LinkedIn for Educators
An Instructional Trilogy
By Ronald A. Berk
Top 10 Reasons You Should NOT Join LinkedIn Professional Network!

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Disclaimer: I have been an active “free” user of LinkedIn for 5.463 years with more than 3000 (1st degree) connections from all over the world. I have no vested interest in LinkedIn other than as a user of the services it provides. Despite the fact that LinkedIn was originally designed as a network for business professionals, not academicians, I have learned a few techniques on how it can best serve my peers. LinkedIn has also added several features and apps over the years to address the specific needs of administrators and faculty. This article is an extension and update of a blog series I wrote 2.683 years ago to acquaint faculty with the features of LinkedIn.

Introduction

Social media networks are not just the rage among Net Gener; they have revolutionized the way over a bazillion people communicate. Hollywood even made a movie about how one of them sprouted from the mind of a Harvard drop-out, Mark Zuckerberg. These networks are free and open to every age, from diapers to diapers. Yet academicians tend to resist most of them, even those that were designed for professional, not social, use. My informal surveys of faculty at universities and conferences in the U.S. and countries in Europe, Eastern Europe, and Asia indicate only about 20% are members of LinkedIn or have any interest in joining.

So what’s the problem? There seem to be two salient issues that bubble to the surface: (1) TIME! and (2) networking. First, a network profile requires time to set up and maintain. If you don’t contribute to the network, it doesn’t serve its purposes and yours. And time is a major issue with all of us. For example, LinkedIn requires a specially formatted profile, which is longer than your university website profile and much shorter than your vitae. But how many profiles do you need? Additional maintenance time on LinkedIn is necessary weekly to stay active with your network and in groups.

Second, administrators and faculty are overwhelmed with a gazillion tasks that usually do not require a vast network of colleagues or the need to build a network. Networking is not part of an academician’s DNA. Except for professors in the business field, most do not have the “business mentality” of constantly thinking about how to generate clients, boost sales, and recruit employees. Usually, they don’t even carry business cards to distribute at conferences. Researchers, especially, thrive in a very narrow world of colleagues contributing specifically to their research. Professors function primarily within the tunnels of their respective disciplines, despite the increase in interdisciplinary journals, conferences, and email lists.

So who needs another Internet source that will just send you more emails you don’t want? This article is intended to answer that question so you can make an informed decision about whether to join LinkedIn. Just what can LinkedIn do to make your life better? The next three sections will provide the following: (1) an inventory of the top 10 traditional resources for communication, excluding social media, (2) the top 10 reasons NOT to join LinkedIn, and, finally, (3) what happens next in terms of a summary of LinkedIn’s five purposes, deciding whether to join LinkedIn, and LinkedIn’s 2013 profile updates.

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Top 10 Traditional Resources for Communication

Let’s begin with basic academic communication. Assuming you are not a total recluse and you do communicate with colleagues at institutions outside your own, how do you contact them? What resources do you use? Here’s an inventory of 10 traditional low-tech networking resources you may be using:

1. stone tablets
2. faded business cards with a paper clip or rubber band around them
3. scrunched napkins with a smeared ink name and phone number (WAIT! That’s for dates.)
4. print address book
5. Rolodex® cards in or out of the tray or base
6. print directories from institutions, associations, and conferences
7. online address book (e.g., AboutOne, Plaxo, Telnic, Unyk, conXt, and WikiWorldBook)
8. contact lists from Outlook, Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo, and AOL
9. PDA (personal digital assistant), PIM (personal information manager), or mobile phone directory
10. phone a friend to remember the person sitting next to that friend at the table with horn-rimmed glasses and a leather headband

If you’re a Net Gener or Gen-Xer faculty member reading this list, you’re probably throwing up right now and thinking: “What’s a Rolodex®?” I’ll wait a moment. Are you okay? There may be other “on-the-fly,” low-tech techniques you have used, such as Googling your colleagues or their institutions to track down their emails or phone numbers. How time-consuming is that? Certainly, your iPhone®, iPod®, iPad®, or other iGadget® is an option since it has an infinite number of apps and can be used to contact and connect with just about anything with or without a pulse, including LinkedIn. Beyond all of these resources, what other options are there?

Top 10 Reasons NOT to Join LinkedIn

There are social media networks such as LinkedIn. It’s the professional counterpart to Facebook. Instead of facing, you’re linking. It is only a decade old with more than 200 million members (compared to Facebook’s 800 million), including 2.8 million active company profiles, spread over 200 countries (Weiner, 2012). Of course, there are other similar networks originating from several countries, such as Viadeo (45 million, France), Plaxo (20 million, USA), XING (10 million, Germany), Academia (.6 million, United Kingdom), Academic.edu (2 million, USA, research sharing only), and Young Black Professionals (YBP, USA), but they don’t seem to be growing in membership at the rate of LinkedIn nor do they have the number or variety of features and apps that LinkedIn offers.

So why bother? What does LinkedIn provide that could streamline some of your job tasks or make your job easier so you can produce more efficiently and effectively? Since many of you are looking for reasons not to join LinkedIn or any other social network, let’s consider exactly why you should NOT join the network. Here are 10 reasons.

As a bona fide, certified, fully functioning faculty member or administrator who plans on a career in academia, DO NOT JOIN if you have NO NEED TO:

10. consolidate the preceding 10 resources and your institutional website profile into one location. If you prefer to continue contacting everyone using those different resources, that’s your choice.

LinkedIn Feature: In the upper left corner of your profile page (Contacts), you can click “Connections” and easily find any connection in your network by last name, locations, companies, or industries lickety-split or faster. In the upper right corner, the “Search” box permits you to locate any person (People) in the dropdown, as well as company, jobs, groups, etc. in or outside your network with up-to-date contact information. In fact, LinkedIn will send you a message if a connection changes jobs, contact information, T-shirts, or other elements on his or her profile.

9. build a network of like-minded (teaching, research, writing, clinical) colleagues. If you have no interest in networking with others in your field and you prefer to be a hermit, then this feature is useless. Also, if you’re not like-minded like any of your colleagues, you may need an appointment with Dr. Phil.

LinkedIn Feature: You can create your own custom network. Adding connections increases the likelihood that colleagues will see your profile. In fact, your LinkedIn network can help boost your ranking in Google. Further, professionals usually prefer to collaborate with people who they know and trust rather than strangers. That can be a big plus in assembling your research team or being asked by someone in your network to serve on a working group or any job. There are more than 20 sources you can use to build your network, which will be described in Part 3.

8. contact colleagues and students in your field easily and quickly. If you prefer your Rolodex® or you have an interpersonal emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) of 0, then building and maintaining contacts with LinkedIn will be a waste of time.

LinkedIn Feature: Members of LinkedIn typically update their job titles, institution, iPhone carrier, and other profile information, which means you can probably contact anyone in a blink. But “anyone” means a contact on LinkedIn. Your colleagues and students must be on LinkedIn. There is
If you have no need to collaborate or interact with others in your own institution and association, then fawgettaboutit. If you are totally outside your institution to consult and speak. I was in business and didn’t even know it. Outsiders can affirm your expertise and build your credibility. The number and types of invitations to the White House to advise the President and to Capitol Hill to testify before Congress really count when you come up for promotion, assuming you also have a wheelbarrow of publications.

Your abilities and skills are clearly described as well as the benefits you can provide an employer or client. Those benefits, in particular, should be highlighted in your Background open “Summary” section. It’s what you can deliver for your employer or client better than anyone else that counts. If you’re running a business, you need to be reachable quickly and easily or someone else might get the job. Had I known in 1976 when I began my career at JHU what I know now about running a business, my consulting life might have been more productive. Yours can be now with LinkedIn.

4. hunt for a job in or out of your field. If you are totally committed to your current position, have tenure, or have been kidnapped by your department chair, then you will have no need for this feature.

LinkedIn Feature: Otherwise, if you’ve been whacked, shoved out, or forced to retire, this feature might be useful. Or, if you just want to keep your options open to pursue other positions and move up the ranks as a free agent, the free employment resources in LinkedIn could help. Beyond The Chronicle of Higher Education and other professional sources that post positions, LinkedIn lists positions based on your specifications all over the world. There are also specific job posts within LinkedIn groups. When you’re in search mode, you need all available search engines to drive you to a new job.

You can find jobs, people, and business opportunities recommended by someone in your contact network. As a job seeker, you can also review the profiles of hiring administrators or chairs of search committees and discover which of their existing contacts can introduce them. Now you can follow different institutions and receive notifications about the new jobs and offers available and also save (i.e., bookmark) jobs for which you would like to apply.

3. search for the best candidates for job openings you’re trying to fill in your department. If you have no need to search for job candidates, then you won’t need this feature.

LinkedIn Feature: As an employer, you can list jobs and search for candidates all over the world for any faculty, administrator, research, clinical, or extraterrestrial openings in your institution. LinkedIn offers another significant source of job possibilities along with The Chronicle, your professional journals, and other media that post jobs.

2. be part of multiple communities of scholars other than your own institution and association. If you work alone and have no need to collaborate or interact with others in your field, then fawgettaboutit.
LinkedIn Feature: There are 1.2 million professional groups in LinkedIn, many related to your associations, conferences, and a variety of institutions and companies, including your college alumni. **You can join up to 50 groups.** If you can’t find one that fits your interests, you may be really weird. But guess what? LinkedIn permits you to create your own.

You can initiate or comment on discussions, poll members with specific questions, advertise upcoming events, search for jobs posted by group members, or do nothing. **Level of participation is within your control.** Visibility in these groups and your comments to questions can also contribute to establishing your expertise and building credibility.

**And the NUMBER ONE REASON:**

1. **Tell your professional story.** Your profile, your purpose(s) for using LinkedIn should be clear. How can LinkedIn affect your professional life as you now know it? Will it make your life easier, add or create opportunities you want to pursue, or expand your professional aspirations? Consider those possibilities.

   **Should You Join?**

   How do these purposes align with your professional needs for using LinkedIn? Which ones are most important? How can LinkedIn affect your professional life as you now know it? Will it make your life easier, add or create opportunities you want to pursue, or expand your professional aspirations? Consider those possibilities.

   Remember that LinkedIn is just a tool or vehicle for the preceding purposes. If you don’t commit to using it properly, those purposes may not be realized. It provides FREE professional services (of course, there are upgrades) you can use to propel yourself forward in your career. All of the preceding five purposes can be attained with free memberships. (PERSONAL NOTE: I have never paid anything to LinkedIn. If you need a LinkedIn ad or profile for your business, there will be a fee.) Once you set up your profile, it will require only a few minutes a week to update and keep your activities visible to your network. Any additional activity on the site is at your discretion and time.

   Given the importance of designing your profile and building your network, my next two articles in this trilogy will be devoted to those topics. I encourage you to jumpstart the process using my previous blog series in November 2010 and LinkedIn blogs and tutorials.

LinkedIn Feature: Questions can be sent in a message to your connections, posted on group discussions, or shared in an update. **The scope and depth of expertise available on LinkedIn is beyond our imagination.** The human resources worldwide and in a few small planets can provide perspectives on issues you may not find within any single association, organization, email list, blog, or other specific source. You can tap those resources for free.

**What Happens Next?**

If you are convinced that you have no need for any item on that top 10 list, then get back to work. Stop fooling around. If, however, there is at least one reason you might benefit from LinkedIn, then keep reading. We’re almost done. Think carefully about that benefit. When you craft your profile, your purpose(s) for using LinkedIn should be clear.

**Five Major Purposes**

The preceding top 10 list can be boiled down to **five major purposes for joining LinkedIn:**

1. **Display your professional credentials to promote your expertise, credibility, and job-hiring potential**
2. **Communicate easily and quickly with colleagues, clients, and students anywhere in the world on any topic**
3. **Market your business, whether individual consulting or a large company, and products (books, webinars, institutes, etc.) to obtain clients**
4. **Search worldwide for a job, while employers search for you as a candidate to fill positions in their institutions**
5. **Search worldwide for the best candidates to fill positions in your institution or business**

LinkedIn also updated their profile format this year. According to LinkedIn representative Bronson (2012), the updates were intended to

1. **Tell your professional story.** Our new visual design helps you make a powerful first impression and showcase your skills and accomplishments. We’ve also provided tools such as inline editing, making it a snap to create a complete, up-to-date profile.
2. **Discover people and opportunities.** Have you ever wondered how many of your connections already work for your dream institution? Or what you have in common with the prospects you’re trying to reach? The new profile shows you rich and visual insights on the people and institutions in your network. These insights also make it simpler to discover people outside your network and quickly establish common ground to make more meaningful connections.
3. **Engage with your network.** We’ve also made it easier to see what your network is doing and to engage with your connections. Recent activity is now on the top of the profile, allowing you to stay current with what your network has been sharing and doing.

LinkedIn continues to make improvements and respond to the needs of its members. It’s definitely worthy
of your serious consideration. Think about it and let me know your thoughts.

The next article in this trilogy (Part 2) will cover the following sections of the profile: (1) Name, Headline, and Photo, (2) Contact Information, (3) Customize Public Profile, (4) Activity or Update, (5) Background (Summary & Specialties), (6) Experience, and (7) Education. The final article (Part 3) will describe the remaining profile sections, particularly Connections and Recommendations.

References


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LINKEDIN TRILOGY: Part 2.
Creating an Eye-Popping Profile to Be Found and Network with LinkedIn Optimization

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Introduction

HR directors, job recruiters, faculty researchers, clinicians, administrators, and search committee chairs are sleuthing around LinkedIn daily. On your profile in the right margin and also on your LinkedIn Home page, under “Home,” you can see “WHO’S VIEWED YOUR PROFILE?” In that widget box you will find “How many people have viewed your profile” and “How many times your profile has shown up in search results” every day. What do these Google Analytics reveal about your profile visitors?

LinkedIn is THE social media tool for tracking down professionals. The searchers may be hunting for the right person to fill a specific position in their institution or may just contact a faculty member, researcher, clinician, speaker, consultant, coach, or mentor. LinkedIn is more than an electronic directory, plus it doesn’t cost anything to be searched or to search for jobs, although upgrades are available. It was estimated that 95% of companies use LinkedIn for recruitment (Qualman, 2011).

Soon more and more universities will discover LinkedIn’s potential and tap into their professional database. Is your profile ready to be found in those searches? What do the current analytics tell you? How can you turn your profile into a credible, salable vehicle for promoting your products and services? This article, which is Part 2 of my LinkedIn trilogy, will transform the uses and functions of LinkedIn covered in Part 1 (Berk, 2013) into a reality.

Profile Motto

It’s profile time in the big city! My MOTTO for this profile is: “Do it right or don’t do it at all.” If you do not complete your profile, it’s like sending a colleague or employer half of your curriculum vitae (CV). It says, “I don’t care.” You want your BEST possible image to be conveyed to the people who may matter the most in your profession and career, especially those professionals who you haven’t even met yet. Your professional reputation is on the line. What you display can be a career maker or breaker. Your profile on LinkedIn doesn’t cost you anything. You decide.

Profile Preparation

As you prepare your profile as a newbie on LinkedIn or revise your current profile, make sure every entry is accurate and spelling, mechanics, grammar, and word choice are impeccable. Prepare text sections in Microsoft Word to check for errors. In Word you can also transfer special characters, symbols, and fancy bullets to highlight key words and phrases. Then you can copy and paste your “copy” into LinkedIn. Dig out your resume or CV (the whole one) and website pages. You may be able to adapt some of the material from those sources.

LinkedIn Optimization

LinkedIn profiles receive high page ranks in the major search engines, such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo! When an employer Googles you, what does he or she see? Your LinkedIn rank in the search engines and your LinkedIn search engine optimization (SEO) will be determined by the following seven habits:

1. the information you provide in your profile, especially “Headline” and “Summary,”
2. the number of data points you create, such as skills, interests, groups, and connections, in common with others,

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(3) your choice of a public profile for “Full View,”
(4) your customized LinkedIn URL and frequency of citing that link in your email signature line and websites,
(5) the frequency of click-throughs, clicking website and publication links to your websites,
(6) your level of activity in adding connections, participating in discussions, posting status updates, and endorsing and recommending others, and
(7) a 100% complete profile according to LinkedIn requirements.

These are key elements in building your profile to increase your visibility and connectivity to find and be found by buckets of people. This article will focus on optimizing these elements as you create your profile.

100% Complete Profile

Why bother? Who cares whether your profile is complete? You should. It affects your search engine rank and increases your chances 40% of receiving opportunities through LinkedIn (Serdula, 2012). Here are the profile requirements:

1. Photo
2. Industry and location
3. Summary
4. Experience (Current job position with description & at least two previous positions with descriptions)
5. Education
6. Skills & Expertise (minimum of 3)
7. 50+ connections
8. Frequent profile updates

Those are modest requirements most anyone can fill. They are all within your control. LinkedIn provides a visual gauge to let you know your percentage progress and when you are complete.

Profile Resources

There are more than 15 print books on the use of LinkedIn for business (Alba, 2011; Breitbarth, 2011; Butow & Taylor, 2009; Carter, 2013; Elad, 2011; Gunelius, 2012; Martin, 2012; Prodromou, 2012; Rose, 2010; Sandler, 2010; Schaffer, 2009, 2011; Serdula, 2011; Tylock, 2011; Vermeiren, & Verdronck, 2011; von Rosen, 2012). Most are self-published e-books by Amazon’s CreateSpace. There are also several available only as Amazon Kindle™ Books (Bernstein, 2013; Brown, 2012; Deford, 2012; Gallagher, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Masters, 2012; Turner, 2012). Added to these resources are hundreds of articles and blogs. Since it is not known whether these books and articles are peer-reviewed for accuracy and comprehensiveness, I verified specific procedures and content with LinkedIn, where possible.

I was unable to locate any source written for faculty and administrators in higher education. An academician’s needs, interests, and applications of LinkedIn’s functions are different from business and industry. Since LinkedIn added sections for publications, patents, projects, and certifications, the site has become more academic-friendly with profile characteristics to which we can relate. This trilogy of articles is designed to fill that gap in the literature and the needs of educators.

Before we move into the details for creating your profile, here are a few samples of profiles that illustrate the descriptions and concepts that follow. These individuals are a few of the LinkedIn and social media experts. What better models for your profile than those experts who wrote the books? Notice their customized URL. Even the CEO of LinkedIn has one: http://www.linkedin.com/in/jeffweiner08/.

Viveka von Rosen (http://www.linkedin.com/in/linkedinexpert/)
Donna Serdula (http://www.linkedin.com/in/todonna/)
Neal Schaffer (http://www.linkedin.com/in/nealschaffer/)
Melonie Dodaro (http://ca.linkedin.com/in/meloniedodaro/)
Laura Rubinstein (http://www.linkedin.com/in/laurarubinstein/)
Jason Alba (http://www.linkedin.com/in/jasonalba/)
Wayne Breitbarth (http://www.linkedin.com/in/waynebreitbarth/)

Profile Sections for This Article

You can do this. Setting up or modifying your profile will be worth your time and effort. In the NEW 2013 LinkedIn profile design, the sections that follow describe the steps to provide the most appropriate information for

1. Name, Headline, and Photo
2. Contact Information
3. Customize Public Profile
4. Activity or Update
5. Background (Summary & Specialties)
6. Experience
7. Education

The final article in this trilogy will cover the remaining eight profile sections, particularly Connections and Recommendations.

Creating Your LinkedIn Profile

Are you ready? Let’s begin. At the top of the LinkedIn page, under “Profile,” click “Edit Profile.” You will always start in “Edit Profile” mode and left click the pencil icon to enter new information or change your profile. “View Profile” is what you and the public will see.

1. Name, Headline, and Photo

a. Name: Your full professional name should be displayed without any nicknames or abbreviations.
b. **Headline**: This is the **single most important element** to be picked up by the search engines. It should be an eye-popping, attention-grabbing phrase (up to 120 characters) of who you are and what you do. Use words that administrators, faculty, researchers, clinicians, or recruiters will use when they search for your expertise. Get into their heads and think like them. How can they find you? For example, “Consultant” does not identify your skills; “Performance Testing Consultant,” or “Psychometrics (Teacher Certification) Consultant” does. Check out Google Keyword Tool for synonyms and alternative phrases. *(NOTE: DO NOT use unfamiliar acronyms or abbreviations unless they are fully defined elsewhere in your profile.)*

**Your title and institution.** LinkedIn is a people-to-people network. The headline can consist of your title and institution or company name, but it should be accompanied by a word or phrase capturing what you do (teaching, research, or clinical specialty) or what your business does. For example, as a title, “Professor & Chair, Pediatric Neurosurgery” is much more descriptive than just “Professor & Chair.” Avoid headings that say nothing about what you do, such as “visionary,” “expert,” or “entrepreneur,” or how you can help me. Put them in the “Summary.” Be specific.

**Multiple titles.** You can use more than one title or phrase, separated by semi-colons, other punctuation, or symbols. So after your primary university position and institution, indicate your secondary consulting, speaking, or clinical services. This is your tagline or personal branding. Why should someone want to connect with you? What benefits can you provide?

**Test the SEO of your headline.** For example, if you are building a center for teaching excellence for medical faculty, what keywords would you use to search for a consultant in that area? Who pops up on the first page of a LinkedIn search? Type different phrases in the “People” search box in the upper right corner of your profile page, such as “faculty development,” “professional development (medical education),” “medical education,” or “center for teaching excellence, medical education.” Left click magnifying glass icon each time. On which page do you pop up? 1st? 2nd? 36th?

If you want to be found as that consultant, then use the most SEO effective keywords in your **“Headline”** so you pop on the first page. Given the character limitation of the “Headline,” use other related keywords in your **“Summary”** and in other sections of your profile.

**Location and industry (LinkedIn requirement).** Under the “Headline,” left click the third pencil icon and make sure to complete your country, postal code, location, and industry; otherwise, there will be blank space under your title or United States, Bangladesh, Pluto, or some other name. It’s incomplete and looks ridiculous. This is critical information because LinkedIn filters job searches by location and industry. No location, no job.

**Photo (LinkedIn requirement):** Upload a professional, up-to-date, flattering picture (close-up headshot, with or without Botox®, not full-length) that fills the box. It should make you appear warm, friendly, and approachable, not stiff, scary, or a serial killer. *(NOTE: Photo must be no larger than 80 X 80 pixels and 4MB.)* Why post a photo?

1. **It helps to build your social media credibility.** It’s like your personal logo: An awesome photo may not necessarily win connections or business, but a bad or inappropriate photo can definitely lose both (Haden, 2011). LinkedIn reports that **profiles with photos are seven times more likely to be viewed than those without photos** (Han, 2011).

2. **The photo provides evidence that you are real.** There are fake profiles without photos on LinkedIn. Profiles without photos look suspicious and raise questions by people who don’t know you. Since LinkedIn is a people-centric network, no photo means you’re invisible (Schaffer, 2012).

3. **It helps people remember you easily.** When you receive business cards from new colleagues at a conference and invite them to connect, it will be easier for them to match your name to a picture than nothing. When you interview for a job, the interviewer will be able to recognize you before and after the interview more easily. The same advantage applies when you select or interview candidates for a research position or collaborate with co-authors.

*DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT post your wedding or a holiday photo, a gecko, ugly baby, barnyard animal, stuffed toy, your grandchildren or anyone else’s, or your book cover in place of YOU. This is not Facebook; this is a professional network. What image do you want to convey to colleagues, professionals who may not know you, a prospective employer, or your momma? Once you upload your photo, click “Everyone” to make sure it’s visible.
2. Contact Information

LinkedIn is designed for you to be able to not only find colleagues, but also for you to be found easily by them and people who want to know you. In the bottom right corner of your “Headline” box, left click “Edit Contact info” (see screenshot next). Click each pencil icon and supply as much information as you feel comfortable posting.

List at least your email (OPTIONAL: IM, phone number, and address), plus your Twitter link so people can follow you on Twitter. On “Websites” dropdown, click “Other” and provide actual names of your personal, business, and blog websites with URL links; otherwise, they will be given the generic labels of “Personal,” “Company,” and “Blog.” You can also provide contact information in other sections of your profile. If you hide this information, you won’t be contacted.

3. Customize Public Profile

After the “Websites” in the previous screenshot, right of the LinkedIn URL, left click “Edit.” A page will pop up on the right with the heading “Customize Your Public Profile.” To maximize your visibility to search engines and people searching for you, left click the “everyone” line bubble and every box below, as in the next screenshot.

Below that list, you can also customize your LinkedIn URL. Left click “Customize your public profile URL.” Create one with your name as your vanity URL (see screenshot), such as http://www.linkedin.com/in/stevenspielberg. Click “Set Custom URL” in blue box below. You can even see the profile that others will see by left clicking “View your public profile” to the right of the “Customize” link.

Use your custom URL and/or one of the profile badges in your email signature line, websites, and any other Internet sites to increase your visibility. This is easy to do and extremely important. Don’t skip it.

4. Activity or Update

This is the last information your viewer will see “above the fold” before deleting you or scrolling down to your “Background” section to learn more about you. Only one or two posts should be visible with the most recent on top. The viewer can always click “SEE MORE.” “Activity” appears under the first box (see first screenshot below) and as “Update” at the top of your “Home” page (at top far left, under “Home,” click “LinkedIn Home”) (see second screenshot).
When you enter a post in either white box, it will automatically appear in both places. The announcement of new connections, changes to your profile, endorsements of skills, comments to posts, and group activities also appear automatically in both locations. (NOTE: You can delete most activity posts, except new connections, by clicking “Delete” which appears when you move your cursor over the upper right corner of the update. You can also prevent changes to your profile from being posted.)

**Blocking profile changes in Activity and Updates.** Since every change you make will automatically be announced to everyone in those two sections, you might want to block those posts. Go to the upper right corner of your profile and place the cursor on your name or down arrow. On dropdown, left click “Settings.” Go to “Privacy Controls” and click “Turn on/off your activity broadcasts.” Make sure the box is unchecked (see screenshot below). Left click “Save changes.” Now none of your profile changes will appear as an “Activity” or “Update.”

**Types of activities.** This entry should indicate your current project, professional activity, or benefit for your viewers consistent with your expertise and brand. This is another opportunity to “customize” your profile by sharing material that displays your interests and those of your connections. For example, you can post new blog titles with a URL link, research activities, attendance at a conference, a new article or book (listed under Publications on your profile), announcements of upcoming events, helpful tips, and any other information you want your connections to know. You can also add a URL link for a YouTube video, photo, music clip, artwork, portfolio of any work, or other media (see Johnson [2012] and Robinson [2013] for other suggestions). You never know when a colleague, student, prospect, client, or vendor may notice.

**Frequency of posts.** When you post your message, the “Home” page of all of your connections is “pinged” with your “Update.” Your updates for the week are also sent via email to your network as “Network Updates.” You can also share on Twitter, but only the first 140 characters will be displayed. It is recommended that you post updates every day to raise your LinkedIn rank in the search engines.

Be active on your LinkedIn Home page by responding to the posts of others in the “Updates.” This “activity feed” is real-time feedback from the people you want to reach. Their updates indicate what interests them and their hot issues. “Like, Comment, or Share” posts that strike your fancy. This will contribute to your relationship-building mission on LinkedIn.

5. **Background (Summary & Specialties)**

If your reader gets to this section, you have reason to celebrate. However, you won’t know; so don’t start popping any corks yet. The “Background” section is your “highlight film,” figuratively and, possibly, literally, because you can post a video link here as well. Based on your “Headline,” “Background” tells your story and describes you, your teaching, research, and/or clinical expertise, your business, and your purpose(s) for being on LinkedIn. Is your purpose to network with colleagues, to collaborate on research or writing projects, to obtain clients for your consulting business or clinical practice, to find a job, or a combination of the preceding? Your summary must be written to fit your profile purpose(s). This section should be tailored to the image you want presented.

Direct it at your target audience or niche. You have about 10–30 seconds to provide a strong, compelling description of what you do and, especially, if you have a business, the concrete benefits you can offer your clients. It consists of a “Summary” and list of “Specialties” (up to 2000 characters).

**Summary (LinkedIn requirement).** After your “Headline,” this is the second glimpse at who you really are and what you do. If a colleague, consulting firm, or job-recruiter glances at your summary and is unimpressed, he or she probably won’t read any further. It’s lights out. Concentrate on using the keywords and phrases that will capture you and be captured by the LinkedIn searches consistent with your headline.

Format-wise, it can be in narrative form or an outline with lists and bullet points (see profiles of the experts mentioned previously). Consider your audience. Will they spend the time reading the narrative or will they just skim down your list? The list format is easier and faster to read than running text (see next screenshot). Again, think like your viewer.

This section should pop off the page so a colleague, client, or recruiter will stop and take notice. Highlight key information. Since LinkedIn only formats in plain text, not HTML, you’re limited in popping options. I recommend **UPPER CASE for important words and heads or “quotes” around other words for emphasis.** You can also import characters and symbols from your Word version.
In “Edit Profile” mode, carefully craft a capsule description from your resume or CV of:

a. who you are (teacher, professor, researcher, clinician, coach, consultant, speaker, writer, secret agent, GEICO gecko, etc.)

b. what you do (conduct psychological profiles of the men in the Capital One commercials) or produce (books on rodents, lizards, and pigs used in GEICO commercials)

c. what benefits you can deliver for your target audience (create hilarious commercials for rich insurance companies)

The last-named focus is for consulting and business purposes. Minimize the use of “I’s” in your wording and instead use YOU. Consulting firms and clients want to know specifically what benefits or outcomes you can provide. That’s the perspective from which I wrote my summary as a speaker, coach, and consultant. The issue is: What can YOU offer specifically that no one else can? You need to set yourself apart from the rest of the pack.

Specialties. Just below the “Summary,” you can highlight your areas of expertise. These can be more specific than the ones in the “Summary” (see next screenshot). What can you do differently or better than others with a similar background? Why should a client or employer hire you as a consultant, speaker, or college president? List appropriate specialties that can be detected in searches.

Professional Gallery. In addition to the preceding content, you can add videos, photos, PowerPoint presentations, and other documents to display a portfolio or gallery of your services and/or products. Each medium just requires a URL link. These elements can provide a powerful visual context to support your verbal summary. They can be added to the end of your “Summary” (see keynote video and PowerPoint in previous screenshot) as well as to your “Experience” (after job description) and “Education” sections. Left click the icon to the right of the pencil at the right top of the section to add each video or other media. The next screenshot displays two sample PowerPoints after my PowerPoint job description.

Drag and drop (D & D) sections. Every section from this one down, until you hit “Recommendations,” can be moved anywhere you want. When you’re in “Edit Profile” mode, there will be a ↓ in the upper right cor-
ner of each section (see preceding screenshots). Just left click on the arrow and D & D up or down to relocate a section or entry.

I know what you’re thinking, “When are you going to get to the “Connections” already? You’re driving me nuts.” Actually, you should be thinking, “Why would you relocate?” Answer: To put your best stuff on top of your profile before the viewer has lost interest. After the “Background,” which is critical for your keywords and LinkedIn SEO, what other sections showcase your expertise best? As professors, “Publications” and “Honors & Awards,” if you received the Nobel Prize in Physics, might be in that select group. Think about it as we proceed through the remaining sections here and in Part 3 of this trilogy.

6. Experience

Starting with your most recent job, prepare your job profiles with the detailed information to support your “Headline” and “Summary.” LinkedIn requires at least one current and two previous job descriptions. Both your list of jobs and education should collectively add credibility to your expertise, skills, and what you can deliver. Supply the “Company Name” (avoid unfamiliar acronyms), “Title,” “Time Period,” and a “Description” of your major job responsibilities.

Provide only brief descriptions for previous jobs. Repeat for each job. Click “Add” to include other significant and relevant jobs that can be picked up in institution or company searches. However, streamline this section by omitting jobs that don’t contribute directly to your current image. For example, if you want to remain in academia, do not report your stint as a Capital One Viking, but DO include your visiting professor position at the University of Siberia.

7. Education

Starting with your most recent degree, pick “School Name” from the dropdown list, then fill-in “Dates,” “Degree,” and “Field of Study” (Major and Minor) at minimum. Add “Grades,” “Activities & Societies,” and “Description” if they can support your expertise. Click “Add” to repeat for each degree chronologically and don’t forget to identify the degree. Include all degrees because school names are picked up in searches. Remember that your education is a LinkedIn requirement. Make sure to include other significant educational training at accredited institutions and fly-by-night, mail-order diploma mills.

What’s Next

The next article in this “LinkedIn Trilogy” will cover (8) Skills & Expertise with Endorsements, (9) Honors & Awards, (10) Organizations, (11) Optional Sections, such as Publications, Projects, Certifications, Languages, and Patents, (12) Recommendations, (13) Connections, (14) Additional Info, such as Interests, Personal Details, and Advice for Contacting Ron, and (15) Groups. Sections 8 and 13 are required to receive a 100% completion by LinkedIn; all of the other sections are critical to render your eye-popping profile fully functional. It should be taking shape by now, but just wait until it’s done.

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**Kindle™ Books**


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LINKEDIN TRILOGY: Part 3.
Top 20 Sources for Connections and How to Add Recommendations

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Introduction

This article makes this collection a “Trilogy”; otherwise, it would only be a pas de deux. As the LinkedIn finale, this piece of the profile puzzle will cover the remaining critical information you must complete before your profile is fully functional and you get a 100% passing grade from LinkedIn.

Following the seven sections described in Part 2 (Berk, 2013), this part will present the details for the remaining eight sections: (8) Skills & Expertise with Endorsements, (9) Honors & Awards, (10) Organizations, (11) Optional Sections, such as Publications, Projects, Certifications, Language, and Patents, (12) Recommendations, (13) Connections, (14) Additional Info, such as Interests, Personal Details, and Advice for Contacting, and (15) Groups. Posting profile information in all 15 sections is free as well every use described in Part 1. Make sure you’re in “Edit Profile” mode as we hop along through these sections.

The Rest of the Profile Story

8. Skills & Expertise with Endorsements

Consistent with all of the previous sections, “Add” skills and expertise that comprehensively define all that you do and can offer your clients. Where do you begin to identify those skills? Here are a few suggestions.

Four criteria for skill selection. There are four criteria that should be met for your skill selection: (1) reflect your “academic” brand and image, (2) amplify upon your areas of expertise in the “Summary” and “Specialties,” (3) consider whether your colleagues will endorse them, and (4) be listed in the dropdown after you type each skill in the “Add” box (see screenshots). The keywords in the dropdown may be detected in LinkedIn searches. (REMEMBER: LinkedIn requires at least 3 skills for 100% profile completion.)

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For each skill, you can also locate professionals with that skill and lots of other information. Go to top far right of the menu and place cursor over “More,” then left click “Skills & Expertise.”

Type a skill in the Search box with the dropdown.

Endorsements. Once you’ve listed your skills, you now can enter the “endorsement” derby. This is different from the “Recommendations,” which will be described in section 13. Endorsements by your connections (1) affirm your expertise, (2) improve your branding and image, and (3) provide feedback on what your peers perceive as your most highly valued skills (Schaffer, 2013).

Your connections’ endorsements of your skills and your endorsements of theirs automatically increase your communication and engagement with each other. As colleagues, it gives you pause to consider their primary areas of expertise. More important, colleagues, prospects, and recruiters will compare your endorsements to your peers or competitors. Take them seriously. It is likely that both your skills and endorsements will eventually become part of LinkedIn’s top secret search algorithm.

You can pick a maximum of 50 skills, but only the top 10 with the most endorsements will be highlighted with the photos of the endorsers (see display of endorsements in screenshot). Once you receive 100 endorsements or more for a skill, 99+ will appear in the left column.

View all of the information on that skill. In the screenshot on “psychometrics, you can find a definition, growth of the profession, professionals with that skill, LinkedIn groups associated with that skill, and related skills and companies. Where else can you find that information on any skill in a nanosecond for free?
Response to endorsements. When you receive one or more endorsements, it is appropriate to thank the endorser, return the favor, and/or write a recommendation. Although your expectation of reciprocal endorsements (Berkowitz, 2013) may be construed as “back-scratching” or “buddy” rating bias (Berk, 2010), it is still a common practice.

9. Honors & Awards

A long laundry list of awards takes time to read. Create categories for this section so the awards jump off the screen. Pick headings appropriate to your achievements, such as Editorial Boards, National and International Association Leadership, National and International Association Awards, and University Awards. This is the place for your Nobel, Pulitzer, Grammy, Tony, Oscar, Kennedy Center Honors, and other awards.

10. Organizations

List professional associations related to your skills and expertise described in previous sections. DO NOT use abbreviations or acronyms only. Not everyone will know what they mean. International, national, regional, and local organizations and groups can also be added here. LinkedIn groups with logos will appear in a separate section.

11. Optional Sections

Beyond the standard sections of the profile, there are several optional ones which can be added anywhere. They are listed in the right margin on top (make sure you’re in “Edit Profile” mode). There are also a few that were “standard” sections in the pre-2013 profile format. There are particular categories that fit the credentials of many academicians: publications, projects, certifications, patents, and languages. Others are appropriate for students, such as test scores and courses, unless you aced your admissions, certification, or licensing exam.

Remember the “drag and drop” (D & D) arrow in the right corner of each section? No? Go back to section 5, Part 2. Now might be the time to consider the order of...
your sections. A few of the optional sections are described next.

**Publications.** This has to be one of the most important sections for professors. On my profile, it appears near the top, even before Experience and Education. Nothing says credibility and expertise like books and articles in peer-viewed, quality publications. When you add each publication, make sure to include a URL link so the viewer can immediately download the article or order the book. This click-through sends the viewer directly to your website (personal, publisher, business, or university), which can automatically increase traffic to your website. That traffic improves your positioning in the search engines.

Just left click the publication title and “Whal-la!”: Your viewer has immediate access to the publication and doesn’t have to leave your profile. The profile should be one-stop shopping for you. Don’t send them away to your website unless there’s a specific reason, such as viewing your portfolio, registering for your webinar, or purchasing your books and videos.

When there is a URL link, an arrow appears at the end of the title. Unfortunately, many of your viewers may not know there’s a link and they should click the title. Under my LinkedIn announcement at the top, I give instructions in parentheses to do just that (see screenshot).

I recommend picking a few of your most recent and salient publications related to your research or expertise, maybe five to ten articles. You can update your publications anytime a new one hits the streets and reorder the titles with, you guessed it: the D & D arrow on the far right.

Since LinkedIn doesn’t permit APA format for journal articles, enter “Title,” and in the “Publications” slot, type the journal name, volume, number, and page numbers in APA format (see previous screenshot). Under “Publication Date,” pick the year from the dropdown. Now you have a LinkedIn version of APA for each publication.

A “Description” may be too unwieldy when you list five articles, but you can write a brief one for each publication if the title isn’t adequate. I definitely recommend a description for each book (see screenshot below). (OPTION: The URL for each book can link to your website, publisher’s website, vitae, Amazon, or other source with all of your publications.)

**Projects.** Major teaching, research, clinical, or community projects on which you are currently working should be listed and described in this section. If there are reports available, furnish links to access those reports. Also, supply any other pertinent information that may be of interest. The links should send the viewer to your website or the university’s.

As a speaker, what could possibly be more important than publications? Answer: the Nobel Prize in chemistry. Unfortunately, I was passed over again. An alternative answer is: a speaking brochure with testimonials and a video of one of my international keynotes. They showcase what I do and how I do it. I used the “Projects” section to display them prominently. They tell a story by themselves. The URL link to a YouTube clip provides my keynote in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (NOTE: This keynote can also be displayed with a link at the bottom of the “Background” section [see Berk, 2013].)

I dragged and dropped the “Projects” section to the top of my profile just under the “Background.” The brochure was also dragged to the top of the section. This is critical information for a meeting planner, conference organizer, or director of faculty development. It’s upfront
and highlighted ahead of details on “Experience,” “Education,” etc. What is the most important information that you need to D & D (with the arrow in the right corner) to the top of your profile?

Certifications. If you specialize in medicine, nursing, clinical psychology, allied health fields, accounting, auto mechanics, insurance sales, cosmetology, taxidermy, espionage, or other professions requiring professional certifications and licenses, this is the category for you. Include the “perfect” score on the exam, if appropriate. Not everyone has these credentials. This is another category that can distinguish you from others in your field.

Patents. If you possess patents for particular inventions, list them in this section. For example, after someone invented a better mousetrap, if you invented a better mouse, this is the place to mention the patent on that mouse. The patents should be relevant to your areas of expertise and rodents.

Languages. If you are fluent in several languages, identify them and your levels of proficiency. You never know when they could come in handy and give you the edge.

12. Additional Info

Interests. List your professional and personal interests and hobbies which you may share with other connections. Do you do anything but work? This could be a key area of connection with others. I also added a few humorous hobbies at the end (see screenshot).

Personal Details. As a professional network, the information in this section may be viewed as inappropriate. You decide whether you want to select “Birthday” and “Marital Status” from the dropdowns.

Advice for Contacting Ron. Specify exactly how to contact you through your website(s) and email. Make it as simple and easy as possible.

13. Recommendations

Someone once said, “What you say about yourself [in the “Summary” section of LinkedIn] is nowhere nearly as credible as what someone else says about you [in a LinkedIn “Recommendation”]. The words of a client who hired you can provide a first-hand testimonial of your expertise, your impact, and the experience of working with you, if he or she doesn’t lie. The power of that testimonial in a well-written short paragraph recommendation can do more to persuade a customer to hire you than just about anything else, including your gazillion endorsements. That’s the value and importance of “Recommendations” on LinkedIn and testimonials on your business website. (NOTE: LinkedIn no longer requires at least three recommendations before it considers your profile to be 100% complete.)

Definition. LinkedIn’s notion of “recommendation” is more akin to what is known as a “testimonial” in the business community, not what we know as a recommendation, such as a letter of support for promotion. It can range from one or two sentences to a long paragraph. Your clients are the most credible authorities to document your dazzling performance. Here the emphasis is on the specific performance or impact at one time or collectively over multiple experiences, such as in a series of workshops.

Who should write it? A colleague or administrator in your department, the person who hired you to consult or speak, or a professor, staff member, or student who was on the receiving end of your services would be the most appropriate choice. It should be a professional who is in the best position to describe what you do, how you do it, and the value and impact of your contributions. The last-named element is extremely important. Does your work produce any visible results, change, or impact? Did the benefits you promised actually result in the short- or long-term? (NOTE: The person writing the recommendation MUST be a 1st degree connection in your network; otherwise, it cannot be posted.)

When you consult, speak, or coach, specify a requirement in your contract that, if the event is successful, the client will prepare two or three comments about the experience within a couple of weeks. This is standard operating procedure to assure you will receive some type of recommendation.

Preliminary request for solicited recommendation. Here are steps I suggest for you to solicit a recommendation in the academic arena:

a. Immediately following your workshop, consult, speaking event, or other activity, email your primary contact (director, chair, meeting planner, etc.) a request to draft a recommendation. It can take the following form:

“For the past n weeks, I have had the opportunity to work with Dr. Ron Berk in a series of workshops. Dr. Berk has demonstrated a high level of expertise in the field of [insert field]. His presentations are engaging and informative, and he has a unique ability to connect with the audience. I strongly recommend Dr. Berk for future workshops.”

b. If the request is denied, do not take it personally. The person may be too busy or may not have the time to write a recommendation.

NOTE: LinkedIn no longer requires at least three recommendations before it considers your profile to be 100% complete.
There are recommendations on my profile (or website) that may help you compose one."
If he or she requests that you send him or her a draft recommendation, do it.

b. **Edit the draft and send it back and forth until you both approve the recommendation.** Make sure it is generic and doesn’t contain acronyms or abbreviations so it will be understandable to any viewer and stand the test of time once it’s posted on your profile.

c. **What if you get a milquetoast recommendation?** Sometimes you will get a less than enthusiastic, mind-blowing, show-stopping recommendation from a colleague who will not change anything. Professors and directors can be tough and may not fully understand the intended spirit of a testimonial. Hyperbole and lying are usually involved. Even your groveling may not work.

What do you do? Proceed with the rest of the process, be grateful and appreciative, and, when you finally approve the recommendation, you can decide whether to post it on your profile. If it doesn’t highlight what you do best, hide it. Then you can put out a contract on milquetoastboy or girl.

**Alternative unsolicited recommendation source.** Instead of you requesting a recommendation from scratch, one or more may simply be dumped right in your laptop. After the event, you may receive unsolicited emails or texts from faculty, students, and others who attended your session with glowing comments about how much they enjoyed it and found the content useful in their work. Those are recommendations waiting to happen! Take the phrases and sentences from their correspondence and transform them into viable LinkedIn recommendations. Then send them back for changes or approval. This makes recommendations easy for those sources. They are usually heartfelt, very effective recommendations.

**Formal LinkedIn request.** At the top of your LinkedIn profile, under “Profile,” left click “Recommendations,” then click “Ask for recommendations.”

- For 1, click “Choose” on the box, and a dropdown will appear with all of your job and student positions. **Click the title** to which the recommendation will apply, if you have more than one.
- For 2, type the name of the person writing the recommendation or click “IN” and pick the person from your list of connections. (REMEMBER: He or she must be a 1st degree connection, not just on LinkedIn.) If you’re tempted to send the request to 50 colleagues in your network, hoping to get a few responses, DO NOT do it. This should be a personal request.
- For 3, **personalize your message,** as in the screenshot.
- Click “Send.”

**Response to request.** Your colleague, client, student, etc. will receive the request and copy and paste the recommendation you both approved into the box provided. You will receive the recommendation by email from LinkedIn and be given a chance to revise or approve, then post on your profile.

**Unsolicited recommendation.** You can also send a recommendation to anyone in your network without a formal request. What a great way to build relationships with colleagues whom you respect. Do not recommend dirtbags. This recommendation should be sent without any expectation of a reciprocal recommendation.

At the top of your LinkedIn profile, under “Profile,” left click “Recommendations,” then click “Received.” Scroll down to the bottom of the page and you will see a box “Make a Recommendation” (see screenshot). Just follow the directions.
Computer-generated recommendations. Can you believe it? Using the “Endorser” (http://endorser.org), instead of the “Enforcer,” you can request a recommendation for a colleague. It saves writing your own if you can’t think of anything positive to say, although it’s hard to imagine a professor with a loss of words. With minimal information you supply, Endorser produces a recommendation. However, Serdula (2011b) recommended that you use the ideas in the recommendation as a starting point to write your own rather than the actual computer version.

14. Connections

Degrees of separation. Based on the concepts of six degrees of separation (Karinthy, 1929) and networking (Vermieren, 2008), LinkedIn operates on the number of steps or distance you are from the person with whom you wish to connect. The site uses three degrees of contact. To the right of each person’s name is a rank, which indicates his or her degree:

a. 1st degree: When you connect with someone on LinkedIn, he or she becomes a 1st degree connection in your network.

b. 2nd degree: These are people with whom you are allowed to connect based on LinkedIn’s “top secret” algorithm, which my LinkedIn snitch says is based on your mutual connections and possibly other factors you have in common, such as current connections, group membership, interests, schools you’ve attended, institutions where you have worked, prisons where you’ve been incarcerated, etc. These other factors have not been verified. That’s the problem with “secrets.” The 2nd degree connections should be people you “know and trust.” When a 2nd degree contact accepts your invitation to join your network, he or she is promoted to 1st degree.

c. 3rd degree: These are more distant connections in places like Madagascar who usually require an email address before you can send invitations. (SECRET: Is anybody looking? If you want to connect with a colleague at this degree, check to see if he or she is in one of your groups [Click “Members” on the group site]. You can send an invitation to connect with anyone in your groups. [Please don’t tell anybody about this secret. My snitch could be hurt].)

How do you add connections? Electronically, there are four basic strategies. All four are described, although only one requiring a personal message is recommended:

a. Impersonal emails (Not Recommended). On your profile page, under “Contacts” at top, click “Add Connections.” Click the far right box titled “Any Email.” At the bottom left, left click “Invite by individual email” (see next screenshot). A box below will appear where you can simply add emails of prospective connections. All you need to invite someone to join your network is his or her email. That’s it. Type 1 or 50 at a time in the box. Then click “Send Invitations.” This is the easiest impersonal way to invite people who are not members of LinkedIn or you’re not sure whether they are. These invites will compel them to join, or not.

b. Impersonal connect (Not Recommended). The “People You May Know” box (upper right corner of your profile and LinkedIn Home page) suggests three people with whom you can connect quickly and impersonally who
are already members of LinkedIn. Left click “See More” at the bottom of the box (see screenshot below).

That click will open a floodgate of potential connections. An array of possible connections along with the number of “shared connections” in common with you are presented. These 2nd degree connections are people with whom you have in common institutions where you’ve worked, schools, locations, groups, skills, etc. With one click of “Connect” below the photo, an impersonal request is sent.

d. **Import address books (Not Recommended).** You can also import emails by the bucket-load. This is another “impersonal” approach. When you click “Add connections,” click “Continue” and scroll down a bit to upload your address book as a contacts file (see next screenshot). It accepts .csv, .txt, and .vcf formats.

Beyond these basic strategies, what are the possible sources for connections? Short of contacting Homeland Security or Dog the Bounty Hunter to track them down, here are 20 sources to consider in order to bulk-up your network. Start with invitations to people who are already 2nd degree contacts on LinkedIn, then pursue other online contacts, and, finally, tap your offline sources.

**Top 20 Sources**

**LinkedIn Sources**

1. **LinkedIn connections at previous institutions or companies where you have worked or have gone to school (colleagues, clients, classmates, faculty, administrators, students, employees, etc.).** Place cursor over “Companies” on menu above your profile and click name of the university you attended or worked. In screenshot, I clicked American University. A page appears with current job posts on the left and 1st and 2nd degree connections on the right. I’m interested to see whether I know any of
the 2nd degree connections. Left click the number of those connections (113).

A new page with all of those connections appears (see next screenshot). Now I can scan those people or use the search box and try to connect with former classmates, faculty, and others I may I know.

2. LinkedIn group members as contacts in discussions to which you both contribute or comment (you can invite any member of a group to which you belong; join a bunch of groups in higher education, professional associations and organizations, and relevant businesses)

3. Colleagues you may know who are 2nd degree connections listed in your 1st degree contact’s connections. This can be a major source. You can identify potential connections with keywords to locate those who have a particular characteristic in common with you. Here are the steps to narrow your field to a specific topic:

   a. Pick a favorite connection in your network who has barrels of connections. Locate his or her profile. Scroll down to the “CONNECTIONS” section (see screenshot). On the right, left click the magnifying glass icon. A box will open. Type your keywords, such as “medical education.”

   b. Hit the “ENTER” key on your PC/Mac. What pops up are 70 people in “medical education” out of 134 (see next screenshot). Those keywords appeared in their headlines or elsewhere in their profiles. You can try this with any descriptor to filter a specific group.

   c. Left click “advanced search.” Now you have a more detailed listing of all 70 1st degree common connections followed by the 2nd degree connections. You can click the names for any of the latter to view their profiles and decide who to invite. This screen also permits you to re-sort and save these connections.
4. LinkedIn connections who invite you to connect because they see your custom LinkedIn URL in your email signature line or “Contact info” in the opening box of your profile. When you receive an invite in your email (see screenshot), click “View Profile” near name to check them out before clicking “Accept.”

5. “People You May Know” box (upper right corner of your profile and LinkedIn Home page) provides Dumpsters of people as you scroll down like Facebook; left click “See More”; note the number of “shared connections” in common with you next to “Connect” (those with higher “shared connections” are more likely to connect than newbies with low numbers); left click name and then “Connect” on the person’s profile to compose a personal message.

Online Sources

6. Online address book (e.g., AboutOne, Plaxo, Telnec, Unyk, conXt, and WikiWorldBook) (left click “Add Connections” and upload emails) (NOTE: This is a questionable, not recommended “impersonal” approach.)

7. Email lists uploaded from Gmail, Hotmail, Outlook, Yahoo! Mail, and AOL (left click “Add Connections” and import emails) (NOTE: Same as 6.)

8. Colleagues within your own department and institution

9. Professional email inquiries about your publications, products, permissions, and activities

10. Contacts from your website, blog, or other professional sites

11. Professionals on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media and people “following you” or “liking” your site or posts

12. Association listserv discussion contributors who share similar areas of interest with you or comment on your posts

Offline Sources

13. Print address book/ Rolodex® cards

14. PDA (personal digital assistant) or PIM (personal information manager) directory

15. HR director, center director, or personnel who hired you to speak or train

16. Meeting planner or conference organizer and related staff who invited you to speak

17. Professionals you meet at conferences/meetings and networking events (with new business cards) who share your interests

18. Colleagues in print directories from associations and conferences who share your interests

19. Faculty, employees, students, or others who attend real or virtual workshops, seminars, or institutes you conduct (DYNAMITE SOURCE: After all, they attended your workshop because they’re interested in the topic, your work, and/or you.)

20. Acquaintances in doctor’s, surgical, auto repair, or other waiting rooms and in airline terminals, train and bus stations, bars and restaurants, and similar venues with whom you connect in a professional discussion; otherwise, connect on Facebook

Tap as many of these sources as appropriate. That could be a fairly long list or a tiny one depending on the season of your career and your interpersonal skills. Once you have sent out the invitations, be patient. Invitations to current members of LinkedIn (sources 1–5) typically yield the highest hit rate. If they’re not members (possibly sources 6–20), expect a very low response rate. Don’t take it personally. Many professionals are hesitant to join another network with which they are unfamiliar, especially social media-phobic academicians. Just persevere.

How to delete a connection. You may want to delete connections for a variety of reasons, such as they have more than one site, they passed away, they bombarded you with...
sales ads, they are nonresponsive, or they transmit evil or demonic forces. Here’s the procedure to dispose of them:

a. On the menu at the top of your profile, under “Connect,” left click “Connections.”

b. On the far right, click “Remove Connections.”

c. On the left column, scroll down and find the connections you want to whack. Click the boxes above their names. Check marks should appear in the boxes and their names should appear on the right.

d. Finally, on the right, click the blue box “Remove Connections” to complete the whacking. What a clean job. No evidence can be traced back to you.

How many connections do you need? (REMEMBER: LinkedIn requires at least 50 for a 100% complete profile.) This is not a race or competition to see who can produce the highest number of connections, although I know some of you have already considered taking connection-enhancing substances to pull ahead of your colleagues. LinkedIn is all about building relationships. Yeah right! There is no magic number of connections.

Prodromou (2012) identified two strategies to networking:

a. Strategic approach, which is the most popular, emphasizes quality and in-depth relationships with fewer than 500, but regular contacts with 150.

b. Open approach, used by recruiters and sales personnel, typically involves thousands of connections to reach a wide potential market. These networkers are often called LinkedIn Open Networkers (LIONs). They will accept invitations from almost any animal, vegetable, or mineral.

The bottom line issue with large numbers is: With how many contacts can you possibly correspond? With more than 500 connections, most people can barely stay in touch with 20%. But larger numbers increase your visibility and rank in the search engines (Serdula, 2011a).

So what’s the most appropriate target number for you?

It depends on your purpose(s) for using LinkedIn. If you just add and maintain contacts as your e-directory only, the target will be as large as the number of colleagues you know. However, if you have a consulting, speaking, and/or clinical business beyond your university position, you will need large numbers to be found in LinkedIn searches and to generate leads. The larger your network, the greater will be your chances of being identified by potential clients. On my network, I have a few professors with only one connection (Moi) and a social media expert with 24,000. The maximum LinkedIn allows is 30,000.

Multiple target groups. The recent trend toward solo-preneurs who have left the corporate world or academicians who have consulting businesses or clinical practices on the side suggests that individuals may have several small businesses with different target markets. In that case, you may have several different groups of connections by industry and location to whom you market your services and sell your products, like books, videos, CDs, etc. You constantly need to generate new clients and prospects. Collectively, all of these people may exceed 500 and even number in the thousands.

Reaching 500+. Technically, once you break 500, LinkedIn will report 500+ next to “Connections” in your “Headline” box. That cut-off signifies that you have serious professional presence on LinkedIn. That number plus a high number of recommendations and a 100% complete profile convey you are an active and committed user of LinkedIn representing your academic institution and your business. Those numbers will improve your positioning in the searches.

15. Groups

After “Connections,” near the bottom of the Dead Sea scrolls on your profile is a section called “Groups.” Place your cursor over “Groups” on the menu at the top of your profile. Welcome to GroupLand!
There are only 1.2 million groups in LinkedIn, so you need to be picky. You can join up to 50. The options are given in the preceding screenshot along with a list of 10 of the groups to which I belong. If you can’t find the right groups, you can create your own. Make sure your groups reflect your brand, expertise, and interests conveyed in all of the preceding sections of your profile.

What is so special about groups? They provide the following 10 features:

a. Connect, engage, and build relationships with thousands of others with similar interests
b. Reconnect with faculty and students in groups representing your previous or current schools
c. Build credibility and prove your expertise by your activity in the discussions
d. Raise pertinent, probing, or vexing questions for discussion
e. Process answers to questions by experts from all over the galaxy
f. Respond to questions by commenting on others’ questions
g. Reconnect with employers and employees in groups representing your previous or current institutions and companies
h. Invite 2nd and 3rd degree members of your groups to join your network
i. Find jobs posted by your group members related to group interests
j. Create a group and furnish leadership that increases your visibility

Start with about five groups with which you can become actively involved related to your discipline, research and/or clinical specialties, schools you’ve attended, and institutions where you’ve worked. Joining a bunch of groups and doing nothing doesn’t help anyone. The payoff is in the conversations, initiating discussions, and participating in the discussions by others. Those discussions originate on your group page under the “Discussion” tab (see screenshot below). The regularity with which you contribute will increase your level of engagement and visibility to your group connections. That is another strategy for you to expand your network and establish your credibility as an expert in your field.

What’s Next?

Once you’ve had time to process these guidelines and build, rebuild, and/or revise the sections of your profile, you’ll need a nap. When you wake up, you can start using LinkedIn for the reason(s) you joined. Without spending anything for upgrades or business ads, you can proceed to

1. Post activities or updates
2. Track down individual colleagues to send messages
3. Invite nonmember colleagues to join LinkedIn and your network
4. Send messages or announcements to groups of connections (up to 50 at a time)
5. Add connections to your network
6. Search for researchers or clinicians for positions in your grants
7. Search for faculty candidates for your department
8. Initiate or contribute to discussions of your groups
9. Post announcements of upcoming events or activities in your groups
10. Solicit advice on a teaching, research, or clinical problem or issue
11. Find an expert in your field who can serve as a mentor
12. Search for part- or full-time job opportunities

Details on how to use LinkedIn for these dozen purposes may be enough to generate another article beyond
this trilogy. You never know. Let me know your needs and thoughts on these topics. Stay tuned. Of course, if you’re in my network, you will know about my writing activities and when my publications are available.

References


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