price falls to the lowest point possible to barely cover costs. That "low-value" place is not where you want to be.

Lots of great things happen when you have a clearly defined audience that you serve. Most importantly, you can communicate more clearly to partners and clients because you have articulated the exact problems you solve. Your personal branding becomes more effective because it speaks to specific needs and specific customers. Also, others can refer you more easily because they can grasp what you do, and they'll know where you fit into the spectrum of your field. Yes, the people who are outside of your target market are less likely to respond, but it's offset by the fact that your ideal clientele will know how to find you.

Here's a slightly morbid example, but one that illustrates the point well:

- If you're a general practice doctor, you compete against every other doctor, health clinic, and webmd.com for patients (i.e. clients).
- If you are an oncologist, people who have cancer will work harder to find you because you focus on the solutions to their problem.
- If you're an oncologist who specializes in pancreatic cancer, the pool of people who need your expertise is smaller. But if they have pancreatic cancer, they are really motivated to find you.
- And if you are the oncologist who is the expert in a rare type of pancreatic cancer that only affects one hundred people a

year, you best believe those one hundred people will seek out your services.

Plant a flag. Narrow your focus to a specific group that you can help more effectively than anyone else. Then tell everyone.

2.5

How to Incorporate Side Hustles into Your Personal Brand

These days it's common for professionals to have part-time jobs, hobbies that bring in an income, passion projects, supplemental gigs, and side hustles. Maybe they do it because they want to bring in some extra money, or maybe they are toying around with starting their own business someday. Or maybe they just really love doing something beyond their regular 9-5.

No matter the reasons, these side activities are an integral part of people's lives, so how should we account for them in our online presence? I get asked all the time about whether these belong on someone's LinkedIn profile. And the answer I usually give is:

> "Maybe, but you have to be very careful how you do it. And if in doubt, don't."

When visitors are reading your profile, they don't know much, if anything, about you beyond what they read. That's why it's so important to be clear and concise when sharing your message. If it's broad

and rambling they won't know how to pull out the most important threads. Every additional piece you add to your story can muddy the waters. When you share a side gig or outside passion on your profile, you could be creating a mixed message. From your perspective, you are just trying to provide a richer picture of yourself. But they could interpret this as split interests. This can detract from your professional credibility in their eyes.

For example, if you were going to hire a plumber to fix your toilet, would you want to hire one who spent all their energy focused on pipes or one who also played jazz piano on the weekends? While the music probably doesn't take away from someone's wrench skills, if you had a choice between the two, wouldn't you want to hire the one who solely focuses on your plumbing?

Should you always avoid mentioning your extracurricular activities? Of course not. But be sure it fits with the overall message you want to send. Part of this will depend on how much time and energy this side gig requires. I know a successful business owner who is an assistant football coach at his old high school. He played in high school and college, and he wanted to stay connected with his alma mater and the kids. It takes up some of his time during the season, but that's all. No one thinks that he is going to start coaching in the NFL anytime soon, so he put it on his profile as a hobby. In fact, it helps him start conversations with people because they see it on his profile and ask him how the season is shaping up.

If you look at my LinkedIn profile, you will see I used to play drums in a band. It helps to explain why my company is called RockStar and why I still use the nickname I earned on the stage. But I also make it clear that it was in the past and that my focus now is on my speaking and coaching. It spurs a lot of conversations about music and drumming, and that fits with my overall brand. It also explains why I use so many music metaphors when I am on stage.

That works if your side job is more of a hobby or in the past, but what if your side hustle is a big part of what you do in the present? I know someone who runs a social media agency and at the same time is an incredibly active fitness instructor. For her, teaching fitness is a central activity to who she is as a person and a professional. She combines the two online brands by talking about the power of taking action on the right activities to create success on social media as well as your personal health. In her view, for both a business using social media or an individual pursuing physical fitness, the same rules apply. She's created a unified story where success online and at the gym stem from the same processes.

As more and more professionals pursue side gigs, we'll get more comfortable sharing and understanding the nuances and wrinkles in our and in others' careers. That might take a little while, though. It doesn't mean that you should hide or avoid your other interests and passions, but maybe you don't lead with them. Weave your side work into the story of who you are as a professional.

The goal is to create a larger umbrella narrative that fits all your activity. Taking the opportunity to humanize yourself and provide some depth is fantastic. But remember that the reader is still creating an initial impression. If your side activity is too tangential, it's OK to leave it off. If there is a way to integrate your side activity into your main message, go for it.

2.6

Sharing Online Information in a Short-Attention-Span World

Fifteen seconds.

By the end of that those few seconds, over half of a webpage's visitors have left (according to research by digital metric tracker Chartbeat in 2014). And if you do a quick Google search on "how long do viewers stay on a webpage", you'll find a host of other stats, numbers, and figures, but they all point to a simple fact:

People don't spend a lot of time reading online information.

This has important ramifications for your online presence, especially with your social media profiles and posts. When a prospective client or other interested party visits, they are looking for more information on you. However, they aren't looking for an autobiography. You have only moments to communicate your message and engage them.

Because of this, you want to think like a journalist and focus on your critical messages. It's counter-intuitive, but to effectively snag your visitors in that window you should realize that less can be more. Focus on short, powerful, and clear messages instead of overwhelming

them with a large amount of information. In this situation, quality is much more important than quantity.

That's a challenge for most professionals, who are trained to be incredibly thorough when communicating the facts and figures of what they do. (Think about the last PowerPoint presentation you saw). We're taught to cover everything and so we're afraid of leaving out important facts or over-simplifying. Because it is so easy to continue to add content, we think that we should dump as much information as possible into our online presence.

It's important to keep in mind that your online presence, especially your LinkedIn profile and posts, aren't meant to be fully representative. They aren't full conversations. Think of them as your calling card. You aren't trying to explain everything you do to prospective partners. Instead, you are offering an introduction so they can choose whether to engage with you further.

Remember that a short attention span does not equal stupidity. When talking about online attention spans with many veteran professionals, I've encountered a dismissive attitude among many of them. They want to complain that the shorter attention spans of online visitors point to a lack of intelligence, sophistication, or decision-making ability. This attitude is reinforced when it is lumped together with complaints about the "younger generation".

If you haven't noticed, we live in a world with a glut of information, and we need to process it quickly. If you were a digital native who grew up in a world overloaded with information, wouldn't you process information quickly as well? You'd want to make sure that you weren't wasting your time. And it's not just young people, it applies to all generations.

Studies done by Microsoft also show that if someone does stay on a website for longer than 15 seconds, the likelihood that they'll stay increases. Basically, you have a few seconds to make a good first

impression, and if you do make a good first impression and create value, people will give you more time. In this way, short attention spans are a way of vetting an information source to make sure it's valuable and useful.

By the way, before we bemoan the short attention span of the next generation, keep in mind that it's all relative. An ancient Greek who was listening to the Iliad (remember, they were an illiterate culture) would need more than a few seconds or minutes. It would take about 15 hours! If you had asked them, we've been living in a short-attention-span world for a long time.

How can you engage the short attention span visitor on LinkedIn? While crafting your LinkedIn profile and other digital content, keep in mind the power of the first few seconds to grab or lose the attention of your visitors. Focus on making your message clear and to the point, so that you can help them justify spending more time with you.

Here are three specific strategies that can help with on your LinkedIn presence. They also easily translate to other sites:

1. Make the first 3 seconds count.

When people see your online content, it will take only moments for them to make judgments based on these few pieces of information. They won't even do it consciously. Act like a journalist and create a strong lead. Look at the first few lines of your posts on LinkedIn. And analyze your photo and your headline on your profile. Look at your picture and ask yourself if it sends the message that you want it to. And ensure that the headline right under your name clearly and succinctly tell your reader who you serve and how you help your clients.

2. Remove superfluous verbiage.

If you have only seconds to share your message, excess or vague information is a deal-breaker. When you copy/paste long paragraphs of marketing material from your company webpage, it takes your visitor too long to uncover the most relevant information. In fact, it's likely that a visitor will see the info dump and simply skip it. Be clear, be concise, and be succinct.

3. Keep every section relevant.

Don't upload your entire resume to LinkedIn, but rather share a narrative that explains how you help in terms that are relevant to what you do today. Only include information that is relevant to your main message. This applies to every part of the profile. For example, if you have authored articles that have appeared in an industry publication, they should be listed. If you wrote an article that appeared in a gardening magazine (and you aren't a horticulturist), leave it out. It's not relevant and it muddies your message.

It's too late to debate the positive and negative aspects of a short-attention-span culture. It's already here. If you are going to be successful in this new world, it's important to position yourself in a way people can understand and digest. Remember, once you've engaged your online visitors, they've made an important decision to give you some of their attention (which is a very scarce resource). Once that has happened, you can dive deeper into the complexities and nuances of how you help. But don't put the cart before the horse!

2.7

Don't Tell People What You Do, Show Them

When you get to its core, LinkedIn is a cool site. You have a platform that allows you to share your professional story easily and at scale. Your posts allow you to share up-to-date information on your career. And your profile is a website that it is all about you: your experiences, your skills, and your education. In other words: your story. But most of us aren't that experienced in telling (and writing) our story, so we get flustered when we are putting together our profile. A common trap people fall into is approaching their LinkedIn presence like they would a resume.

This has a lot of negative effects, but one of the biggest mistakes is that people fall back on using résumé-speak, the jargon and empty phrases that are used when putting together a resume. The problem with resume-speak is that no one believes it:

Results-driven… yeah, right.

Team-oriented… sure you are.

Goal-focused…if you say so.

These days, people are skeptical about what they read and hear. We're exposed to so many marketing messages that we have learned

to tune out most of what people tell us. How can you share your awesomeness, then, if your audience won't believe what you tell them?

Don't *tell* people how good you are.

Show them.

Because of our innate skepticism to what we hear, we've learned to give a lot of credence to results and actions that can be seen and documented. That's why online content can be powerful: because it is chock-full of ways for you to demonstrate all the experiences, skills, and knowledge that you have. For example, when you are considering your overall strategy on LinkedIn, think of how your profile can show that you possess all the attributes you claim. In other words, how can you prove that you can walk the walk and not just talk the talk?

Here are a few ways you can make your profile show your story instead of telling it.

1. Take as many adjectives as possible out of your profile.

Try this: Print out your profile onto a piece of paper. Take a pencil. Cross off all the adjectives. Is your profile still compelling? If not, you are leaning too heavily on using the adjectives to tell people about yourself. It would be hard to have a profile completely devoid of adjectives, but it's a great goal to have.

2. Use the additional information sections to tell your story.

The LinkedIn profile has several areas that allow you to go deeper into your story, so use them. If you are highly trained in your field,

list your certifications or classes in the education section. Are you a thought leader in your industry? Then list the publications you have authored or that you have been mentioned in. If you network a lot or are involved in your community, be sure to list the groups that you are in. And be sure to list any volunteer work you do.

3. Write for people.

Remember that the visitor to your profile is a person, not a search bot looking for keywords. Use language that is understandable to the average reader. Keep it simple and to the point!

Section 3

CRAFT A ROCKSTAR LINKEDIN PROFILE

For modern professionals, the LinkedIn profile is one of the main pillars of their online professional presence. Too often, professionals look at the blanks on their LinkedIn profile and start filling them in with little forethought. And then they wonder why they don't get good results! In fact, for many professionals, it is *the* main tool to communicate with everyone from colleagues and partners to clients and prospective employers. A quick Google search of someone's name and city often puts their LinkedIn profile page at the top of the search results.

The personal branding strategy that you developed in the previous section will guide what put on the page (or screen as it were) as you craft your LinkedIn profile. You don't have to be a professional writer or marketer to have a great profile. It's simply a matter of taking each piece in turn and using it as a tool to communicate your brand. Let's make sure it's saying the right things!

3.1

The First-Person vs. Third-Person LinkedIn Profile

One question that is disarmingly simple centers on the voice you should use in your profile. Should you use the first-person or the third-person voice when crafting your message? Should you use "I, me, and my" or should you use your name? This is especially important to consider for the Summary and Experience sections. Those are open fields where you can communicate directly with your reader.

In the early days of LinkedIn, I said that either direction was fine. But as the platform has evolved, I suggest you always use the first-person. There's an underlying assumption that each person writes their own profile. If you write in the third-person, two negative thoughts pop up in the mind of your reader. First, they start to doubt whether you wrote it, or if someone else did. There's a short mental jump from there to doubting the credibility of the message. Secondly, it makes you sound like a pompous ass. Would you ever speak of yourself in the third-person when talking to someone in the offline world?

Not everyone is comfortable writing about themselves. We've often been trained to not put the focus on ourselves. But when crafting your Linked Summary and Experience sections it's completely acceptable to

use the first-person. Imagine that you are speaking to your visitor at a professional event when you're writing these sections. You can even start each paragraph with the word "I".

Your visitor wants to read about your career and professional life from your perspective. Speak from that perspective and share a message that connects with your reader's needs.

3.2

How to Use Your Profile Images Effectively

Humans are wired for sight. Literally. We have over 30,000 nerve receptors in our ears but over 1 million in our eyes. When we have an opportunity to communicate visually, we need to take advantage of it.

Ironically, LinkedIn was resistant to visual storytelling for a long time. While platforms like Instagram and Pinterest are almost based entirely on pictures, LinkedIn has only started to position video and images more prominently. For a long time, there was only one image attached to your profile, your headshot. As the platform added multimedia to the different sections, it was possible to cheat a little to add more images to your profile. You could use the thumbnails of videos, slideshows, and .pdf files to share more visual information in the profile. And that's still a valid way to get more images into your profile. But these were ad hoc fixes.

That's why the relatively recent addition of the Profile Banner photo is a big deal. It has been the first meaningful visual component added to the LinkedIn profile. It's effectively doubled the number of images that you can add to the Header section of your LinkedIn Profile. And the banner has a lot more open space that you can use to

share information. (LinkedIn recommends a 1584 x 366 image for the banner). That's significantly more than just a small headshot.

The banner also allows for more expression because it doesn't have to be a headshot of you. It could be almost anything! But that doesn't mean that it should be. Your banner image selection should have one overarching goal: to set a tone. You want to help set your reader's expectations. And that will influence how they read the rest of your profile.

Even before they start reading, your banner and headshot are going to influence how they feel about your credibility, accessibility, and likeability. They are going to make these decisions unconsciously and without even trying. It's just like meeting someone in real life. Even before we start talking, we take in visual cues like their attire and facial expressions to judge how we should interact. We don't do this intentionally. This is simply how our brains are wired for interpersonal communication.

That's why it's important that we are deliberate with what we share on our Banner. It's not enough to just have a pretty picture. And don't use an image just because you think it looks cool. This is the first opportunity to communicate with your visitors. You don't want to miss out on the chance to share your message, or worse, confuse them. You want to align your image with the overall theme of your profile.

Some ideas of banner images that set a tone:

- A branded image from your organization. It could be just a company logo or a photo from your marketing material that includes logos, colors, or other taglines.
- A photo of your team taken at an event, like a conference, celebration, or even a party at the office.
- An image that features the accomplishments of you or your organization, for example industry awards or a book or product that you created.

- An action shot of you doing the work you do.
- If your work centers around a specific location, like a city, building, school, use a photo to let people know.

3.3

How to Pick the Right Headshot Photo

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. So what are the thousand words of your profile photo saying about you? People like to "see" who they are interacting with. That's why YouTube has hundreds of hours of video uploaded every minute and one of the most popular social media sites with teenagers is Instagram. It's common for people to say, "I can't remember people's names, but I can always remember a face." That visual preference has followed us online.

Besides your banner image, your headshot is the only photo attached to your profile. That is why it plays such an important role. (see 3.3.1) On LinkedIn, a profile with a photo gets approximately 11 times more traction than a profile without a photo. These days, a profile with the empty outline indicating that you haven't uploaded a photo makes you a bit of a non-entity. (see 3.3.2) Used correctly, a good headshot captures the message that you share on your profile textually and represents it visually. And your visitors do want to see that.

The first rule of thumb is to keep your profile photo consistent with the rest of the information you are sharing. Ask yourself, "Is the

person in the photo the same person that the visitor is reading about?" If you talk about how hard you work for your customers, but your photo is you lounging on a beach, there's a mismatch. Similarly, if you're sharing your successes on your profile, but the photo is a blurry one taken with a cell phone camera, your audience will wonder just how successful you really are.

This highlights the need to be polished in your photo. Both you, and the photo itself, need to have a certain degree of professional polish. You don't need an uptight headshot, but you should convey that others can trust your competence. The prevalence of good cameras means that we expect to see high-quality photos, so don't short-change yourself. Low-grade or inappropriate photos make your visitors doubt the professionalism of the person in the photo. Polish in the picture is also driven by the context of the photo: what you are wearing and the background of the photo. Dress for success.

Balance that polish with approachability. Humanize yourself. Your facial expression conveys approachability (or the lack of it). Would your reader feel comfortable interacting with the person in your headshot? Is it open, warm, and friendly? Can your visitor imagine starting a conversation with you if they met you at a business meeting? Your profile visitor is asking themselves if they could engage with you, and an approachable photo lets them feel comfortable taking the next step.

Selecting a great photo is easier than we make it out to be. It's normal for us to look at our own photos and see the tiny imperfections. Everyone else looks at your photo and (usually subconsciously) mines it for contextual information: "Where is this person?", "What message does their clothing send?", and "Are they smiling at me and therefore friendly?"

These are the same thoughts that go through our head when we meet someone in person. The advantage we have online is that we can strategically choose the photo that will send the message that we want.

If you are struggling to choose the right photo, ask for an outside perspective. Send three photos to a few close friends and see which one they like. There are also online sites that allow you to post photos for assessment by others.

A few quick guidelines: Make the photo of you and just you. Keep other people (and your fishing trophy) out. Position the photo well so that you are centered and zoom in close enough that it's easy to see your face. Only use action shots if they coincide with your work. For example, if you speak at a lot of meetings, then a picture of you presenting could work. And finally, though it may seem obvious, make sure that it's a photo that looks like you. Your online presence needs to support your offline activities. If the person in the photo doesn't look like you, or if he or she looks like the "you" of ten years ago, then it's not doing its job.

Put the same care in managing your online appearance as your offline appearance and you'll be fine.

3.4

Easy Ways to Get a Great LinkedIn Profile Photo

Once you understand the power of your headshot, it's important to go and get a good one. How can you get a good headshot that isn't a poorly lit photo that someone took with their iPhone against the white wall in your office?

Yes, there are a lot of those around. Everyone who sees that image knows exactly where it was taken, and they judge it accordingly. And yes, your profile visitors are judging you based on your photo. This amateur office photo is almost as common as the "I have this nice picture of me at a wedding. So I just cropped out my significant other and the glass of wine I was holding" picture. These types of photos are sending a brand message that you don't want to send!

How can you get a photo that looks great? Try one of these ideas instead:

1. Pay a professional to take a great photo.

This is a good investment for anyone. But it's especially important if you interact with your prospects or external clients online. You'll be

able to use your photo on LinkedIn, and on your website and other social media platforms. Many photographers have packages specifically for social media headshots. You can get a good, professional-looking photo for under $150. To find someone near you, do a Google search on: "professional headshot social media (your city)".

2. Look for networking events in your area that feature a photographer.

Many professional events, conferences, and networking groups include someone taking headshots. For example, in Chicago there is a huge LinkedIn group, Linked N Chicago, which regularly organizes offline networking events. At many of the events they have a photographer who is set up in the corner taking headshots. For the price of admission, you can get a professional headshot and build your offline network. Look around to see if you have a local networking group that offers something similar.

3. If you work for a larger organization, talk to your marketing department.

They might be able to hire a photographer to come in and take photos of the entire team. This has the added bonus of creating consistency among all of your colleagues. When your LinkedIn visitors see that everyone in your firm has a similar style and quality to their headshots, it reinforces your brand message, both on a company level and an individual level.

These are just a few of the ways you can get a professional, high-quality photo. The most important thing you can do, though, is get

one! Someone could be on your LinkedIn profile right now, deciding whether to do business with you. Make sure that your photo is helping your cause, not hurting it!

3.5

Starting Your Profile with the Perfect Headline

Headlines are important. Whether it's a newspaper, a blog article, or your LinkedIn profile, the headline performs a few important tasks. (see 3.5.1)

First, it grabs attention. Newspapers have huge front-page headlines because they want to snag the attention of people walking by the newsstand. Because there are so many messages bombarding us daily, it's critical to cut through the noise. In the same way, your Profile Headline should reach out to hook your ideal audience. This is doubly important because the information that appears in LinkedIn Search results includes your name, picture, and *headline*. You want it to grab the reader.

Secondly, you want to give the reader the opportunity to opt-in to you. Eye-tracking studies show that people spend more time on average reading the Headline than any other part of the profile. They are processing the information and deciding whether it's worth reading more. Since time is such a valuable commodity, they are vetting you based on the information you share in the Headline.

Finally, the Headline creates a framework for the reader of your profile. They will know what to expect based on how you start the

profile. A blog article that starts with the headline "5 Ways to Improve Your LinkedIn Headlines" leads to the expectation of exactly five ideas for your online social profile. In the same way, your Headline lets the reader know what they will find in the profile that follows.

How do you construct a Headline that does all of that? Focus on making it compelling and informational like a newspaper headline. By the way, I said newspaper headline, not a tabloid headline. It's not about shouting, but rather telling your reader who you help and how you help them.

The default setting of the headline is your current position and company, which is pulled from your Experience section. If you listed Project Manager at Company XYZ as your current position, that's your default Headline. Realize that your job title may or may not be meaningful to your outside reader. As you go up the company hierarchy, job titles have more resonance outside the organization. For example, everyone knows what a CEO does. But what if you are a salesperson, account representative, director, or small business owner? There's very little information in those titles for an outside reader. Right now, there are over 1.6 million "account executives" on LinkedIn right now. They work for a wide variety of companies with a wide variety of responsibilities. In that situation, you couldn't rely on your job title to communicate your value and your title alone isn't going to be enough.

The solution is to take a cue from the search engine optimization world. Look at populating your Headline with keywords. The keywords that you select in this scenario won't be determined by a computer search algorithm. Instead, let your selection process be guided by words that your ideal audience will respond to. This is another place where knowing your ideal audience is important. You want your headline to resonate with your target market when they first see it.

A simple way to add these keywords is in two areas: who you help and what you help them with. In fact, a useful template for brainstorming the headline is:

"Helping (insert who you help) with (what you help them with)"

This allows your visitor to think "I'm looking at the right person" when they see your profile. It also stands out more in the search results. Instead of having a dry job title, they'll see:

- Helping Fortune 500 Companies Solve Complex Personnel Issues
- Helping Medical Professionals Manage and Grow Wealth
- Helping Our Sales Team Deliver Amazing Customer Experiences

You can easily use a different verb than "helping". It's simply a starting point for our brainstorming. However, it's effective because your profile visitors are looking for help and we want to be as direct as possible.

Crafted properly, your headline will serve as a beacon to the audience that you want to talk to. It creates a positive first impression and draws them in to find out more about you.

3.6

Words You Don't Want to Use in Your Headline

Over the years, I've seen a lot of LinkedIn Profiles and a lot of Headlines. Which means I've seen the good, the bad, and the downright ugly of social media.

And I've compiled a list of what you want to stay away from when talking about yourself on LinkedIn. Too often, professionals try to be cute or clever, and it just comes off as foolish, arrogant, or clueless. Or they use terms that they think are informative that are in actuality bland and meaningless. Instead, just focus on being clear. Here's a list that hurts your ability to communicate and engage with your network.

1. Ninja

No. You're not. Just no. Stop it.

2. Guru

Are you going to be a spiritual guide to website marketing or graphic design or whatever? Why not just call yourself the high priest, pope, or cult leader? You're attempting to gain credibility by attaching yourself to a system of spirituality that you know nothing about. You look foolish and nobody trusts gurus, anyways.

3. Account Executive

I just did a search and there were 1.6 million account executives on LinkedIn. Your readers have no idea what it means in your specific situation. Please, take two minutes to write something more descriptive. Almost anything else you write will be more informative.

4. Founder

This one's tough, because if you are a founder, your life is wrapped up in the business you created. But your reader doesn't care about your story, they care about how you can help them. And founder really doesn't tell them how you help. Unless you "founded" Uber or Twitter or another household name.

5. Assassin

Really? Do you kill things for a living? I know that you are trying to make yourself sound like a badass, but I want someone who is going

to help me with my business challenges, not try to impress me like a 13-year-old playing Xbox.

6. Results-Oriented

LinkedIn puts out an annual Top 10 of the most overused words on profiles. This one is a regular on that list. It's jargon and it means absolutely nothing. Aren't we all focused on getting results in our professional lives? Here's a general rule of thumb: if it looks like it belongs on a resume, don't put it in your headline.

7. Connector

Being a LION on LinkedIn doesn't make you a mover and shaker who is making deals happen. Whenever I see someone who is a "Connector", I wonder who they are really connecting. And that rarely speaks to how you help your customers.

8. Wizard

Hey, I read Harry Potter too. But I've come to grips with the fact that I'm not going to be visited by an owl anytime soon. Unless you are talking about your Friday night Dungeons & Dragons game with your friends, leave the spellcasting out of your profile.

9. Expert

I'm going out on a limb here because there are a lot of experts on LinkedIn, but here's my take: If you must tell me that you are an expert, you probably aren't. You just think you are. Don't tell me, show me on the rest of your profile that you have the chops. (By the way, there's an exception. If you've put your 10,000 hours in, then go ahead and claim your expertise.)

3.7

The No-Sweat Guide to Writing Your Profile Summary

Along with your profile images and headline, the profile summary is the third of the three most important parts of the profile. It's a blank canvas of 2,000 characters and there are many different approaches you can take to communicate with your reader. That multitude of options can create a lot of stress. Many people simply don't know the right approach to take when writing their summary. And because most members don't have a clearly defined process for writing it, their apprehension leads to unfocused, unclear, and incomplete summaries.

This isn't helped by the fact that many professionals are uncomfortable writing about themselves. It's easy to see why people spend very little time on the summary. This is unfortunate because it's an opportunity to have your message broadcast to everyone, everywhere, all the time. It's like having an elevator speech that's on 24 hours a day. Imagine that your profile visitor is your ideal contact. Your summary is your chance to speak directly to them. What you share should mir-

ror what you would say in the offline world if you met that person at a conference or cocktail reception.

If you're not a writer, this can seem daunting. But a step-by-step approach will help make this a painless process. The goal is to find a balance between giving people adequate information while not overwhelming them. They didn't come to LinkedIn because they were looking for a full autobiography, but they do want to find out more about you and what you do.

Walking the line between too much and too little information is the difference between a Summary that just exists and one that drives business. When looking at how to create a great summary, it helps to start by looking at what not to do first. There are three big mistakes that people make all the time. You're going to see a lot of these examples as you surf around LinkedIn.

1. Some skip the summary completely – it's blank.

They are losing out on a powerful way of influencing their visitor. A blank summary conveys one of a few messages, and none of them are positive. It shows that the professional in the profile could thinking: "I'm not confident enough to write about myself", "I'm too overwhelmed by other things to think about LinkedIn", or "I'm not current with trends in business (i.e. social media) so I don't want to spend time with LinkedIn". No matter the reason, these profiles miss out on a huge opportunity, and they are creating a negative impression on their visitors.

2. There are also a lot of resume imports.

These are the people that have just cut/pasted from the Objective section on their resume. It's often filled with jargon, with phrases like detail-oriented, results-focused, and team player. No one speaks "resume" in the real world, and you shouldn't speak it on your LinkedIn profile. Not only are you communicating poorly, but if someone looks at your profile, they might think you're looking for a new gig. And that doesn't show that you are committed to doing good work where you currently are.

3. The opposite of the blank summary is overloaded one.

This is when someone tosses in every piece of information they have about their professional career. It's usually overwhelming, chaotic, and long. These are not good adjectives to describe your online presence. People take one quick look at a long summary and tune out. They aren't at your LinkedIn profile for your life story, so be concise. People don't read online, they scan. Because of that, you want to make the important information easily accessible.

The first step to avoiding these mistakes is to keep your overall strategy in mind. By considering your target audience, the message you want to send them, and the business goals you are currently focused on, you will have a clear direction. Using those ideas to organize your thoughts, you'll come up with a concise, tight message that will accurately communicate your brand message to your visitors.

A simple, clear structure is the secret of a great summary. Let's walk through a simple template that will help you organize this information in a way that will be engaging to your visitors and make them

want to do business with you. We'll do this with three short paragraphs. You'll want each paragraph to be between 2-3 sentences. We're going to keep this short, sweet, and simple.

1. Tell people what you do on a day-to-day basis.

Don't use internal jargon or fall back on your job title. For example, your reader might not know what an Account Executive or Director does at your organization. You need to tell them what you do and who you help. You can't just assume.

This could be as basic as saying, "I'm a real estate agent that specializes in working with first-time homebuyers" or "As the Director of Marketing at Company XYZ, I'm working on new ways to let our customers know about how we can help." It's a short version of your elevator speech. If you were at a neighborhood BBQ and someone asked you what you did, what would you say? That's how you start your summary.

2. Next, tell the reader what makes you better.

You want to find a way to differentiate yourself. Usually, this is going to include an "I" statement and a "we" statement. There's probably a reason why you are good at what you do and why people like to work with you. It might be your experience, competence, skillsets, or passion. Whatever it is, share it. Then you want to connect with your larger organization. Talk about what your company brings to the table. Your company has spent thousands of dollars, maybe more, figuring out how to market themselves. It makes sense to grab a sentence or two from them.

It could be as simple as saying, "I have 20 years of experience in the field, so I know how to solve our customers' challenges easily and effortlessly." You could share your passion: "I love when I'm able to help our employees shine." And think of the one or two sentences that you would use in describing the best parts of your company. That's what you would add here.

3. Finally, you want to share something about yourself.

People want to connect with other people online, not companies or brands. Be human. It's being Profersonal™ and recognizing that your personal and professional spheres are intertwined online. Find something you feel comfortable sharing about yourself. It's not an online dating profile, so you don't have to say you like long walks on the beach, fine dining, and that you're a Virgo. Rather, share one non-professional activity and one detail about it.

For example, don't say that you "like to spend time with your kids" because that just shows that you are a normal human being. However, if said that you liked to spend time with your kids and you coach their Little League team, that's more informative. If you like to bake, tell your reader about your most popular creation. If you are a live music fan, share your favorite concert experience. If you are a golfer, let people know what course you are dreaming of playing. You are looking to share a "hook" that creates a natural starting point for a conversation.

You might not be a big writer and that's OK. You can still do this easily and quickly. Take a piece of paper and divide it into three sections, one for each step. For each of the steps, write down 3 or 4 ideas. Just do a quick information dump onto the paper. Then, in each section, write one sentence that tries to encapsulate everything. You'll

find that you will need an extra sentence or two to fully explain what you mean. And before you know it, you'll have a summary. If you aren't super confident or you want some feedback, show it to a colleague or friend that you trust.

Sit down today and write out your summary. Experiment! It doesn't have to be perfect the first time around. You are always evolving and growing in your career. The summary will evolve and grow with you.

3.8

The Right Way to Add Keywords to Your LinkedIn Profile

I'm always looking for a few good tips on improving the LinkedIn profile and I like keeping tabs on what everyone else is talking about. That means I read a lot of articles that are some variation of "X number of ways to make your LinkedIn profile work for you". Most give solid foundational tips for the profile. But I see one idea repeatedly that I need to mention. And not for a good reason.

It seems like basic advice, but I think it's counterproductive. I cringe every time I see it because it's horrible advice to give someone who is reading an article on the basics of writing a LinkedIn profile:

Create a *keyword-rich* summary and experience section in your profile to bolster your SEO efforts.

On the surface, this isn't bad advice. But it's most helpful if you are already comfortable writing keyword-rich online material. If you know what that advice means and how to execute on it on your profile, go for it.

But here's the thing: most people who are writing their LinkedIn profiles aren't brand marketers or advertising-agency copywriters.

Most professionals don't have the time to craft a keyword-rich, carefully worded LinkedIn profile. Most barely have the time to craft a poorly worded profile. And if you don't know how poorly-worded most profiles are, spend 10 minutes randomly viewing profiles and you'll see how many desperately need help. Most of us aren't even comfortable writing about ourselves, or even writing at all.

Telling a LinkedIn newbie to write keyword-rich text is like putting a novice skier on a double black diamond slope. They take one look at it and say "Forget this! I'm going to get some hot chocolate." It's doing them a huge disservice because instead of sharing their professional story in a meaningful way, they avoid it altogether. It can take me hours to craft keyword-driven content, and I'm an experienced writer who works with LinkedIn for a living, so don't expect yourself to be an expert when you first get started.

If you aren't an experienced writer of online material, the best advice is to keep it simple. Here are tips to keep in mind if you aren't a copy-writing master:

- Don't worry about the keywords.
- Just tell your story.
- Use your own voice.
- Be genuine.
- Tell me about yourself and what you do as if you were telling a new friend.

You don't have to worry about putting keywords into your profile, because here's the kicker. If you tell your story with confidence and passion, those pesky keywords tend to show up anyway.

3.9

How to Share Your Experience and NOT your Résumé

How do you talk about your past on LinkedIn? It's easy to look at the Experience and Education sections on your LinkedIn profile as the "resume" part of the profile. There's a slight problem, though. No one wants to read your résumé. Even corporate recruiters and headhunters don't like reading résumés. But then how are you supposed to talk about your past work life?

Much of the confusion stems from the fact that the LinkedIn profile *did* start as a kind of online résumé. In its early days, LinkedIn was a way for professionals in Silicon Valley to keep track of each other. It was an environment where short-term stints were the norm and paper resumés and contact lists were quickly out-of-date. It was a short hop from using it as a contact database to using it as a forum where people could be found for work. It stayed that way for the first year or two, and so it was natural for the first non-Silicon Valley users to upload their resumés as well when they first created their account.

Even though the platform has changed and evolved since then, most professionals still think of LinkedIn primarily as a job-finding

tool. And it makes sense to add your résumé to a job-finding tool, doesn't it?

But that doesn't tell the complete story. These days, to think of your LinkedIn profile as a fancy resume is to think of YouTube as just fancy television. There are a wide range of new activities and interactions that it enables. In the past, you would only use a résumé when you were looking for a new job. Now someone can look at your profile whenever they need to engage with you. That could be when they are thinking of hiring you, hiring your company as a vendor, or even just partnering with you on an internal company project.

This is why it's important to craft your professional story. The Experience section provides a place to share the narrative of your career arc. You don't list your past jobs just to fill in the blanks, but to show how you got to where you are today. Your past experiences are what support everything else that you are saying in your profile, from your headline to your summary.

If all you do is import your résumé, you've lost out. When was the last time you talked to someone who just wanted to curl up with a good résumé? Of course you haven't heard that, because they are usually dry, convoluted collections of facts and figures couched in "résumé-speak", a language that isn't used in everyday life. When was the last time you used "results-oriented or task-focused" when talking to your friends? Nobody wants to read that on your profile.

When outlining your experience, use language and a structure that will encourage people to read it. (see 3.9.1) Your current position section will have some similarities to your summary, obviously, because it's what you are doing in the present. There's also an opportunity to talk more in-depth about your role on a day-to-day basis and about the company that you work for. Don't assume that someone can look at your job title and know what your responsibilities are. At the same time, though, don't go overboard. People aren't at your LinkedIn pro-

file because they couldn't find your autobiography on Amazon. They want the basics. Writing two to four sentences is enough for your current position.

Avoid glossing over your past positions. The jobs you held in the past are how you got the experience that you use today. In fact, that's how you should structure what you say here. Write a sentence about what you did at a past job. Then spend a few sentences telling your reader what you learned there that makes you awesome in your current role. Keep it simple and focus on transferable skills and experiences. And no bullet points! It's not a résumé, and since you don't speak in bullet points you shouldn't write in bullet points here either.

It can sometimes be challenging to figure out if you should include certain past jobs, especially if you've been in different industries or if you've had a long career. My suggestion is to include anything that's relevant to your current role. If you've been in your industry for 20 years, your college summer job delivering newspapers doesn't need to be there unless you are now an editor or writer at a major publication. Ask yourself, "does sharing this job help my audience understand why I'm good at what I do, or does it not serve my overall story?"

Filling in the Education section is straightforward, but there are a few things to point out. (see 3.9.2) First off, be sure you use the right dates, which also goes for your Position entries. Include your graduate work and add your high school, especially if you are in the same area that you grew up in. You never know when someone is a fellow alum. Include all your major academic endeavors. For on-going professional development, licenses, and other training use the Certifications section.

The goal of your Experience and Education sections is to give a fuller picture of your professional narrative. It fills in the details to what you've outlined in your Headline and Summary. Every professional has a story to share, so share your story!

3.10

Putting Your Personality into Your LinkedIn Profile

The internet has shrunk the world by giving everyone access to information and people that was unheard of just a few years ago. Whether someone lives in a rural town or a booming metropolis, they are only a few clicks away from a wealth of information on products, services, and prices. Your network doesn't have to rely on you for basic information about your field anymore. They can sit in front of their computer or pull out their smartphones. Information asymmetry, where information is unevenly distributed, is a thing of the past. We all have access to the same material.

Since others don't *need* you for simple information, it's easy to see your position become commoditized. This is especially true if you are in a sales or customer service role, but it applies to any position where you provide a service for others. You risk becoming a cog in the machine that can be replaced with someone else. In economics, the value of commodities falls to a point where there's almost no marginal profit. Not a fun position to be in no matter what role you have.

How can you stand out if you can't set yourself apart by your access to information? The first thing you can do is focus on your niche. Being an expert who can interpret information and solve prob-

lems is always in demand. Another way to stand out is to emphasize your unique individual perspective and experience. Ironically, one of the best tools for that is the same technology that leavened the playing field in the first place: the internet. Tools like LinkedIn, blogs, and your website become the platforms where you can share your unique perspective. It's where you demonstrate your brand on an individual and human level.

How can you bring your personality and your unique perspective into the LinkedIn profile on a tactical level?

My suggestion is to think *profersonally*™. My friend Jason Seiden had to invent the term because there was no way to describe the eroding line between our personal and professional lives on social media. But it's an idea that was around well before the internet. We've always connected with our business contacts on a personal level. Social media is just making it more apparent as we bring this mix into our online conversations. The more others can connect with you as a person, the stronger your business relationship will be.

Being profersonal means that you'll keep the tone of your profile professional, but you'll let who you are as a human come out as well. Share your professional competence and experience, but also share your unique story. If you are struggling with this, imagine that your perfect client is in front of you and you are talking directly to them. Here are some ways that you can share your personality through your LinkedIn profile.

1. Photo

Using a polished headshot with a great smile is never a bad idea, but you can let your personality come through here a bit (as long as you are doing it on purpose). Is your office near your alma mater and

you still bleed your school's colors? Then maybe some school memorabilia will make it into your photo. Or if you often speak on industry topics, how about a photo of you on stage? Have a little fun, and always make sure that you stay consistent with your overall message. In other words, don't put a photo of you at the beach if your profile focuses on how hard you work for your clients.

2. Summary

This is an easy place to let your personality come through, but it's usually misused (if it's used at all). If your summary is filled with vague buzzwords that make your eyes glaze over, then trust me, your visitors are bored too. A great way to flesh out your summary is to be very specific with how you help people. Don't assume that they know how you work. You need to tell them. You can also add a profersonal statement right into the summary, which is a little bit about one of your favorite activities outside of your professional life.

3. Previous Positions

The career paths that people take these days are rarely straight. How you got to where you are is important. Don't just tell people what your past jobs were, tell them what you learned at those jobs and how they influenced the way you approach your work today. Were you a teacher, an engineer, an artist? Your career is yours alone and creates a unique perspective, so be sure to share it.

4. Volunteer Work

An obvious way to set yourself apart is in how you choose to spend one of your most precious resources: your free time. Whether you are involved in civic organizations, industry associations, or humanitarian causes, let people know what is important to you. And don't list nine associations just to make yourself look good. Your visitors know you are pandering. It's better to focus on one topic like housing the homeless than puffing up your chest with all the meetings you go to.

5. Education

Be sure to list your educational experiences and list your major and extracurricular activities. Where you choose to put your academic focus says a lot about you, even if it doesn't appear relevant to your current role. Also, you never know when a potential contact was also a biology major or wrote for the college newspaper like you did. It's an easy way to create a shared connection.

These are just a few of the places you can demonstrate your personality, but they're a great start. Your network can find information about your industry or field from many sources, but they can only find out about you from you. Take the time to share your message and your personality with others, and the benefits will come back over a lifetime of stronger (and more productive) relationships.

3.11

The Value of Sharing Your Community Involvement

Many professionals want to walk the line between sharing too much and too little of themselves through their social media presence. It can be challenging to find the perfect balance point between staying professional and giving your visitors a deeper glimpse of who you are personally. The goal is to share enough so that they will be comfortable starting an online dialog. And in doing so the chances are much higher you'll be able to start an offline conversation eventually.

On LinkedIn, an easy way to get started with sharing what's important to you is through the Volunteer Experience & Causes section. Sharing your involvement in non-profits is a simple and profound way to share a broader picture of yourself online. It gives a more complete picture which is important when sharing your brand. It allows you to be more authentic and transparent because your brand encompasses what you do professionally but also who you are as a person.

It makes sense that many people in your network would share some of the same values and interests that you do. People feel most comfortable doing business with people that share a background and commonalities. It's easier for them to build trust in someone whom they can relate to. As you look to build your connections, you can accelerate the relationship-building process by allowing your prospects to find common ground with you.

You don't have to join a group or organization just to put it on your LinkedIn profile. Like many professionals, you are probably already involved in community organizations that support causes that are important to you. It's just a matter of including that in your profile. LinkedIn makes it easy with the dedicated Volunteer Experience & Causes section. You can use it to include both current activities and past involvement. You can even list your specific roles in organizations, which is a great way to highlight the leadership positions you have held.

Is it possible to push away potential contacts by sharing what groups you support? It's possible, but it's unlikely that you will lose connections who share the same values by sharing what's important to you. But if you are concerned that a political or religious group might bring up some questions, it is OK to leave it off. Focus instead on organizations and areas that have wide-spread support. No one is going to be upset if you support the local animal shelter.

Your contacts today are savvier and more informed than they have ever been. Offer them more ways that they can engage with you on a personal level. Give them the information that allows them to feel comfortable with you and start building relationships that last a lifetime.

3.12

LinkedIn Profile Advice for New Professionals

There's a circular trap that hits most young people when they enter the job market. They run into the challenge of trying to get experience when they don't have any. They end up asking themselves. "How can I get the experience I need to be qualified for this job when no one will hire me because I don't have experience?"

If you are a recent college grad or have recently been a college grad, you'll know that there's a 21st-century twist to the problem. It goes something like this:

> "I am new to the workforce and everyone says that my generation is totally social media-savvy. So I should have a killer LinkedIn profile to help me get work. But what do I put on my "professional record of note" when my professional record consists of 2 internships and waiting tables during the summer at my local pizza place? How do I get something to put on my profile when I can't get a job because there's nothing on my profile?!"

First, if you're in that situation, breathe in and breathe out. It's going to be OK. We've all been there. Secondly, understand that LinkedIn is great precisely because you can use it to show what experience you do have even though you might not have a long work history. It's a great way to tell your story and frame the way potential employers will view you.

When companies hire, they are looking for someone who can do the job. That might sound obvious but think about what that means. The interviewer is looking for someone who has a high likelihood of success in the new position. That's why experience is important. It's a good indicator of whether you will be able to handle the responsibilities of the role. But you can use LinkedIn to fill in the hole left by your lack of experience. It can illustrate that you have the skills necessary to do the job even if we don't have a long line of previous experience.

Here are five places on your LinkedIn profile where you can look like a competent professional instead of a green rookie:

1. Update your headshot.

Do you still have a photo cropped from that fraternity social (the last time you were dressed up)? It might be time to get a new one. The trick here is not to look older than you are. The trick is to look polished and competent. Are you someone that an employer would want to represent them? Look around your area for networking events that have a photographer giving free social media headshots. And while you're there, do some networking.

2. Use the right headline.

If it says, "Student at XYZ University", time to change it. That doesn't tell a potential employer anything about you. Your LinkedIn profile headline is just like a newspaper article headline. It should create interest and excitement for the visitor. They should know right from the start what you are about. Try this: *Professional in (your field or industry) focused on (the specific area you want to work in).*

3. Write a compelling summary.

This is huge because this is where you can create the context for your visitors. You can influence how potential employers see you. Imagine that someone is hiring for a job you'd love and would be great at. They are sitting across the table from you and they've just asked "Why should I pick you. What will you bring to the team?" Use the summary to share that answer!

4. Frame your experience.

You might not have a long list of experiences, but make sure that the work experience you have adequately shows what you can do. But don't make this a bullet-pointed résumé section. Tell your reader about the learning opportunities you had in each position. What abilities did you develop at each role that you can transfer to your next position?

5. Add your volunteer work.

More and more young people participate in volunteer activities. And even if you aren't getting paid, it still counts as experience. Helping to organize a fundraiser or leading a community clean-up day are experiences that translate directly into the for-profit world. Use the volunteer section to not only show your involvement in areas that concern you, but also how you've refined your skillsets.

By the way, if all of this doesn't help you, then your LinkedIn Profile is providing you with another service: It's showing you where you do have gaps in your professional experience. Look for ways to fill those gaps, possibly through internships, apprenticeships, or even an entrepreneurial effort.

When you use these tools, you can create a killer LinkedIn profile, no matter that you are at the start of your career. You'll give yourself the best opportunity to move past the no job/no experience dichotomy.

3.13

Leveraging Skills and Endorsements

The Skills and Expertise section on LinkedIn has caused a lot of consternation since it's been introduced. When LinkedIn moved the keyword bank from the "Specialties" area in the summary to its own section, it was trying to provide some structure to the process. Unfortunately, things got confusing when it then allowed people to give each other "Endorsements" on their listed Skills (and even unlisted ones). No one really knew how to effectively use them or what exactly they meant.

Were they helpful or not? Did they lead towards a valid representation of someone's abilities or were people "gaming" the system? What if someone endorsed you for a skill you don't really have? How do you get your network to plug the right skills? The questions kept coming.

Here's my advice: stop worrying about it. Endorsements are valuable, but they aren't anything to stress about.

From a networking and relationship-building perspective, they are invaluable because they provide another level of credibility to your LinkedIn profile. It used to be that you could put anything in the Skills and Expertise section and there was no external "check" on what you

added. I could have said I was an expert in skydiving even though I'm terrified of heights.

Now you can still add any skill you want, but if no one endorses you for that skill it won't matter because it won't be as relevant or credible. If you put "Being Awesome" as a skill, but no one endorses you for it, it won't have a big impact. Conversely, if you are looking at a profile that has "Marketing" as a skill and it has 28 endorsements next to it, there's a much better chance that the person does know something about marketing. If there are 99+ endorsements, then there's a good chance they are an expert. You want to make sure that your profile accurately shares the message about your specific skill sets.

Here are the steps to take to maximize your Skills and Endorsements section:

1. Check to see that you are in a profession that allows endorsements.

If you are in a field that has compliance requirements (financial or legal, for example) you might not be able to use endorsements and you should hide them.

2. Add at least 20 relevant entries to the Skills and Expertise section.

This will encourage people to endorse you for skills that you think are your strengths. If you aren't sure which ones to use, look at colleagues and peers that you respect, and see what they have used. This is a keyword bank for search terms, so include any words that describe your position or the work you do.

3. Endorse the people in your network.

You don't have to endorse everyone for every skill they've listed. But if someone is good at something, say so. This will encourage them to endorse you back and makes everyone's LinkedIn profiles more accurate. And it's a nice thing to do!

Section 4

FIND AND ENGAGE YOUR NETWORK

A robust LinkedIn profile is a great start. Once we've established our brand online, we can look to engage more fully with our network. But if you want to use LinkedIn as a social networking tool, you need to have a network! The first step is to bring your existing connections into LinkedIn as well as use it as a tool to create new connections. It's important to align your networking activities with what you want to accomplish.

Each of us will bring a different set of goals and expectations to LinkedIn. Let's look at who should be in your network, the etiquette of how to engage with them, and even how big your network should be. Let's look at moving beyond the passive uses of LinkedIn and at how you can reach out to the 600+ million members on the platform.

4.1

What is Your LinkedIn Network

Before digital technology, it was relatively easy to define our network. It consisted of the people we had met over the course of our life and career. It was made up of those that we had physically encountered and engaged with based on where we lived, went to school, and worked.

But if you had to describe your LinkedIn network, how would you define it? Our online network still contains the people that we have had direct contact with over the years. But there are so many more opportunities these days. Now we can connect with others around the country and the world with a click of a button. We can reach out to thought leaders in our field, possible partners or clients, and fellow industry practitioners without ever meeting them in the offline world.

And beyond that, our newsfeed keeps us up to date on the activity within our network with little effort. A few minutes on our computer or phone can let us know a lot about what is happening with our contacts. Spending just a little time to scroll through your newsfeed allows you to stay informed with what's happening in your industry and the business world at large. Now we have a way to find out the needs and

opportunities of a much larger cross-section of our potential partners and customers.

This larger network has practical benefits. The researcher Mark Granovetter first discovered the power of what he called "weak connections" in his ground-breaking paper ***The Strength of Weak Ties***. These were people that we had contact with less than once a week but more than once a year. We had some relationship with them, but it wasn't a close connection. And these weak connections lead to job opportunities, possible partnerships, and prospective clients because we don't see them very often. That means they spend their days exposed to completely different people and information. They are our entry point into new spheres of possibility.

And that's the role that many of the contacts in your online network fill: they are weak connections. LinkedIn has given us a platform that we can use to stay in touch with a much broader group of our weak connections with little extra energy and time. That means that your LinkedIn network is much more than a collection of names and résumé information. It's an environment that we cultivate for business success. As you build your network on LinkedIn, you're creating the potential for good things to happen. You're building access and reach for future opportunities. Your LinkedIn network becomes a valuable resource that follows you for your entire career, from job to job. It's there for introductions, leads, feedback, support, and camaraderie.

4.2

Who Should Be in Your LinkedIn Network

The most basic question when building your LinkedIn network is: "Who should I connect with?" Social media platforms have broken down the geographic barriers that limited our networks in the past. Now, physical proximity doesn't hold us back from connecting. We can reach across the world to engage with others. But that freedom doesn't necessarily help us when we're deciding who we should connect with.

There's an important caveat to start with. Your LinkedIn network, the connections you have and the relationships you have with them, are yours. You are the final arbiter of who should be and shouldn't be in your network. There aren't any hard and fast rules in building your network, so it's important that you are comfortable with who you connect with and how you engage with them. Don't feel that you must engage in an online strategy just because someone suggested it (even me).

Should you just connect with everyone? Probably not. Just because online networking allows us to connect with everyone doesn't mean that we should. There are some professionals on LinkedIn who call themselves L.I.O.N.s (LinkedIn Open Networkers), and their goal is to

build as many connections as possible. They want to hit the LinkedIn cap of 30,000 connections. While there's nothing inherently wrong with this, you don't want to confuse reach with access. Thinking that you can have a tight network of thousands is like thinking that everybody in the phone book is your friend just because you have access to their phone number.

The goal is to balance reach and access. The place to start is with the people that you interact with in the offline world. Make sure that you connect with colleagues, customers, and partners in your current role. Even if you engage with them every day right now, in five years it's possible that some will have moved on and it will be good to have that online connection. In the same way, reach out to the people you knew at past positions, schools, and organizations. LinkedIn will give you a great tool to stay in touch with those people.

The next group of connections to add consists of those people you run into during your regular business activities. When you meet someone at a conference, a networking event, or another professional event, it's a good idea to follow up with a LinkedIn invite in the subsequent days. You don't have to see a direct and obvious business goal. Simply add a short note to the invite that says, "It was great meeting you at _____. I'd like to stay connected and see if there's a way to help each other in the future."

Just adding those connections to your LinkedIn network will help it grow over time. But you don't have to stop there. You can extend your offline networking activities into the online world. When one of your 1st-level connections shares content from one of their 1st-level connections, you can engage with that content and start a conversation. It can be powerful to reach out to that person who is a 2nd-level connection to see if they'd like to connect.

And along those lines, there's nothing wrong with reaching out to aspirational connections. These are people that you haven't met in

the offline world but who you would like to. They might be leaders in your field, community, or favorite organization. Or they might be someone who runs in the same circles as you but whom you haven't met yet. You can send an invite that says, "We haven't had a chance to meet yet, but I've seen your (postings, books, online content). I'd love to connect on LinkedIn. Let me know if I can help with anything." Maybe they will connect, and maybe not, but it's doesn't hurt to ask.

And that brings up the question of which LinkedIn invitations you should accept. As I pointed out at the beginning of the section, your LinkedIn network is yours and you are the final arbiter of who you let in. My friend Andy Crestodina has a simple decision-making process that you can learn from. If someone invites him to connect, and they share either an industry (marketing) or location (Chicago) then he'll accept it. If they don't share at least one of those two groups, he probably won't

You can choose to be pickier or more open, but I would suggest avoiding spam accounts. When you look at a profile and the individual is from another country and the profile is incomplete or doesn't make a lot of sense, it's best to decline. And always remember that you can choose to disconnect from any of your connections whenever you want to.

There are a lot of different ways to construct your LinkedIn network, but it's more useful to be inclusive than exclusive. So reach out and start connecting!

4.3

Using Introductions to Expand Your Network

People often think that the power of your LinkedIn network is in your direct connections. That's not exactly correct. Because one of the most valuable assets on LinkedIn isn't the people you know. It's the people that *they* know.

By providing access to these 2nd- and 3rd-level connections, LinkedIn provides you an amazing resource that you can use to gain new clients, new vendors, and new partners. These connections used to be "hidden". You wouldn't normally sit down at someone's desk and flip through their Rolodex. Now, that's exactly what you can do. You can find the exact people that you want to meet, find out information about them, and see how you are connected to them. Even the Search function allows you to organize the rankings by relationship. You can see which LinkedIn users are in your network easily and quickly. For example, if you wanted to find all the CPAs in your network who are your 2nd-level connections, it's only a few clicks away.

Once you've found a professional that you'd like to meet in your larger network, you have a few options. One way to do this is with a simple message to your 1st-level contact by LinkedIn message, email,

or phone. There's nothing wrong with finding the information on LinkedIn and then moving to another platform!

A few things to keep in mind. Keep your introduction "asks" short and sweet. Be straightforward and ask for what you want, and always give an out. It could be something like this:

> "Hi Bill, would you mind introducing me to your contact Sue Smith. She works at Company XYZ and I'm looking to work with them. I was hoping she might be able to help me with some insights into their marketing needs. If you don't have a strong relationship with her and don't feel comfortable passing on the introduction, that's totally OK. Thanks!"

Another option would be to reach out to new connection directly on LinkedIn. When looking at the profile of someone who is your 2nd- or 3rd-level connection, you will see the intermediary connections that you both share. Simply craft a customized invite to that person that references that connection. Again, simple is best:

> "Hi Lisa, I found your profile on LinkedIn and saw that we both know Jim Smith at Company XYZ. I've known him since we both worked at Acme Inc. These days I'm also a project manager in the technology field and would love to connect with a fellow colleague. Have a great day!"

4.4

Engage Your Alumni Network on LinkedIn

Of all the networks we build in our lives, one of the earliest and deepest networks we create is that of our alma mater. People take their connection to their school seriously. The fundraising department at your school depends on it when they have students call and ask you for money. Take me for example. I'm a busy guy and I don't have a lot of spare time just lying around. But if you want to have 5 minutes of my time, call me and tell me when you graduated from Northwestern University. I'll give you a few minutes.

In the past, if you wanted to network with your fellow alums you had to wait for your next reunion to roll around. Or if you were lucky, the alumni association would have events in your area where you could meet others from your school. That would only work, though, if you stayed around your school after graduation or were in a major metropolitan area.

LinkedIn has done a lot to beef up its alumni section. Because LinkedIn has 600+ million members who have self-identified themselves, your classmates are already there, and they've already checked the "Education" box. Whether you are a recent graduate or the class

of (mumble, mumble, mumble), it's a great tool to use when you are looking to expand your network.

At the heart of the alumni section is an incredibly powerful search engine that allows you to find your fellow alumni. (see 4.4.1) You can filter the results by where alumni live, what industry or companies they work in, and even what they studied while in school. The date filter allows you to find alums that went to school during a specific time period. This is a great way to find your fellow classmates. And you can also sort through them by the degree of connection on LinkedIn. For example, there are almost 5,000 members on LinkedIn who were Wildcats during the same years I was in school and who are also 2nd-level connections. Not only could I leverage my school connection, but we also know someone in common. That makes it a lot easier to start a conversation with them!

There are many ways you could leverage the alumni section. For example, those 5,000 2nd-level connections that I went to school with have spread around the country and the world and into almost every conceivable industry and job. If I was looking to move, to work for a new organization, or even to change career paths, I could reach out to my connections in those areas so I could ask questions and get some feedback.

If I was looking for help, I would reach out to my school connections. If I was interested in making inroads into a company because I wanted to get a job there or because I was in sales and they were a great prospect, I would absolutely start with fellow alumni. When you are prospecting for new opportunities, the hardest thing to do is get someone to pick up the phone and talk to you. You wouldn't expect someone to buy from you just because you went to the same school together, but it can be the proverbial "foot in the door" that helps you start the conversation.

Beyond the search feature, your school's homepage also includes a newsfeed where alumni can communicate with each other, a listing of notable alumni, and links to your school's LinkedIn Groups. How you use all this information is up to you, but it's a great resource as you build your career!

Go 'Cats!

4.5

Getting Started with 3 Daily LinkedIn Activities

I often get asked, "So what am I supposed to actually *do* on LinkedIn?"

Usually this is asked with a mix of confusion, annoyance, and desperation. Online social networking represents a fundamental evolution in how we communicate, and it can be overwhelming. How can you start using it in a way that helps you accomplish your work goals? One of the best ways to get acclimated to LinkedIn is to use it consistently. You want to make your social media use a habit.

You might be afraid that this takes a lot of time. But once you make it a habit, LinkedIn requires just a few minutes a day to use effectively. Social media moves from something on your *to-do* list to something that helps you *do* your to-do list. Consider how you use email. When it first came along, people had to force themselves to remember to check for new messages. Now, it's something that you check many times a day without thinking.

Here are simple 3 things that you can do on LinkedIn every day. By taking just a few minutes to develop the LinkedIn habit you can make it easy and efficient:

1. Read the newsfeed.

Your LinkedIn newsfeed is an amazing aggregation of all the activity in your network. It's everything that your 1st-level connections are doing on LinkedIn! Not all of it will be relevant, but it's worth a quick daily scan. Let the important pieces of information jump out and grab your attention. And if there's nothing for the day, that's fine. As your network gets bigger, the newsfeed algorithm will work in the background to make sure that you are seeing the most relevant and noteworthy content.

2. Research people you are going to interact with.

Take a minute to research anyone you will be talking to for the first time. Maybe it's a prospective client or candidate. Or it could be a vendor or a colleague from another department. Take a quick look through their profile to gather any relevant information, including people that you both know or shared groups. Even if you don't have any common background, knowing a little about them will help you have a much more effective conversation. It can be as simple as saying, "I saw that you used to work at Company XYZ. Tell me about that!" It moves the relationship along more quickly and you can get on to more and deeper business topics.

3. Post a status update.

This remains one of the most underused parts of LinkedIn. This is too bad because if it's used correctly, it's one of the most powerful. Take time to share information with your network. This doesn't have

to take long. The more regularly you post, the more likely your connections will see it in their own newsfeeds. Many professionals don't use the status updates because they think it will take too much time. But when you develop the habit you can share valuable information in just seconds a day. Eventually you'll find that you are subconsciously looking for information to share throughout your day.

4.6

Your LinkedIn Newsfeed is Your Connection to Your Network

Becoming a great networker is about much more than talking and offering advice. It's also critical to listen to your contacts and understand their needs. People will tell you what's important to them, what challenges they are having, and how they can help you. But only if you are paying attention. Social media hasn't changed the need to listen, but it has changed where you do your "listening".

A lot of the focus on social media centers on how to share content. What gets overlooked is your ability to home in on the information your network is sharing with you. For example, your LinkedIn newsfeed is a fantastic aggregator of everything that is going on in your network. A few minutes a day can keep you in the know and cue you into important happenings in the professional lives of your colleagues, prospects, clients, peers, and partners. That's what is exciting about using LinkedIn for listening: The ability to leverage your time and find lots of information quickly and easily.

As your network grows into the hundreds and even thousands on LinkedIn, it can be a little overwhelming to sift through all of this

information. There are filters that allow you to switch between seeing the most recent activity from your network and the "top" activity that has the most engagement. They are accessed through the upper right hand of the Newsfeed. (see 4.6.1)

When you engage with a particular connection's activity, the newsfeed algorithm will give that connection more prominence in the future. And that means they will be more likely to be featured as top activity in the future. You can even hide connections that "overpost" or specific posts that you don't want to receive notifications about.

4.7

How to Leverage LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn Groups are one of the easiest ways to *do* something on LinkedIn. And they are a great place to start your online networking. Used correctly, Groups make the huge 600+ million online networking event that is LinkedIn much more manageable, and they allow you to leverage your social media time and effort efficiently. But because there are so many groups, it's important that you align your approach to LinkedIn Groups to your larger business goals. It's a slippery path and you could easily spend hours and hours connecting in LinkedIn Groups with little to show for it.

Here's a simple process for finding the right Groups to join, engaging with them intelligently, and getting a good return on your time.

1. Set your expectations correctly.

LinkedIn Groups are a powerful forum, but they aren't a silver bullet that will solve all your problems. Keep in mind what you can reasonably expect from your efforts. It would be great to get a new client or job the first time you participate in a group discussion. But

you should view groups as an incremental and additive tool. Just like offline relationships take time to cultivate, it will also take time to build your relationships with your colleagues in the Groups you join. Keep the right expectations in mind.

2. Create a group hotlist.

You can join up to fifty groups on LinkedIn. But it would be incredibly unwieldy to participate in that many at the same time. You will want to spread your Group participation among several categories. The exact mix will be based on your goals and your existing networking. You will often be able to find ones that combine more than segment (for example, an alumni group from your alma mater comprised of people in your industry).

- Industry/Trade Professionals
- Alumni (Both Educational and Professional)
- Geographically Based
- Groups Where Your Clients Spend Time
- Networking Groups
- Non-Profit/Volunteer Causes Important to You

3. Find your Groups.

With over 2 million Groups, you might think that it would be easy to find ones to join. You'd be right and wrong. It's quite easy to find ones that *sound* like they are right up your alley. But finding good Groups that are worth your time can be a little tougher. Here are 3 ways to find possibilities.

- From your connections. Look at your favorite (and most successful) connections on LinkedIn and scroll through their groups. This is a great way to find Groups that pertain to your industry and geographic area. The bonus: these Groups already contain someone you know.
- Use the Group Search Function. From the top search bar, use keywords to conduct a general search and then select Groups. (see 4.7.1) You'll find ones that are relevant to your areas of interest.
- Start your own. This can be a great way to fill an unmet need but keep in mind that running a good group takes a lot of time and focus. If you aren't ready to invest that energy, go back to steps #1 and #2.

4. Choose the right groups.

It's easy to find Groups that are relevant to your interests. But unfortunately, many aren't very useful. A lot of them are ghost towns that lack discussions, are full of self-promoters, or are too big or too little. A few things to look for:

- Groups can vary from twenty or thirty members to twenty or thirty thousand. A good place to get started is with Groups that hover around 300-400 members. You can add a few of the very large groups (10,000+) to get a broader reach as well.
- Open Groups allow anyone to join (so they are often bigger) and tend to be a little more chaotic. Closed Groups have a moderator that filters potential members and they are often more tightly focused.

- When was the last post? If it wasn't within a week, it's likely that there is little happening in the group. Also, make sure the discussions aren't dominated by a few people spamming the group with irrelevant information.

5. Lurk in your Groups.

One of the biggest mistakes committed by new Group members is blindly posting off-topic or using a tone that doesn't fit the normal vibe that others use. It's like barging into a conversation in the offline world and beginning to talk without knowing what the conversation is about! You want to get a sense for how things flow in the group you've chosen.

Therefore, the next step is to simply "listen in" on the discussions that are happening in the Groups you have joined. There's no need to participate yourself yet. You simply want to get a feel for what is already happening. Find out what topics are discussed, what kind of information is shared, and the general tone of the conversation.

6. Participate!

Once you've gotten a feel for the group and the flow of conversation, it's time to dive in. The easiest way to get started is by responding to what other members are posting. "Liking" a discussion can be a simple point of entry because all you need to do is click the button! But if there is a discussion that you can comment on, take the opportunity to join in. You're in this group to make connections, and you can't do that until you start connecting.

7. Engage with other members.

As you engage in the group, you will find other LinkedIn members that are good connections for you. They might be a peer who has a similar approach to you, or a potential client you can help. Or maybe you find that someone shares interesting information and insights and you'd like to have them in your network. If you see that there is a good reason to connect, reach out. When you share group membership with another LinkedIn member, you can send them a message directly through the internal messaging system.

4.8

The Hidden Value of "Liking" Job Anniversaries

Over the years, one of the most consistently maligned features on LinkedIn has been the job anniversary notification. Over and over I hear some form of, "Why is LinkedIn gumming up my feed? Why should I care if Bill Jones has been at Company XYZ for 6 years? Does "liking" that really mean anything?"

Well, yes it does.

To explain the value of liking job anniversaries, we have to look at something else that people don't really enjoy: small talk. It's easy to bash small talk. We think that it's an awkward and superficial conversation with people we don't know well. It's something we try to avoid. I'm not trying to sell you on small talk, but there are some powerful effects that we need to be aware of.

When linguistic experts look at how people interact with each other, they often look at something called *phatic communication*. It's defined as verbal or non-verbal communication that has a social function as opposed to a content function. It's communication that's not meant to convey information, but rather to show that the lines of communication are open. It reinforces the social bond between two people.

Examples of phatic communication include waving hello, smiling, or saying "How are you?" when you first greet someone. The content of the question "How are you?" would indicate that you are looking for the other person to describe their mental and physical state. But really, you are just saying that you are ready to engage in a conversation with that person. You're saying that you are ready and willing to connect.

Much of the interaction on social media is relatively shallow. But just because there isn't a lot of depth in every post doesn't mean that those posts aren't meaningful. A lot of them have a social function separate from their actual content. "Liking" a job anniversary on LinkedIn is just one example of how this phatic communication can play out online. Even liking or commenting on a post has a phatic effect. You're showing that you are engaged in the relationship and that the lines of communication are open. The other person might not take you up on it right then, but they know it's available.

It's like waving to a friend when they come into the conference room for a meeting. They might not start a conversation with you right away, but they know they can later. Imagine what would happen if they walked in the room and you ignored them. That would close off the possibility of interaction.

So even if acknowledging a job anniversary doesn't lead to a conversation right then and there, you're now poised to have a better conversation down the line.

4.9

Research Your Networking Partners and Business Contacts

You did it. You got the meeting that you've been pursuing for months. It could be with a prospective client, business partner, or investor. You've got your pitch rehearsed and you know your presentation rocks. You've got your best outfit back from the cleaners. You are ready to go.

But hang on a second. There's something else you that you should do before you go into that meeting. How much do you know about the person you are about to meet? There's a saying that most sales are won or lost before the conversation ever starts. And that applies if you are selling a product, your ideas, or yourself. The more information you have on your meeting partner, the more effective you can be. Going into a meeting blind is a rookie mistake, and one that you can avoid easily thanks to social media.

LinkedIn is a must-visit before you start your next business meeting. When you visit someone's LinkedIn profile, you access a wealth of information that will make your conversations richer and more

effective. Here are three things to look for in a LinkedIn profile to take your conversation to the next level:

1. Find a connection.

Don't underestimate the power of a common background. Don't manufacture a flimsy connection just to have one, but people like people who are like them. Use LinkedIn to connect the dots. Think about the last time you met a stranger who happened to go to the same school you did or was from your hometown. You want to create that same warm feeling in your conversation. Before you meet with anyone look at the schools, employers, and organizations that populate their career because you might have an overlapping experience. Even if there isn't a direct connection, you can still find similarities. Maybe you both went to a Big 10 school, or maybe you worked in the same industry.

By the way, you don't have to be creepy when you bring up this information. It's common practice these days for people to research using LinkedIn. Simply say, "I had a chance to look at your LinkedIn profile before we met, and I noticed _____." It shows that you cared enough to look them up, but lets them know you weren't stalking them online.

2. Find a question.

One of the best ways to start and deepen a conversation with someone is to get them talking about a topic they care about. Even though you are walking into a meeting with your own agenda, focusing the conversation on them in the beginning can win major points.

It's like a first date. If all you do is talk about yourself, it won't go very well.

The trick here is to be genuinely interested. You can ask about their professional background, or it might be something a little more personal that comes through in their profile. For example, "I saw that you worked at Company XYZ, what was that like?", "What made you choose to study History at University ABC?", or "I saw on your LinkedIn profile that you ran the Chicago Marathon, what was the hardest part of the race?"

3. Find a referral.

It's great that you got the meeting. But pros think towards the future and the next meeting. If you are fired up to talk with this person, my guess is that they know other people you would want to meet. People tend to spend time with people like themselves. Use their LinkedIn profile to see who else they are connected to and use that information to ask for a referral.

Again, you don't want to be creepy or pushy. But if you feel the conversation goes well, ask for an introduction. Make it as simple as, "I saw on LinkedIn that you know _____. How do you know her? I'd love to meet her because I think we'd be a good fit with her company. Would you feel OK about introducing us?

Even three minutes on a LinkedIn profile can give you the information to take your next business meeting from good to great. Don't miss out!

4.10

How to Structure Your Asks on LinkedIn

Your LinkedIn network contains a full range of relationships, from your best friends and family to people you haven't even met yet in the offline world. It's important to keep that spectrum in mind when you ask for help through LinkedIn. You don't want to assume a close relationship with all your connections. At the same time, you don't need to avoid asking for help from others.

For example, Mark Granovetter found that weak connections (anyone you see less than once a week) are the best source of job leads when we are looking for work. It could be a college friend, a colleague from a past job, or your sister's friend. They have access to information, insights, and connections that you don't. It makes sense to leverage LinkedIn to ask your weak connections for help, but there's a right and wrong way to do it.

Since you might not know these people well, it's important to create the proper context for your ask. But the overall etiquette won't change that much even if you don't know the person very well. The most important thing to realize is that although LinkedIn is a new communication medium, you've been communicating your whole life. So whatever approach you'd take in the real life is one you can take

online. There are 4 pieces of the puzzle to keep in mind when reaching out for help on LinkedIn:

1. Time it right.

How long should you wait before you ask for help? If you haven't seen someone in 5 years, and then you reconnect with them on LinkedIn, can you ask them for an introduction the next day? That's a very real scenario and the answer is: sometimes. There are no hard and fast rules to this, but keep in mind how you would act in the real world if you weren't using LinkedIn. If you ran into the person at a class reunion and would feel comfortable giving them a call the next day, then go for it. If not, spend a little time building the relationship through LinkedIn before you ask for help.

2. Give a "Because".

People love to know why something is happening. When you reach out on LinkedIn, tell them why you are doing it. It helps give some context for your request. It can be as simple as saying, "I wanted to see if you'd introduce me to the person at your company who is responsible for _____, because I would feel a lot more comfortable than if I had to cold call them."

3. Leave an out.

No one likes being trapped in a corner. You always want to leave your connection the opportunity to say "no" without feeling bad.

Maybe they'd love to introduce you to their boss who's hiring, but they just came back from a staff meeting where the boss said how sick she was of interviewing people right now. When interacting with your weak connections, you don't know the back story. Give them an out so they can refuse your request gracefully if they'd like to.

4. Express gratitude.

We're all busy, so the fact that they even read your message and considered your request is great. Let them know you appreciate their time. And let them know you appreciate their effort no matter the result. From the very first message, be very clear with your gratitude. And if they do help with an introduction or some information, take a few minutes to compose a nice thank-you note. You can even send it through LinkedIn.

These four steps are great for asking for help from all your contacts, whether they are someone you see every day or once a year. But remember that much of the value of LinkedIn lies in your ability to build relationships with the people in your network on a consistent basis. One of the best ways to use it is to invest some time and attention on your network. When you do this, you'll find that when you need to ask for help, it's an easy and natural process.

4.11

Following Online Networking Etiquette

Since LinkedIn has secured its place as the online extension of offline networking, it suffers a bit of "guilt by association". The same fears and hang-ups that haunt offline networking have followed us online. And it makes sense to pay attention to how you are interacting online. Because when you're afraid of making mistakes or doing something wrong, it prevents you from engaging online.

But you don't have to worry about being a jerk online if you keep in mind the same etiquette rules that work offline. Here are a few of the ways that people act like jerks on LinkedIn, and the best ways to avoid them.

1. Send introduction requests with no customization.

Would you walk up to someone at a business event and have the first sentence out of your mouth be, "Here's my card, can I have your contact info and access to your Rolodex?" Of course not! They would be justifiably wary. Remember that when you send an invite on

LinkedIn because you are asking for access to someone's network and their attention.

Write a 1-3 sentence introduction that tells the person why you'd like to connect on LinkedIn, especially if you haven't met in the offline world yet. Give them some context for your request. "I'd like to sell you something" is not going to cut it.

2. Pull a bait and switch with your introduction.

We've all met the person who is initially super-friendly and solicitous. Ninety seconds in, though, the conversation takes a twist. Suddenly they just want to sell you something. I met a mortgage broker once who asked me if I was looking to buy a house or knew anyone who was within two minutes of meeting me. I was like, "Whoa, slow down a bit". There was no relationship established and the ask was inappropriate. Would you ask somebody to marry you just two minutes after you met them?

Take the time to build a relationship and provide value before you ask the person to do something. And if you feel you might be jumping the gun, say so: "I know we haven't been connected for long yet, but I wanted to let you know that..."

3. Send super long messages

We all know the person who can't shut up and can't get to the point. I once belonged to a networking group that had someone who I would reflexively avoid. No conversation with her would last less than ten minutes, and I never did any of the talking. It was easier to avoid

her. And even though she would talk about how she could help my clients, I never once sent business to her.

Keep messages short. A lot of professionals get poor results from their InMails and other communication because they treat them like information dumps. People don't have that much time. Get right to the point: here's who I am, here's why I'm writing, here's what I'd like for you to do.

4. Post content about your product/service and nothing else.

The people who talk too much are usually the same people who talk about themselves over and over (they need to talk about something after all). In the end, though, no one really cares to hear about the details of their product/service/life. They care about how it's going to help them. It's the same on LinkedIn. I knew a recruiter who filled my newsfeed with the minutiae of every position he was filling. He didn't stay in my newsfeed for long.

Share content that is directly related to your offering between 20-35% of the time. Mix it up with information that could help your target audience and a personal piece occasionally

5. Ask for an introduction without providing an out.

If I ask you for an introduction, I'm hoping to gain credibility with the new person by extension. I'm hoping to be carried on the coattails of your relationship. But what if we were at an event and I asked you to introduce me to someone that you knew by dragging you over to them? That would put you on the spot, and I wouldn't know the con-

text and backstory. That puts you in a very awkward position. Maybe you don't get along with the person I'm hoping to meet, even though you work together.

When asking for an introduction through LinkedIn, add, "If it's not a good time to introduce us, that's completely OK."

6. Hijack conversations with off-topic promotions.

You're standing at a conference cocktail reception with a few people you've just met. Everyone is having an interesting conversation about the sessions you've attended, and BAM, a salesperson walks up, nods his head for a minute, and then tries to steer the conversation to his company's new software package. Not only is it annoying, but it ruins the vibe that you had with your other conversational partners. You don't like when others do it, so why do it to them?

Listen to the conversations before you start posting. Read all the comments on a post. And there's nothing wrong with lurking in a group before you start contributing. It takes a little longer but it's much more effective.

7. Post inappropriate, too personal, or fluffy material.

I have yet to meet someone who hasn't heard an off-color joke or a "too much information" admission in a professional setting (there's nothing like hearing about someone's latest rash). Some people are trying to create a closer relationship, and sometimes they are just socially awkward. In any case, it's not good. In the same way, LinkedIn should be about professional topics, and you should be on your best behavior.

Pretend that your grandmother is involved in the conversation online and listening to what you say. Nothing goes out without you pushing "send", so when in doubt sit on it for a little while. And then, don't say it.

Navigating relationships online takes the same care and focus that your offline relationships require. Spending just a moment thinking through your activities will prevent most of these faux pas. Don't worry about being perfect. You will have missteps, just like in the offline world. (We've all accidentally hit "Connect" on LinkedIn before customizing the invite.) If they aren't done intentionally or maliciously, they won't be career-ending, just like in the offline world.

But a little time and attention can save you a lot of headaches and make your online networking an effective part of your daily work life. And isn't that what we all want?

Section 5

SHARE YOUR MESSAGE

You have the profile. You have the network. Now it's time to share your message and ensure that people know what you are working on and how you can help them. The ability to reach out and share content with your network in just minutes is incredibly powerful. This is where you can take the brand that you developed for your profile and actively communicate your message to your network. This is where relationship-building happens.

And when you flip the script, this is how you can find out information about your connections. By paying attention to what your connections post, you can find ways to be of value to them. In the end, engaging with other professionals on LinkedIn allows you to create new connections and opportunities. And that's where the investment in your network will pay off now and in the future.

5.1

How You Share is As Important as What You Share

It used to be that bad spelling and poor grammar would only hurt you if you were writing an essay for English class. Now, because so much interaction is online it can also put a damper on your career or damage your credibility in the professional world. With the explosion of written forums that are open to the public (social networking, blogs, online reviews, etc.), *how* you write can be just as important as *what* you write. If you are using the internet in any professional capacity, you need to make sure your writing skills aren't sending the wrong message.

In the past, you would write a letter to your newspaper if you wanted to be published in a public forum, and that took time and effort. Now you can post a comment on a blog or a status update on LinkedIn in a matter of minutes. The fact that it can be seen by a large audience is great. But it also means that any mistakes you make will be seen by just as many people.

People judge speakers on their content *and* on their delivery. And your posts are going to be judged by their content and how it's delivered. This is especially important when spending time online for professional purposes like networking, because your audience is always

forming an opinion of you. If you are trying to build your personal brand image online, and your writing is full of typos and errors, the image you're creating isn't going to be very compelling.

The solutions are simple, but they do require a few moments when you are sharing content. Even if you aren't a confident writer, these few steps can ensure that you don't look like a complete fool when you are communicating and networking online. In the end, it's not about being perfect with your writing (I'm sure you could even find a few errors in this book). It is about avoiding as many simple mistakes as possible.

1. Reread everything before you post it.

It doesn't take long. But this one simple step will save you from a lot of faux pas and confusing sentences. You'll often catch simple typing mistakes and extra/omitted words. Beware of autocorrect, too. It often creates mistakes instead of fixing them.

2. Use spell check!

LinkedIn includes a spell checker when you post status updates. Or if you know you're not great with grammar and you have a longer piece of writing, cut and paste to Word or a similar program and use its internal checker. Even if spelling isn't that important to you, it might be to someone who's reading your post and forming an opinion of you.

3. Avoid these common word mistakes.

- They're/Their/There
- You're/Your
- Two/Too/To
- It's/Its

4. Don't use communication shortcuts out of context.

As texting and instant messaging become more common in business, so too are text shortcuts (like LOL, IMHO, THX). That's fine if you're communicating one on one. But they are usually too informal if you're broadcasting to a large audience, unless that audience is a group of tweens. When in doubt, always be more "formal" than less.

5. Don't overuse emojis, gifs, or punctuation.

Sharing on social media platforms such as LinkedIn can often mimic our conversational language. And new tools that make our text more fun or engaging are readily available. Just remember that a broader professional audience might not appreciate seven exclamation points or a smiley face emoji in a business post.

5.2

The Science Behind Posting on LinkedIn

Posting online is more than a good idea. There's a lot of science that supports the effectiveness of sharing content with your network. There are very specific professional outcomes that you can support through regular and consistent engagement on social media.

Sharing content allows you to make your presence known and actively influence your connections. And your connections might not even know that it's happening, because much of what influences us isn't being processed at a conscious level. Researchers like Dan Ariely, Daniel Kahneman, and Sheena Iyengar have all focused on the unconscious ways that humans make decisions. Central to their research are the cognitive biases and unconscious heuristics that influence our decision-making processes. Heuristics are the mental shortcuts that our brains use without us even being aware.

Instead of being completely rational, humans are influenced a lot by our unconscious mind. And if we can understand how that works, we can use it to build stronger relationships with our prospects and network. The goal isn't to manipulate people. The goal is to present ourselves in the best possible light and build the best connections that

we can with those that we want to influence. Here are three mental shortcuts that you can access by posting on LinkedIn

1. The Recency Heuristic

The recency heuristic is also known as the availability heuristic. It's a cognitive bias in which the mind perceives the credibility of something to be proportional to the ease of remembering it. In other words, the more available it is to the mind, the more weight it's given. In some other other words:

If it's easy to remember, it must be good.

We're biased towards things that are easier to remember. This internal bias is one of the drivers for "top of mind" advertising, which is why companies like McDonald's and Coca-Cola spend millions of dollars every year to advertise a product everyone knows about. They want to come up first in your mind when you think, "I'm hungry and thirsty."

Every time you post on LinkedIn, the people who see your post get a little ping, a little reminder of you. They might not engage with the post. In fact, they may not even consciously remember seeing it. But you've made it a little easier to bring you to their mind. The likelihood that you are at the top of their list when it comes to your product or service increases dramatically.

2. The Halo Effect

The Halo Effect is a cognitive bias where we extend one positive or negative attribute in an individual to their other attributes. For example, it's been shown that we unconsciously consider people who

are more attractive to also be smarter. It doesn't matter that those two attributes are not related at all.

When we see someone being successful in one area, we unconsciously extend that success to the other areas of their life. It's why we think that people who keep posting pictures of their happy vacations on Facebook are always happy even though there's no evidence that they are. When your network sees your posts talking about your areas of expertise, they unconsciously extend your expertise beyond just the topic of the post. You become more competent all-around. Likewise, when you share a client success story, or a picture of you with your clients or even colleagues at a conference, that credibility extends beyond the digital into the offline world.

3. Anchoring Bias

Anchoring describes a bias in which we give an outsized amount of value to the first piece of information obtained when making a decision. People "anchor" around that first piece of data. It's why first impressions are so powerful: whether we like it or not, all further impressions are influenced by the first. This is the same reason that salespeople are coached to offer a higher initial price when presenting to prospects. Prospects will anchor their expectations around that initial number and they'll probably end up at a higher number by the end of your negotiation.

The question to ask is: What is your personal brand anchored to? If they don't think about you at all, then it's not anchored to anything. But if they see regular updates on social from you, you're anchoring them around the brand message that you want. You're anchoring it to "competence" and "expertise".

When you start looking at the science behind how humans make decisions, it becomes apparent that posting on social isn't a waste of time. The trick is to be intentional with how you use it. Create a plan that will allow you to engage with the people you want to engage with. Then, work that plan.

5.3

How Can You Get More People to See Your LinkedIn Posts?

If you are going to take the time to share content on LinkedIn, it makes sense that you would want it seen by as many people as possible. Unfortunately, simply posting something does not mean that it will be seen by everyone in your network. Not even close.

Partly this is a matter of practicality. Can you imagine having a 500-person network where each person posts one piece of content a day? Your newsfeed would be overwhelming, and it would be counterproductive. You would struggle to find relevant information and engage in a meaningful way. Even though not everyone is active on LinkedIn every day, this is a very real challenge as networks get larger and more people share content.

The other barrier between you and your network is the LinkedIn Newsfeed Algorithm. Let's call it the LNA for short. The LNA is a process that LinkedIn uses to decide who sees your posts. There are several steps, both human and automated, that the LNA uses to decide how many people should see your posts and who exactly should see it. If you want to see the LNA in action, you can toggle the newsfeed

filter on the desktop browser window which allows you to sort by "recent" and "top" posts.

Unfortunately, nobody knows exactly how the LNA is set up. LinkedIn keeps it secret because they don't want marketers to game the system. This is the same reason that Google keeps its search algorithm under wraps and changes it regularly. When we look at ways to ensure that your posts reach your network, there's some guesswork involved. But there are general guidelines that can help you increase the chances that your content will be seen by your connections and beyond.

1. Early engagement is a key indicator that your content is valuable.

In its current incarnation, the LNA looks at what happens to a post within the first few hours of going live. When people are viewing the content and engaging with it by liking, commenting, or sharing, it triggers an internal notification that it is relevant to the network. There are then a few steps that happen behind the closed curtain to determine how it gets shared more broadly. But if you don't get that initial attention, it can be challenging to create reach.

2. Use tagging to let your 1st-level connections know about relevant content.

One of the easiest ways to create initial engagement is to tag other LinkedIn members who would find the content useful. If you are sharing an article or video about a topic they are interested in, tag them. Or if you are sharing a photo of an event, tag the other people who

were at the event with you. When someone is tagged, the post appears in their notifications section. That makes them more likely to see it, and more likely to respond to it.

3. Engage with your connections' posts.

This can happen well before your post, but when you are looking through your newsfeed be sure to engage with the content that is shared by your connections. First, it will strengthen the relationship you have with that person. And secondly, the LNA takes note of that and thinks "These two people seem to know each other." When that person posts content in the future, you will be more likely to see it. And conversely, when you post something, they'll be more likely to see it.

4. Create conversations.

A great way to get exposure outside of your immediate sphere is to create conversations between you and the people who engage with your content. When someone comments on your post, respond to that comment. It could be as simple as a "thank you" or a more in-depth response. They will often respond back to you and in doing so, it's more likely to show up on the newsfeeds of the people they are connected to.

5. Share posts consistently.

Even though it would be nice if every post was seen by every connection, that's not going to happen. Even if the algorithm didn't filter

some content, you'd be faced with the fact that everyone uses LinkedIn differently. Some people only look at the newsfeed occasionally, or on weekends, or only when they have a plane ride. So an important way to stay in front of your connections is by posting consistently. While it's not necessary to post every few hours like on Twitter, if you only post once a week, it's hard to get your perspective out there. For most professionals, posting once a day is a great goal to shoot for. But at a minimum, 3-4 posts a week are a great start.

5.4

Moving Past Posting About Your "Product"

What do you think of salespeople who only talk about their company and give you a sales pitch ***every time*** you see them? At best you try to politely avoid them. At worst you run the other way when you see them.

Now translate that into the online world. What would you think of someone who only posted sales pitches? If they only shared information about their products and services over and over, it would be easy to tune them out. In fact, on LinkedIn that's as easy as hitting the "unfollow" button. Poof! They are gone from the newsfeed and the network for good. They've lost all future chances to engage. To keep this from happening to you it's important that you avoid overwhelming your connections with self-centered posts and constant sales pitches.

There is a time to share the information about what you do on a professional basis and how you help. But you also need to engage with your connections beyond your self-centered needs. You need to engage on a human level. Then, when you have positioned yourself as a trusted source of information, you can provide insights about the challenges that you can solve.

It's valuable to expand your footprint in the mind of your network. Here are some areas that you can post about beyond your immediate job.

1. A specific topic in your industry relevant to your customers

Branch out beyond your company to your industry at large. The goal is to plant a flag in the minds of your prospects and customers as an expert in this area.

Pick a topic within your industry that is a hot button for the people you work with. Focus your sharing around that subject as much as possible. The more specific you are, the easier it is for people to remember. It's much easier for your audience to extrapolate from specific to general than the other way around. Other examples of specific topics:

- For those whose work is in SaaS software: data security, AI and its impact, or integration challenges.
- If you work in office technology: The Internet of Things, cloud storage, or remote working.
- When you work in financial services: the impact of outside legislation, the effect of taxes, robo-investors.
- For digital marketing professionals: customer privacy (GDPR), lead generation, or SEO algorithms.

2. A professional topic outside of your field

Don't be boring and repetitive. When you only post about your company, what you're selling, or your industry, you come across as a

one-trick pony. You aren't a one-dimensional person, but it's hard to share that on your profile and activity feed.

It can be powerful to share content about a topic that is relevant to the world of work but isn't directly related to what you sell. It shows that you have some depth as an individual. Demonstrating expertise in one area leads buyers to believe that you have expertise in others. There are a host of topics that you could post about. The key is to choose something that resonates with you. A few examples include:

- The changing theories of work/life balance.
- How the business applications of AI will impact work.
- How behavioral economics and productivity hacks can help in the office.
- The best ways to encourage STEM education in under-represented communities.

3. The people in your business life

Business is a person-to-person endeavor. The more that you can humanize yourself, the more effective you can be. One of the fastest ways that you can humanize yourself is through photographs of you and the people that you interact with in the offline world. You don't need to turn your LinkedIn feed into a Facebook or Instagram feed, but a consistent stream of photos is an important part of establishing your brand. You can share:

- Visits to an existing customer. Snap a photo together in their office. Or even take a picture of yourself in front of the office (with the logo in the background).

- When you attend a conference, trade show, or other industry event, be sure to take photos of you with other participants.
- Your internal meetings, everything from trainings to awards banquets. Grab group photos of your team and share with your network.

5.5

Tactical Options for Your LinkedIn Posts

You might be excited to share on LinkedIn, but at a loss for where to start. Facebook and Twitter are often jammed with people posting what they ate for dinner and rooting for their favorite sports team. You want to avoid those fluffy posts on LinkedIn because the opportunity to speak directly to your network is incredibly powerful. Your LinkedIn network is made up of professionals who have opted-in to you, but if you don't share anything, they can't stay informed. They want to know what's going on in your professional world.

This is where your brand can really shine. LinkedIn posts allow you to create visibility on a regular basis. And they can solidify your reputation within your network. By sharing content, you are planting a flag and saying, "Here are the topics that are important to me and that I have knowledge about." By sharing information that will be valuable to them in their professional lives, you solidify your reputation in your network as the expert in your area.

At a bare minimum, you want to post on LinkedIn once a week. (see 5.5.1) If you are actively networking on LinkedIn, though, three to four updates a week are a good number to aim for, with one status

update a day being the ideal. Think about your LinkedIn status update as a mini-press release about your career. You can share a small piece of information with your network quickly and without much effort.

Here are different types of content you can post on LinkedIn:

- Tell your network about a professional event you are going to or have just attended (networking event, trade conference, industry convention, Chamber of Commerce meeting).
- Announce a project that you are starting or have completed for your job.
- Plug the work of someone in your network.
- Share a business success you've recently had: a happy client or a rave review.
- Ask your network for a specific connection that you are looking for.
- Post a link that would be of interest to people in your network.
- Promote a new product or service that you are offering by telling your network how it can help them.
- Remind people about the characteristics of an ideal business referral for you, or just ask for referrals.
- Make a recommendation to your network about a service, product, website, software package, company, book, etc. that has been useful to your business.

Just adding on update from each of these categories can keep you busy on LinkedIn for several weeks. And to make it even easier to get started, here are 5 examples that you could use immediately. Simply change the details and you are ready to go:

1. Tell your network about a professional event you attended.

Whether it's a conference, continuing education forum, or networking reception, tell your network where you are spending your time and what you are getting out of your activities.

> I had great conversations and learned some new ideas at the 2019 International RockStar Conference!

2. Pass along an article posted elsewhere on the internet.

It's likely that you've read an article or blog post on an industry or professional site in the past few days. Share the articles you find useful with a comment on why you think your network should read it.

> I think the ideas in this article are fascinating. I'm interested to see how the "internet of things" affects my industry.

3. Ask for referrals for someone else in your network.

You might not feel comfortable asking your network for referrals, but you can help your friends and colleagues by asking for them. It's good karma!

> When you need an amazing creative shop for your next advertising campaign, ask me to connect you with Susan

> Smith from ABC Design. They do fantastic work and Susan was a dream to work with.

4. Share a favorite quote.

Your favorite business quote might be exactly what will motivate one of your connections. Don't overuse this, but every once in a while, you can share one and tell your network why it resonates with you.

> "Make things as simple as possible, and no simpler" – A. Einstein. Good for me to remember on these days when I have 7 projects going on at once!

5. Thank someone in your network.

There's not enough gratitude in the world. You can fix that showing your appreciation for the business help that someone gave you or acknowledging someone's work.

> I want to thank Bob Hazan at Me on Video for his work on my YouTube videos. He always makes me look like a pro.

Here's the trick. Pick the one you like the best, point your browser to LinkedIn, and share a post right now!

5.6

A Key Guideline When Deciding What to Share

Status updates encompass a broad range of content. They include everything from articles you've written to articles you've found on other sites to announcements of professional news. You can share photos of events you've attended or upload videos that you've recorded. You can add files like slideshows or images or links to your company website. You can write a message about almost any business topic.

These posts move you beyond your static profile and collection of connections. They allow you to create engagement with the people you've brought into your LinkedIn network. You now have a way of easily and simply sharing information and cultivating your relationships. Just a few minutes a day can be enough to stay in front of a much larger group of people than was possible even ten years ago. To maximize your effectiveness, it's important to remember a guiding rule for using LinkedIn status updates:

> **Use status updates to share information that can build the relationship between you and your networking connections.**

Does that mean that you should only post cutting-edge articles on ground-breaking information that is relevant to every single connection you have? Of course not. Does that mean you can never post something that is a little more personal than professional? Of course not. In fact, it can be great to add your authentic, personal voice your status updates from time to time. But because it's easier to share with your networks, it's a lot easier to *overshare*. For example, you might be tempted to share an album of photos or tag 25 of your connections to force engagement. Or you might want to add 10 articles that you think are important in an attempt to demonstrate your expertise.

Remember that LinkedIn works when people aren't choking the newsfeeds with useless noise. The LinkedIn community has always favored quality over quantity. Follow the same "rules" you would as if you were talking to these people in the offline world. Think about it this way: You already know how to share information that builds relationships, because you have been doing it your entire life in the offline world. Use those same rules on LinkedIn.

Even though you are sitting in front of a computer or on your mobile phone, use the same thinking that you would if you were talking with your connections at a networking event or company picnic. Focus on sharing news and information that is relevant to the people you are talking to. Talk like a human who is connecting with other humans.

5.7

Communicating with Photos on LinkedIn

As technology improves, social media continues to become more visually oriented. High-quality cameras in our phones make it a snap to capture photos and videos. And sharing them has never been easier. In fact, sites like Instagram and Pinterest are focused specifically on sharing photos with other members. Humans are wired to process visual information quickly (there are millions of nerves fibers in the optic nerve fiber), so it's a powerful tool to communicate with your network

If LinkedIn acts as our business meeting place online, are photos appropriate and relevant?

Absolutely! There's a reason the cliché "A picture is worth a thousand words" is a cliché. It's because it's true. We want to focus on how we can use those thousand words of a photo to communicate our professional brand. We're going to harness the power of visual communication to interact with our LinkedIn connections. If you can share information, build your brand, and keep your connections up to date with a text status update, then you can do it with photos as well. There's a good chance that the photo will have a greater impact and be more shareable.

The trick is to keep your photos engaging, relevant, and appropriate. (And as a small but important side note, if there are other people in the photo, ask their permission). Here are some ideas you can use:

1. A photo of you or your team doing something professional.

- Post a photo of you and/or your co-workers at an event. It could be a trade show booth, a networking meeting, or an internal training day.
- Are you attending a conference or annual meeting? Post a photo of the main conference room or of you with some of your colleagues.
- If you are visiting one of your favorite/best customers, take a photo. Or grab a photo opp when they visit your office.
- If you or someone on your team wins an award, this is a no-brainer. Post a photo of the recipient proudly showing it off! Brag a bit!

2. Photos can also be a great place to humanize yourself.

- Show you and your coworkers enjoying the annual company picnic or holiday party (remember to keep it tasteful).
- Some people really get into decorating for holidays. Display your 4th of July patriotism or your spooky Halloween office.
- Does your crew help in the community, maybe with a Habitat for Humanity project, community clean-up, or food drive? Let people know!

- When your organization sponsors an industry event or a Little League team, don't just tell your network. Snap a shot of the banner or the team photo.

These are just a few ideas. There are many other ways that you can use photos to communicate with your network. Have fun with the photos you share and experiment a bit. And ask yourself:

Is there a way I can show with a photo what I was about to tell with words?

5.8

Tips to Using Video Effectively to Connect and Engage

The recent explosion of easy-to-use video tools has made video a killer opportunity for professionals to create content and share with their network of colleagues, customers, and prospects. It captures the nuance of in-person communication with the ease of on-demand access.

The ability to post native LinkedIn videos means that you don't have to post on a 3rd-party site like YouTube or Vimeo anymore. You can upload videos directly to LinkedIn from your phone or webcam. You can even record videos in the LinkedIn phone app. All the content that you might share through the written word can now also be shared through video. You can take videos at events you attend, share product or service announcements, or talk about successes that your company has had. There's an opportunity to engage easily, efficiently, and powerfully.

But it's also easy to screw it up.

If you are ready to dive into creating videos for professional purposes, don't hit record just yet. Production value matters. It's not just

what you have to say, it's how you say it. The boom in video creation has created a corresponding rise in people's expectations. You can't release a poorly lit, tinny-sounding video and expect it to knock people's socks off.

There are some super-simple steps that you can take to make sure that your videos look and sound great. And when you take the time to prepare the right way, your audience is much more likely to take you and your message seriously.

1. Outline your thoughts.

Even if you think that you know what you are going to say, sketch it out. The few minutes it takes to outline your video will pay off exponentially. Almost every video from one of your heroes where it seems like they are talking off-the-cuff has been scripted (and probably highly edited). Trust me on that.

You don't have to read a script word-for-word, but you'll sound much more confident if you have an idea of what you want to say. It will also help you avoid your verbal tics. I know you have one because we all do. It could be "um", "you know", or "like", but it will creep in when your brain doesn't know what you are going to say next. Mapping out your message allows you to avoid that as much as possible.

2. Buy a microphone.

Your phone, tablet, or computer probably has a microphone built in. But unless it's a cutting-edge device, it's probably not very good. That's why you sound tinny or like you are in an echo chamber when

you use them. It's not the end of the world, but it's such an easy problem to fix that it's worth doing.

It's inexpensive to buy a serviceable external microphone. You could spend hundreds of dollars for a nice mic, but really, $20 on Amazon will get you a wired lavaliere mic that will clip on your shirt and up your game a lot. Just make sure that the mic plug is compatible with whatever device you want to use. Not all 3.5mm jacks are created equal.

3. Talk to the camera.

Eye contact is important. Oddly enough, this is one of the most challenging ideas for beginners. It's easy to look below, above, or to the side of the camera. Your goal is to pretend that the camera is your conversation partner's eyeball. Make eye contact as if the person was right there.

And obey the same rules as if you were talking to a real person. In other words, you also don't want to stare at the camera like a maniac. It's OK to break eye contact for a moment. It's OK to blink. It's OK to use facial expressions. This will come with practice and familiarity, so don't worry if you aren't a natural right away.

4. Wear the right clothes.

It may sound obvious, but since they can see you, it matters what you wear in your videos. Especially if you are making videos that are going to be seen by prospects or customers you don't know well, take the time to dress well. That doesn't mean you have to wear a suit to make your videos. But don't assume they are going to take you seri-

ously if you're wearing a T-shirt because it's "casual Friday" in the office.

You also should consider how your attire will show up on video. For example, stay away from pure white, black, and red, because they wash out. Don't wear distracting jewelry or other accessories, because they will pull focus. And look at your background environment and make sure it's not too distracting either. Maybe push that messy stack of papers out of frame.

5. Keep it short.

Last, but certainly not least, keep your videos short and to the point. This is where scripting can help because then you won't ramble on. Remember that your viewer can't skim through a video like they can an email or article. Keep it concise and put your most important points up front. You can share a lot in 60 seconds if you are focused and prepared!

5.9

When to Talk Politics on LinkedIn

There are key differences between Facebook and LinkedIn. We don't have time to dive into all of them, but an important distinction is the etiquette of posting of political, religious, or controversial material. What works on Facebook is not necessarily appropriate for LinkedIn. And when in doubt, you want to avoid those topics.

There's a specific reason why. Do you remember the last time you saw a social media post about an opposing political viewpoint? Your face probably got a little red. You immediately thought of a response that included a few choice four-letter words. Maybe it was a meme lampooning your candidate or the link to the ultra-extreme political blog from your sworn enemies. And it probably "dinged" the relationship with the person posting it, even if they were a friend or family member.

There's a reason why the cliché suggests that we don't talk about religion and politics in settings with people that we don't know well. Taking a pass on sharing political updates on social isn't about repressing your opinion. It's about looking at whether it will help or hurt your ability to connect and engage with others. It also isn't just

a call for more civility online, although we could use some of that. It's practical business advice that's grounded in neuroscience. When we're online, we want to keep in mind something called the Minimal Group Paradigm. It's a tool that social scientists use when examining the minimal conditions required for discrimination to occur between groups.

Basically, it describes the development of the "us" vs. "them" mentality. Not only has it been proven that we quickly identify with our own group and create negative views of outsiders, but the categories that we use to develop those identifications are often more minor and arbitrary than you might think or hope. All it takes is one post for an online connection to label you as "not like me" and then it's going to be that much harder to develop a relationship and do business together.

Your post about your favorite candidate or belief might create a connection between those who already agree with you, but it will drive away those who don't.

In the past, we would develop robust relationships with colleagues, clients, and coworkers and we would create a strong "we" as we interacted in daily life. Then, if we realized we might not see eye-to-eye on a political question, it wouldn't torpedo the whole relationship. These days, the superficiality of digital conversations causes problems. That lack of depth isn't necessarily bad, but we need to accept the limits of the medium.

Because our social media activity precedes us, we don't always have the chance to build the foundation first. If we "lead" with our political views, we cut off the chance to create meaningful business connections with those that disagree with us. My business network spans the political spectrum, and there are fantastic people that I engage with that don't have the same viewpoints as me. We have great conversations that span the intersection of business and politics, and it doesn't require us to have the same opinions.

It's important, though, that these conversations are built on trust and respect. They usually happen in the real world, and not by a series of status updates. There's a time and a place for all different types of conversation, and I've found that these high-emotion, high-opinion conversations work best offline.

Before you post a piece of questionable content, ask yourself, "Will this information add to the level of discourse?" Will posting it create a nuanced and informed conversation? Before you answer, think back. How many times have you seen a social media post that espouses an opposite viewpoint that has actually made you change your opinion?

I'm not recommending that you shouldn't use your voice or that you hide your opinions. I am suggesting that you think about the medium and context you are using to share those opinions. The key to vibrant business relationships (and a vibrant civic society) lies in finding our connections, not highlighting our differences.

If you think that your job as a citizen is to blast out highly politicized material, then go for it. But I will probably hide you from my newsfeed, as will others. And then, you've lost a forum to build bridges for business and politics.

5.10

How and When to "Tag" Your Connections

Borrowing an idea from Facebook, LinkedIn allows you to "tag" one of your 1st-connections by adding their name into the update. This functionality adds a whole new level of engagement to LinkedIn. When you tag someone in a status update, they'll get a notice in their LinkedIn account (and an email in their inbox, depending on their account settings). So now you have a way to grab someone's attention! Instead of hoping they'll stumble across your mention, they'll know that you have brought them up in conversation.

This has several positive effects. It puts you back on their radar, which is helpful in a world where our network is bombarded with messages and information. It's also a light touch in your networking relationship. Maybe you haven't talked to them in a while, or maybe you want to reinforce a recent interaction. And we all like to be noticed. At the very least, it will make your connection feel good!

There are many ways you can use this new feature. When you post an article or video on LinkedIn, you can tag a few connections who might find the information relevant or useful. You can also tag connections who work at a company or in a field that is mentioned in the

content. And you can also incorporate your connections directly into your posts. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. Tag a connection you saw at a professional event.

> "It was great seeing ***Susan Smith*** at the Annual Conference. I always enjoy getting new ideas from her."

This makes your connection feel noticed and lets everyone else in your network know what professional events you are attending.

2. Share an article or blog post and reference a connection.

> "This is an interesting article on the benefits of credit card processing for small businesses. ***Bill Jones***, we were just talking about this!"

This brings your connection's attention to the subject and reinforces the connection between the topic and you. In other words, it helps build your brand.

3. Congratulate someone in your network.

> "I just found out that ***Lisa Parker*** was selected as Small Businessperson of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce. Congrats!"

This spreads positive energy, not only to your connection, but throughout your network. It's like you shouted across a crowded room, "Hey, you're awesome!"

Now that you have a few ideas, go tag someone!

5.11

Creating Long Form Content with Publisher

The LinkedIn Publisher platform isn't for everybody. Yep, I said it. If you don't like to write, can't write well, or don't think you have anything to say, long-form articles on LinkedIn might not be for you. There are other tools you can use on the platform that are just as effective and won't burden you with writing full articles.

But if that doesn't scare you away, Publisher can be a powerful tool in your personal brand-building toolkit. And I don't want to freak you out with the above warning. LinkedIn has created a whole new channel to share content with your network, which is great. You should be careful, though, because it is also easy to make yourself look bad. We don't want that to happen.

Publisher started out as the LinkedIn Influencer program, and it required an invitation to get access to the functionality. In the beginning it was populated by well-known business celebrities like Richard Branson and Arianna Huffington. In its attempts to encourage engagement on the site, LinkedIn decided to open the program and let any user create long-form content to share with their network and the world. Now, there are millions of articles being shared on LinkedIn.

The key distinction between a regular status update and a Publisher article is size. Status updates are relatively short. They can even be just a photo or a link to another article. Most professionals should be doing this regularly. On the other hand, Publisher articles are just that: articles. There's a lot of debate around how long the "ideal" article is, but it's going to be longer than just a few hundred words.

In the past, the only way to have a forum to share long-form content was to create your own blog. Then you had to somehow get people to visit your blog, which got harder and harder in an over-saturated marketplace. It was practically a full-time job. For most professionals who work for someone else, it was also hard to integrate that blog (and the personal brand it creates) with their day-to-day role.

In many ways, Publisher creates a "blog platform" on LinkedIn that every professional can use and integrate into their existing brand. (see 5.11.1 and 5.11.2) If you work for a technology company as a programmer, for example, you can write about coding or technology trends. It will fit in with the overall message you are sending as an IT professional. It helps you and it helps your company because the overall topics are in alignment with your daily work.

Publisher is a great way to dip your toes in the waters of content creation. A few things to consider when you are starting out on the Publisher path:

1. Have something to say.

Don't worry about being world-changing but do share from your unique perspective. You have a point-of-view and opinion that is uniquely yours and it's OK to share it. In fact, it's imperative to share it.

If you are just rehashing the same old stuff, your readers aren't going to keep coming back.

2. Be consistent.

If you are going to share content that effectively builds your personal brand and encourages engagement, you need to regularly and consistently share. You can't post one article and then sit back and relax. It can be every two weeks, monthly or even bi-monthly, but you create a regular schedule. It's much more powerful to have five or ten articles available than just one.

3. Write good articles.

This may seem obvious, but you need to write interesting and well-written content. You don't have to be another Shakespeare, but you will be judged by how you write as well as what you write. Sharing online is powerful, and that power comes with a caveat: If it has the power to make you look good, it has the power to make you look bad. So proofread material before you post it. You can even use a site like Grammarly to double-check it. And if you have someone who can look at it before you post it, do so.

4. Include a call to action.

The best writers on Publisher are trying to drive activity from their articles, and you should too. You could include a short sentence at the end of your article that encourages your reader to comment or

to follow you. You can also ask people to view your profile, look at other online content you have, or connect with you.

5. Share your article beyond LinkedIn.

Some traffic will naturally come to your article, but it helps to promote it. Be sure to post your article on LinkedIn, but don't discount other avenues. If you use platforms like Twitter or Facebook, include updates on your accounts there. It can also be useful to share it with your close network via email or newsletters. Don't wait for people to stumble upon it. Tell them!

Final Thoughts & Additional Resources

Thank you for learning more about how you can build stronger relationships and a more effective network with LinkedIn. But learning is only the first step. As they say, unused knowledge looks like ignorance to the outside viewer. So now it's time to take your knowledge and do something with it! Plan your online strategy, optimize your profile, and engage with your connections to create opportunities in your professional life.

To continue the conversation and find the most up-to-date screenshots of LinkedIn and the material that we covered, be sure to visit:

davidjpfisher.com/linkedinnetworking

While you're there you can read my latest tips and tools on LinkedIn and social networking, and you can ask any questions that weren't covered here. You can also sign up to receive the BackStage Pass, which is the regular rundown of my best ideas on social media, networking, and professional development.

See you online!

About the Author

David J.P. Fisher lives in Evanston, Illinois, next to a beautiful cemetery, which acts as a reminder every morning to not take life for granted (and be on the lookout for zombies). He is an entrepreneur, coach, salesman, writer, meditator, husband, marketer, musician, son, friend, brother, slam poet, clairvoyant, comedian, salsa dancer, lover of life, teller of bad jokes, yoga enthusiast, and an average cook—as long as it's pancakes or hummus.

Known as D. Fish to everyone (except his mom and wife), he is a sought-after speaker, author, and business coach. He has written over 350 articles and 8 books, including the best-selling ***Hyper-Connected Selling*** and ***Networking in the 21st Century: Why Your Network Sucks and What to Do About It.*** Building on 20 years of experience as an entrepreneur and sales professional, he combines nuanced strategy and real-world tactics to help professionals become more effective, efficient, and happy. And it wouldn't be a LinkedIn book if we didn't tell you that you can find him at:

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It seems ages ago that Sia Apostolakis attended one of my LinkedIn seminars and said, "I think this would be a good fit for our work at the NU Alumni Association." Thousands of participants later, I think she was right. Those sessions become the core of what I still teach today.

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