

Ten tips on building a strong LinkedIn profile

LinkedIn is all about connecting. But before we connect, we have to look for what we have in common. That's the key to putting together a profile that jump-starts conversation. Think of your profile as a way to promote your brand — a professional permalink, a fixed point on the web to promote your skills, your knowledge and your personality. Brands build trust by using an authentic voice and telling a credible story. Tell your story completely by following these 10 tips.

1. Don't cut and paste your resume

LinkedIn hooks you into a network, not just a human resources department. You wouldn't hand out your resume before introducing yourself, so don't do it here. Instead, describe your experience and abilities as you would to someone you just met. In addition, write for the screen, formatting text in short blocks of copy with visual or textual signposts.

2. Borrow from the best marketers

Light up your profile with your voice. Use specific adjectives, colorful verbs and active construction (for example cite "managed project team," rather than "responsible for project team management"). Speak naturally: only write in the third person if such formality suits your personal brand. Picture yourself at a conference or client meeting. How do you introduce yourself? That's your authentic voice, so use it.

3. Write a personal tagline

That line of text under your name? It's the first thing people see in your profile. It follows your name in search hit lists. It's your brand. (Note: your e-mail address is not a brand!) Your company's brand might be so strong that it and your title are sufficient. Or you might need to distill your professional personality into a more eye-catching phrase, something that at a glance describes who you are.

4. Put your elevator pitch to work

Go back to your conference introduction. That 30-second description, the essence of who you are and what you do, is a personal elevator pitch. Use it in the "Summary" section to engage readers. You've got a 5-10 second window to capture your audience; so the more meaningful your summary is, the more attention you'll get from your readers.



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5. Point out your skills

Think of the “Specialties” field as your personal search engine optimizer, a way to refine the ways people find and remember you. This searchable section is where that list of industry buzzwords from your resume belongs. Also this section can house particular abilities and interests you have, the personal values you bring to your professional performance and even a note of humor or passion.

6. Explain your experience

Help the reader grasp the key points: briefly say what the company does and what you did or do for them. Picture yourself at that conference, again. Use those clear, succinct phrases to describe yourself and your company — and break those up into visually appealing sections.

7. Distinguish yourself from the crowd

Use the “Additional Information” section to round out your profile with a few key interests. Add websites that showcase your abilities or passions. Edit the default “My Website” label to encourage click-throughs (you get Google page rankings for those). If you belong to a trade association or an interest group, help other members find you by naming those groups. If you’re an award winner or have been recognized by peers, customers or employers, mention that here to add prestige to your profile.

8. Ask and answer questions

Posting thoughtful questions and useful advice in “Answers” section can help build your credibility. The best responses give

people a reason to look at your profile. Make a point of answering questions in your field to establish your expertise, raise your visibility and, most importantly, to build social capital with people in your network — you may need answers to a question of your own down the road.

9. Improve your Google pagerank

Get recommendations from colleagues, clients, and employers who can speak credibly about your abilities or performance. (Think quality, not quantity.) Ask them to focus on a specific skill or personality trait. Return the favor by providing meaningful comments when you recommend others. And mix it up — variety makes your recommendations feel authentic.

10. Build your connections

Connections are one of the most important aspects of your brand: the company you keep reflects the quality of your brand. Remember, the value of that commonality works both ways. So identify connections that will add to your credibility and pursue those.

One final note: As you add connections and recommendations, your profile develops into a peer-reviewed picture of your personal brand. Make sure it is focused, well composed and easy to find. Remember that permalink? Edit your public profile’s URL to reflect your name or tagline, then put it to work: add it to your blog, link to it from your website, include it in your e-mail signature. Then begin to make your conversations and continue to network.