

Getting Started on LinkedIn

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a professionally focused online networking service that connects business professionals with their colleagues, clients, suppliers and others.

The number of people using the platform is staggering. In fact, a new member joins LinkedIn approximately every second. As of June 2010, LinkedIn had over 70 million members in over 200 countries and territories. Executives from all FTSE 350 and Fortune 500 companies are LinkedIn members.

Why use LinkedIn?

As an online networking site developed purely for business, LinkedIn can provide you with a direct and effective way to enhance your profile and career. LinkedIn serves as a fantastic forum for making new connections in the business world, and allows professionals from similar and different backgrounds to connect, problem solve and find employment.

For more information on the benefits of using LinkedIn, see our White Paper 'The benefits of using LinkedIn in a B2B environment'.

The Basics

Stage 1 – creating your LinkedIn profile

Registering with LinkedIn and creating your profile is free. It is also straightforward:

- Go to www.linkedin.com and fill in the details in the 'Join LinkedIn today' box. When you click 'Join Now' you will be asked to provide a few more details, e.g. your employment status and profession. This information will form the beginning of your LinkedIn profile.
- You will be asked whether you wish to check for known contacts already on LinkedIn by uploading your email contact list. If you agree, LinkedIn will access your email contacts list and search through the millions of existing LinkedIn members for any matches. You can contact these matches once your profile is active.

You need to activate your account before you can access it. You do this by carrying out the following steps:

- LinkedIn will send an email to the address you provided. Open the email and follow the instructions. They will take you to a page where you will be asked to confirm your email address.
- Click on 'Confirm' and you will be asked to sign in with the email address and password that you used to register.
- Once you have done this, and clicked 'Sign in', your LinkedIn account will be up and running.

Stage 2 – developing your profile

Developing an effective presence on LinkedIn is not difficult, but the more time you spend, the more you will get out of it.

Here's how:

- From your LinkedIn home page, click on the title 'Profile' and then 'Edit Profile'. This will let you expand on the basic information you provided as part of the registration process.
- Add a photo of yourself. People are less likely to connect to a faceless internet page.
- The professional headline box is an important one. You will find it directly under your name in your profile listing. The headline will only be four or five words long, but will be one of the first things people see when they view your profile. LinkedIn will have automatically filled it in with the occupation details you gave during registration, but now you should go in and amend it. You should clearly explain what you do - LinkedIn will provide some examples.
- Go through your profile, and update each of the sections, providing as much information as possible - when it comes to LinkedIn, more is better.
- Remember that lots of people will be able to see your profile - friends, colleagues, potential clients, and even potential employers. Don't exaggerate, don't be arrogant, and don't make things up.
- When you are happy with your details, click 'Save changes'.
- You can go back and amend or update your profile at any time.

For more detailed information on developing your LinkedIn profile, see our White Paper 'Writing an effective LinkedIn profile.'

Stage 3 – making contacts

Direct contact

Once you have completed your profile, you can start building up your connections with other LinkedIn members. You can find potential contacts in several ways:

- Click on the 'Add Connections' link at the top of your profile page. LinkedIn allows you to search for email addresses from your email contact list, and this is a good place to start.
- LinkedIn can also read your profile and list other people who went to the same university/college as you, or worked for the same employer. You can see if you would like to connect to any of these suggestions.
- You can also search directly for new target contacts by using the 'advanced search' section, accessed by clicking through from the home page on LinkedIn. Here you can enter criteria about the contacts you are looking for, such as geographic region, industry, job title etc. Some of the profiles brought up on the list may be private so you will need to search

online or call the company for the appropriate name and email address, before you can connect.

Once you have identified a possible contact, you should send them an introductory email. LinkedIn will provide a brief default email, but you should personalise it for each person you contact.

Gordon BDM recommends a short, relevant introduction like this:

“Dear X,
I’m a senior tax manager with xxxxx and have some expertise in tax-related issues within the software industry. Your profile is interesting and I’d like to invite you to join my professional network on LinkedIn.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Bloggs”

This is respectful, intelligent and positions you as someone whose acquaintance would be useful to the recipient.

It is easy to send a personalised introductory email:

- Search for the name/company of the person you want to contact with in the 'search people' box at the top of the page, or use the Add Connections link described above.
- Once you have found a possible contact click the 'add to network' link shown to the right of the person's name.
- You will then see a list of possible ways in which you might know the person you are contacting. He might be a former colleague, for example. Check the appropriate box, and then send your invitation.
- You can check the status of your invite by going in to 'sent' items. This will tell you if the contact has been sent (pending), accepted, or if the email has bounced.

Contact through an introduction

Rather than approach a completely new contact directly, you can also see whether you have any connections in common and ask them for an introduction. This can increase the chances of the new contact accepting you as a connection.

Stage 4 – responding to contacts

While you are searching for useful contacts out there, other users will be searching for useful contacts like you! Therefore, as well as sending out contact invitations, you should also expect to receive them.

- Invitations to connect will come into your 'inbox' on the left hand toolbar. All messages remain as 'pending' until they are actioned. If you want to accept the invitation simply click 'accept' to add the new contact.
- If you are contacted by someone you would rather not form a connection

with, then you can avoid an obvious rejection by simply clicking 'Archive' after viewing their message. This will take the message out of your inbox without sending an outright rejection.

Stage 5 - questions and answers

A great way to demonstrate your expertise and draw people's attention to your profile is to contribute to the Questions and Answers section on LinkedIn.

- You can enter the Answers section of the site by clicking 'More' on the top navigation bar on your home page and selecting 'Answers.' You will then have the option of asking a question yourself, or providing an answer to an existing question.
- You should regularly check the Answers pages to see whether there are any questions on areas of your expertise. Only give an answer if it will add value, and won't just repeat what has already been said. If people find your answer helpful, they are likely to look at your profile to find out more about you.
- Do not use the Answers section for overt marketing. This will only annoy people, and will ultimately be counter-productive.

Stage 6 – Groups

LinkedIn Groups are excellent places to demonstrate your expertise and provide thought leadership. You can even build your own Group(s). enabling you to create and communicate with an invited audience with mutual interests.

The most important things to remember when creating your LinkedIn Group are:

- make sure your Group has a theme that will encourage LinkedIn users to join,
- make sure you source and invite enough Group members - not everyone will want to join or participate, and
- quality not quantity - preserve the integrity of your Group by only inviting those who are likely to have interest in the subject.

Creating a LinkedIn group

- On your LinkedIn 'Home' page, select 'Groups' and from the drop down menu, select 'Create a Group'.
- Fill in all the required information, such as name and summary.
- If you want anyone to be able to join the Group without your approval, click on the 'Open Access' option. If you want to control who joins the Group, then leave the 'Request to Join' option checked.
- You will then have the option of inviting your existing LinkedIn contacts to join. Click on their names from the list to send them an invitation.
- Use the 'advanced search' function and enter job titles, locations and any

other criteria to find other suitable LinkedIn users to invite to join your Group.

- Go back to your Group, click 'manage' and click 'invite members'. You can now upload these researched email addresses in order to broadcast the Group to suitable members and invite them to join.

For more detailed information on creating and managing LinkedIn Groups, see our White Paper 'How to create a LinkedIn Group'.

If you need more information or support with getting started on LinkedIn, contact Christine Black, Client Services Manager on 07964 713592 or at christineblack@winningwork.co.uk, or Adam Gordon, Director on 07870 268288 or at adamgordon@winningwork.co.uk