LinkedIn Profile Development Checklist

LinkedIn is an effective tool to network with others virtually. In order to allow employers, recruiters, and others to find you, you need a profile that stands out and will entice professionals to contact you once they view your profile. Use this checklist as a guide to optimize your visibility and showcase your best work.

Benefits

- 92% of employers use social networks and social media to support their recruitment efforts, and 86% research candidates before or after an interview according to Jobvite’s 2012 Social Recruiting Survey Results, recruiting.jobvite.com/resources/social-recruiting-reports-and-trends/
- Allows for a passive job search and enhances Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Supports your traditional job search documents; shares professional information beyond your resume
- Expands your network beyond first degree connections and who you know

Photo*

- Should be professional and focused close up on your face

Headline

- The default setting is your most recent job title; edit the headline to reflect a brand statement that will attract attention

Recommendations

- Ideal to have 1-2 recommendations for each of your most recent work/project experiences
- When requesting a recommendation, your recommender must be a LinkedIn member
- Customize the recommendation request to share why you are looking for a recommendation and what you would specifically like them to highlight; this will help each recommendation to cover different aspects of your skills and qualifications

Connections

- In general, connections should only be made with people who you have a personal or professional relationship with; ideally, you would be able to recommend each other for networking or job opportunities
- Always customize connection requests; this adds a personal touch and will remind the person who you are
- Begin by connecting with family and friends; the more 1st degree connections you have, the more helpful your 2nd degree connections will be
- Connect with classmates and professors, as well as with employers and colleagues at internships and jobs
- Continue to maintain your LinkedIn connections and add new ones as you meet people at networking events, future jobs, etc.

Websites

- Now located in “Contact Information” under your photo and headline; great place to link to blogs and other websites
- Choose “Other” as the website type, and then specify the title of the website such as “John Smith Twitter Account”
- You may want to also include important websites in the Summary section, which will be more immediately visible

Public Profile URL

- Edit the Public Profile URL to your name; add your LinkedIn URL to your resume, business cards, and email signature

Summary*

- Create a professional summary written in the first person, focusing on answering three main questions: (1) Who are you professionally? (2) What do you do or want to do? (3) Why are you unique? What are your skills and specialties?
- Include your contact information (e.g., email address), which makes it easier for people to get in touch with you (note that this can also be listed in the Additional Information section)
- Be sure to include keywords for your industry; review job descriptions and other professionals’ profiles, as well as the Skills tool, to get more ideas on which keywords to use
- This section is extremely important for SEO
- You may add any presentations, documents, projects, or videos to this section as well*

Experience

- Post your current position as well as at least two past jobs, internships, and/or volunteer
opportunities (note that volunteer experiences could instead also be listed in a separate “Volunteering & Causes” section)

- Under each position, list the bullet points from your resume; you can also add a few additional points if you’d like
- Use bullet points for easy scanning and start your bullets with action verbs, just as you would on a resume; see pages 20 and 21 for a list of strong verbs to get you started
- Note that you can now post presentation materials, writing samples, videos, and other industry-related materials to highlight the work you completed at each job

**Education**

- Include all education as well as honors, awards, activities, significant projects, relevant courses, and/or other highlights
- Note that you can receive recommendations from professors, which would be connected to this section
- You can also add a link to videos, images, documents, or presentations to showcase any school-related work and projects

**Skills & Expertise**

- Use this tool to identify pertinent skills for your industry, find professionals in your field, and find groups and companies in your industry
- Add up to 50 skills to your profile (you need at least five to complete your profile); this is another important section for SEO
- As your network endorses your skills, be sure to return the favor (if appropriate)

**Groups & Associations**

- Join up to 50 professional and social groups to highlight your interests and help you to expand your network
- Check out the more than 300 groups affiliated with Columbia University; a couple of examples include Columbia Career Connections and Columbia Alumni Association Network
- Other helpful groups include Professional Associations, such as the National Association of Mechanical Engineers and Professional Writers

**Additional Information**

**Interests**

- Include your interests, both professional and personal; professional interests should relate somewhat to your field and personal interests should be unique

**Advice for Contacting**

- Another place to list your contact information (e.g., email and phone number) and to specify how you want to be contacted

**Additional Sections**

Note that you can reorder the sections on your profile and can add sections that are not part of the standard template. For example, if you are a student, you may want your Education section to come first after your Summary section. Furthermore, you may want to highlight a specific class project under a “Projects” section to showcase industry-level skills and teamwork abilities to a prospective employer. Additional sections that you can add include:

- Courses
- Test Scores
- Honors and Awards
- Languages
- Projects
- Organizations
- Patents
- Publications
- Certifications
- Volunteering & Causes

**Privacy**

Unlike Facebook, you want your profile to be as open as possible so that potential employers and other professionals can find and reach out to you about opportunities. You can control how people view your information and status updates in Settings.

**100% Complete Profile**

According to LinkedIn, you are 40 times more likely to turn up in a search if your profile is 100% complete. Include the following in your profile to reach this level (also see * sections above):

- Industry and location
- Photo
- Executive summary
- Current position
- Two past job positions
- Education
- Five skills
- At least 50 connections

* Items marked with * are necessary for a 100% complete profile.

* Be sure to use watermarks over portfolios or other information that you want to remain proprietary; note that these documents will also populate in the Project section.
Matthew Margolis
Law Student | Ivy League Graduate | Environment and Energy Activist
Greater Boston Area | Law Practice

Previous: Congressman Jerry Nadler: Bend the Arc, A Jewish Partnership for Justice, Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies

Education: Boston College Law School

BUILD A CAREER NETWORK

Admissions Intern
Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies
August 2010 – April 2011 (9 months) | New York, NY

• Contacted and recruited potential students to apply to and then attend List College
• Planned Prospective Student Weekend for 75 applicants and Accepted Student Weekend for 45 students
• Served as a Tour Guide for prospective students and parents

Intern
Democratic Party of Orange County
May 2010 – August 2010 (4 months) | Santa Ana, CA

• Worked full time building the organization’s social media network and writing press releases regarding the Party’s political positions
• Interacted with candidates and helped organize their campaigns
• Presented in front of the Party’s Central Committee on behalf of the Executive Director
• Awarded the Democratic Party Leadership Award for outstanding performance

1 recommendation

Skills & Expertise

Most endorsed for...

2 Policy Analysis
1 Political Organization
1 Social Media
1 Facebook

Matthew also knows about...

Twitter | Foursquare | Grassroots Organizing | Political Campaigns
Campaign Strategy | Nonprofit Leadership | Research | Recruitment/Retention
Writing | Event Planning | Executive Management | Microsoft Office
How to Make Contacts at a Networking Reception

Most of us are not born networkers. Practice and preparation will help you develop the skills it takes to be effective at a networking event, conference, or other industry specific opportunities. Set small goals to start—like talking to one or two people—at your first event. Below are tips to help you make the most of a networking event. Also check out our online tipsheets “Making the Most of a Networking Event” and “Developing a 30-Second Introduction” under the Career Resources tab on our website.

- For most CCE networking events you can review CCE’s Special Events website and investigate attendees and expected format in advance of the event. Try to identify professionals who have backgrounds that interest you as your first point of contact.
- When checking in at the event, determine the format and set-up of the evening. Some events provide color-coded name badges based on industry and some separate the room by specialty.
- Locate professionals you want to meet and introduce yourself. Don’t hesitate to walk up to someone who might be standing alone, and feel free to join a group already engaged in conversation.
- Smile, make eye contact, and firmly shake hands. Ensure fresh breath and proper hygiene.
- Be friendly and provide a brief background about yourself and why you are there. Ask questions about the professional’s career path.
- At the end of your conversation, if you would like to speak further, ask for a business card. You can comfortably do this by saying how much you have enjoyed the conversation and inquiring whether it is possible to continue the conversation in an informational interview at a later time.

Follow-up

It is important to follow up with people with whom you have spoken after your initial contact with them. Send thank-you notes within 24 hours of your meetings or conversations. See page 46 for an example. Additional follow-up is appropriate after you have taken someone’s advice on something and have an outcome to report. Examples of this include: contacting someone he/she recommended, joining a professional association, or reading a blog that was suggested.

Avoiding Obstacles and Common Pitfalls

The following are recommendations for dealing with unexpected obstacles and situations that you may encounter while networking.

You feel uncomfortable: Networking is not asking for favors; it is a mutually beneficial interaction. Many of the people you contact will be excited to share information about themselves and the industry and might have helpful suggestions. If you do your research and respect the time of your contacts, you will discover that networking is a great tool.

Silences: Create and refer to your list of open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a yes/no response.

Rude responses: If you receive a rude response or an inappropriate comment, thank the contact and, if necessary, leave or end the conversation early.

Lengthy answers: If you are benefiting from the information, let him/her continue. If the information is not helpful, refocus the interview (after letting the person finish his/her point) by stating that you don’t want to take too much of his/her time and then ask another open-ended question from your list.

You ask for a job and the conversation seems to end: Networking is best used to develop relationships, not simply to identify job prospects. Use networking meetings to gain information, develop further contacts, and seek advice.
You become the interviewee: If in the middle of the informational interview an actual job is presented to you, you may choose to be interviewed formally on the spot. In this case, it is appropriate to ask more questions about the job, such as what skills or experiences are relevant, before answering interview questions. If you are uncomfortable, ask whether you can return to be interviewed as you would like time to prepare.

Failing to follow up: In order to keep connections fresh, send thank-you letters, provide updates on progress, and ask for names of other individuals you can contact.

Poor record keeping: Keep a record of your calls, conversations, and meetings. You may find that a spreadsheet or journal may be helpful for tracking. Once you begin to contact a large number of individuals, it may be difficult to recall all of this information.

Networking cannot replace research: Research industries, organizations, and positions before and after your networking meetings. Your meetings and follow-up communication will be more productive if your questions are informed.

QUICK TIP

At CCE, you can improve your networking skills by practicing a networking interaction, preparing questions for an informational interview, or practicing your 30-second introduction with a career counselor.

Employers and students networking at the Fashion Industry Showcase (Navid Ladha)
Dear Ms. White,

I am a student at Columbia University majoring in Art History and I would like to pursue a career in Public Relations. I noticed your profile on the Communication Arts LinkedIn Group and am very interested in speaking with you about your career path and experience. During the summer, I had a very exciting internship at a small boutique PR firm named Jive. This experience has prompted me to learn more about and explore the industry.

At your convenience, I would like to schedule a 20–25 minute informational meeting with you either in person or over the phone, whichever is more convenient for you. Thank you for considering my request, and I hope we can meet in the near future.

Regards,
Alana Gomez

Ben Adams
(212) 854-1234
ba234@columbia.edu

Mr. So Shinohara
All Star Engineering
754 Broadway
New York, NY 10023

May 3, 2013

Dear Mr. Shinohara:

I enjoyed meeting with you yesterday. I really appreciated you taking the time to have coffee with me and talk about the field of chemical engineering. The more I heard about your personal and professional experiences, the greater my interest in the field. Right after our meeting, I reviewed the American Institute of Chemical Engineering’s website as you recommended, to gain a clearer understanding of job titles and the structure of industry.

Thanks again for your time and assistance. I will keep you updated on my progress and hope to keep in touch.

Sincerely,
Ben Adams

NOTE: If your thank-you note is sent via email, the address heading is not necessary.