

**LINKEDIN UPDATE CHALLENGE****JOB SEARCH KICKSTART:****LINKEDIN UPDATE 5 DAY CHALLENGE**

A 5 Day Step by Step Challenge to Optimize LinkedIn for the Job Search: Complete with tips, how-tos and cautions.

## Welcome to the LinkedIn Update 5 Day Challenge.

Creating or updating your LinkedIn profile can feel overwhelming for most people. It's a lot of information to write and organize and quite honestly, many people never complete their profiles. That's too bad, because, thanks to LinkedIn's algorithms, recruiters are more likely to find your profile if it is rated 100% complete. So it's really worth putting the time in to complete it and to make it awesome.

To make it more manageable, our LinkedIn Challenge breaks the job down into day by day tasks. Complete the tasks for each day and your profile will be ready for the job search in less than a week.

## DAY ONE: How to Get Started

To get started on LinkedIn, sign up if you don't have a LinkedIn Account and create a basic account. You don't need to upgrade to premium. For most people, a free LinkedIn account works just as well as a paid account. Unless you are a recruiter, you can do everything you need with a free account.

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While we will talk about the nuts and bolts of making connections later in the challenge, if you are completing the Job Search Kickstart, take a moment to connect with me, Anita Flowers at Blue Sage Career Strategies. Here's how to send me a connection invite.

First, type my name into the search bar – I'm Anita Fraley Flowers on LinkedIn.

When connecting with people, it's most polite and welcoming to send them a note explaining how you know them, if necessary, or why you would like to connect.

Once you find my profile, click on connect and send a message telling me that you are working through the LinkedIn Challenge in the Blue Sage Job Search Kickstart. I'll make the connection and send you a note.

## DAY ONE Update Tasks:

### 1. Turn off Profile Change Notifications

In the default setting of LinkedIn, the network automatically sends notifications or announcements of any changes to your profile. This is a good thing if you're announcing a new job or business change. It's not so good if you're simply updating old work information or completing your profile by adding educational achievements from ten years ago.

It's always a good idea to turn these off while making revisions or updates to your profile. It's easy to switch them back on later.

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Since you will be making changes to your LinkedIn profile, you can change your notification setting so you don't send your contacts a notification about every change you make.

Find the update button labeled "Share job changes, education changes and work anniversaries from profile" under Settings and Privacy/ Visibility. (At least that's where you can find it today – I'll try to keep this page updated. LinkedIn likes to move things around.) Toggle the switch to NO by clicking on it.

If this option is set to "yes," every change you make on your profile will be announced to your network. So, set it to 'no', until you are happy with your profile. You can then switch it back to 'yes' when you want to announce an actual job change or other news.

## 2. Add a professional profile picture.

Add professional profile picture. If you've had a profile pic for a while, consider updating it. Take a look at your picture and see if it accurately represents the professional image you want to share. Your profile pic is shown with every post so it's an important piece of your profile. And adding a picture is important. Research has shown that simply having a picture makes your profile 14 times more likely to be viewed by others.

Ask yourself these questions about your profile pic:

- Is this how I want to be seen professionally?
- What does my profile pic say about me?
- What image does my profile pic project?

If you are using LinkedIn to look for jobs or to build your image for a future job search, ask: How will potential employers view my profile picture?

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If you are using LinkedIn to build a business or a brand, ask: How will potential customers or clients view my photo? Will they see me as approachable? Relatable? An authority or expert in my field?

### **Follow these strategies to choose a great profile photo:**

**Choose a photo that looks like you.** Make sure the photo is up to date and reflects how you look on a daily basis. If your photo is looking dated, consider taking a fresh pic to update your profile.

**Use a high-resolution image.** The ideal size for your LinkedIn profile picture is 400 x 400 pixels. Larger file sizes are also fine (although 8MB is the max), but try to avoid small, low-resolution images. If the picture looks a bit blurry when you upload it, you may want to opt for a different one.

**Avoid using a selfie** – because they are clearly just that – “selfies.” They look unprofessional at best and goofy at worst.

**Make sure your face takes up at least 50% of the frame.** A distant photo of yourself out on your boat may make you happy but it’s not the best choice for LinkedIn. Instead, aim to have your face filling about 50-60% or more of the space. Crop the picture so that your face fills the frame.

**Be the only person in the picture.** Your profile is about you. You should be the only one in your profile pic. Cropping a group photo isn’t a good idea either since you might see a random hand or shoulder in the frame and it’s hard to center a photo cropped from a group.

**Add some personality.** Choose a photo that conveys who you are as a professional. If you are in a more conservative profession, such as banking or accounting, a more

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formal serious photo is appropriate. You can be more creative if you are a graphic designer or artist.

But no matter what your profession, make sure your profile has just a bit of personality. You can vary the background a bit to reflect your personality or profession, but don't make it too busy.

If you look at my photo, I chose a photo with a lighthouse in the background since I spend a lot of time "guiding" people through the career process. Take a look at the profile pics of others in your profession to see which ones look professional and engaging.

Possible backgrounds and what they imply:

- o Bookcases (intelligent and well read)
- o An office setting (hard worker)
- o The beach (infinite possibilities)
- o Anything else that fits your profession or brand

**Wear what you would wear to work.** Every workplace has a different vibe when it comes to the dress code. You don't want to be over or underdressed.

If you wear jeans and a button-down most days, it's okay to wear that outfit in your photo — likewise if you wear a suit. If you work from home most days, choose clothes that you might wear to make a presentation or to meet with a client. Solid colors tend to do best on camera. Avoid anything that looks too busy.

**Avoid harsh lighting.** Lighting can completely change the look and feel of your photo. Florescent lighting is harsh and can create weird tints and shadows. Using a camera flash may make your skin look shiny or your eyes too bright. Natural light usually produces the best effect, but strong, direct sunlight can be too much.

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Your best bet is to take your picture outside on a slightly overcast day, in a slightly shady area (anywhere that's out of direct sunlight), or when the sun is setting to help to soften the light. You can also stand inside using the light from a nearby window. But don't stand with your back to the window or with the sun directly behind you - that can create real glare.

Or just hire a professional photographer to get it right. It's worth the money to have a great photo.

**Your profile photo shows up on every post and every comment you make on LinkedIn so it's important to make it a good one that reflects your professional image.**

### 3. Add a Background Banner.

The background banner is the wide banner behind your photo when you look at your profile page. The default banner is a blue background with geometric lines and dots. There's nothing wrong with the default banner, other than it's boring, but this is prime real estate. When a potential employer, client, or contact clicks on your profile, it's one of the first things they will see. There's a lot you can do to upgrade your profile by customizing your banner. It's a great place to be creative and give your profile some personality.

First, you need to decide what you want your background banner photo to do.

Is it an extension of your business/ brand? If so, use the same colors as your logo, a tag line, or your book cover.

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One option is to use a different abstract background, with or without text. For a long time, I used a simple textured green background as a minimalist background. That will let your Headlines and Summary make the main statement.

If you're looking for a job, use the background banner to emphasize some of your work skills. For instance, if you're in computer tech, you could use a photo of a computer or a solid banner with your name and title on the side.

If you own a business, it's a great place to put the name of your business or your logo and tag line.

You can use one of your own photos that reflect your business or personality or use a free stock photo as a background. Unsplash.com is a great place to find free and open for use photos for all categories.

Another option is canva.com. Canva is another free tool with a template for creating a LinkedIn banner with text or logos.

### **Tips for Creating a Background Banner**

- Make sure it's not too "busy." Sometimes trying to add too much information to the banner can make your profile look cluttered. Minimal is often better here.
- Pay attention to your color scheme. If you're wearing a red shirt, don't add a purple banner. Your profile photo and banner should work together as a unit.
- Check out how the banner and profile photo look on a mobile device. Make sure it looks good in that format as well.

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### 4. Create a Custom URL

LinkedIn will assign a random URL to your LinkedIn profile. To make it easier to add your URL to resumes and job applications, it's best to create a custom URL using your name. You will want your URL to be something like <https://www.linkedin.com/in/anita-flowers/>

Here's how to create your custom URL. It's easy.

1. Click the Me icon at the top of your LinkedIn homepage.
2. Click View profile.
3. Click Edit public profile & URL on the right side of the page.
4. Under Edit your custom URL on the right, click the Edit icon next to your public profile URL. The edit icon is usually an image of a pencil.
5. Type the last part of your new custom URL in the text box.
6. Click Save.

And you're finished with DAY ONE. Take a breath and a break and come back tomorrow.





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### DAY TWO: HEADLINE and ABOUT SECTIONS

Today we are going to talk about two very important and very customizable parts of your LinkedIn Profile: The Headline and the About section - which is basically a summary section.

**First, get clear on the purpose of your LinkedIn Profile.**

Before we begin working on these sections, I want you to get very clear on the purpose of your LinkedIn profile. Why are you creating a LinkedIn profile? What is the purpose? What do you hope to gain or achieve by having a LinkedIn Profile?

Here's your first exercise. I want you to stop and do it right now before reading any further. Stop and write out the answers to these questions. Get specific.

- What is the purpose of my LinkedIn profile?
- What do I hope to gain or achieve by having a LinkedIn profile?

You may be using LinkedIn to build your presence as an expert in your field. You may be actively job searching. You may be a small business owner or solo entrepreneur who is hoping clients will find you on LinkedIn. Whatever it is, write it down. If you're job searching, write down exactly the title of the job you would like to have.

**Stop and write this out. I'll wait.....**

Now, you're ready to move on. Keeping in mind your exact reasons for creating a LinkedIn profile, you will begin to create a headline and summary section that highlights your profile so that people can find you – for the reasons you want to be found.

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### Use your headline to showcase your value.

#### Welcome to the most overlooked LinkedIn profile section: The headline.

By default, LinkedIn creates your headline with your current job title and employer—and that's precisely what a lot of people leave in there. But allowing the LinkedIn default to take charge of your headline is a bad move. Why? Because this short headline is prime marketing real estate. Because, this headline follows you everywhere. Because, it appears on the newsfeed everytime you post. If it's done well, your LinkedIn headline can be used to promote your best expertise, your exceptional skills, and your core message.

A LinkedIn headline is found under your name in your LinkedIn profile. It appears on LinkedIn's newsfeed every time you post. It sums up what is great about you.

Your headline is that important. Simply put, you can sell yourself, your stuff, and your services, all with a carefully crafted LinkedIn headline. So how do you get from job title to exceptional headline?

#### Use these tips to create an stellar headline:

- 1. Highlight Your Career Specialty or Professional Title.** What are those exceptional skills that you are proud of and would like to be recruited to do more of? What services do you offer that clients may be searching for?

If you're looking for a job as a senior accountant or a brand manager, or a teacher or a whatever, you need those words in this section. When a recruiter posts a search for a senior accountant with experience in ABC software, this is one of the areas the computer bots search. If someone logs onto LinkedIn to search for a 'career coach', those are the words they will probably type into the search box. The

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bots will be looking for matches with those keywords. Yep. Keywords are important here.

You have 120 characters to use here. Make sure you include your stand-out skills, experience or value.

**2. Consider your target audience.** Your LinkedIn headline (and, for that matter, your entire profile) should consider its target audience, and then speak directly to it. Who are you trying to reach? What does she or he likely care most about? Use your headline to answer those questions.

**3. Be Specific.** Again, consider who you're trying to reach with your headline, and how you can stand out from the competition. The more specific you can be, the better.

**4. Add in the Important Keywords.** Keywords, again. Where don't keywords matter anymore, really? Indeed, keywords are important when it comes to your LinkedIn headline. There are some online tools to help you research keywords (like Google AdWords: Keyword Planner) but often the easiest and most personal way to identify your own important keywords is to stop and ask yourself the following question:

*What are the most likely terms or phrases someone looking for a "you" might search to find you on LinkedIn?*

Embed as many of those as you can into your headline.

**5. Be Creative, but Carefully.** If you can use some attention-grabbing creativity and get key points about you across, that's great. But avoid anything silly or unprofessional. Consider your professional field. Some fields reward creativity and humor. Others may find it unprofessional. So you may try something different to stand out – but make sure it's positive and not offensive.

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### Try rating some headlines.

Here are some examples of headlines. Read through them and rate them on the points noted below.

- Are they specific?
- Do they use keywords?
- Are they attention grabbing without being silly?
- What audience are they targeting?
- Do they showcase skills and experience?

\_\_\_\_Tireless, caring Registered Nurse who helps pediatric cancer patients and their families

\_\_\_\_Enterprise software executive | Helping retailers find better performance, productivity and profitability

\_\_\_\_Agency Owner | Business Leader | Digital Marketing Pioneer

\_\_\_\_Founder of ABC Education | Leader in Home School Resources | Experienced classroom and homeschool teacher

\_\_\_\_Organizational Psychologist | Author of “Create the Best Team Today” | TedX Speaker | Team Building Workshop Leader

\_\_\_\_Customer-focused pro who can program every robot in your manufacturing facility. Specializing in ABC, Jetson, and Bughopper bots.

\_\_\_\_Freelance professional writer specializing in science and environmental topics, available for short or long term assignments.

\_\_\_\_History professor at State University | American Civil War Buff

Now it's your turn. Take a few minutes to write or re-write your own LinkedIn headline. You can keep it simple or use all 120 characters. Keep in mind your purpose for creating a LinkedIn profile. Let your skills and experience shine.

**LinkedIn is full of space-wasting, say-nothing headlines.  
With a bit of effort, yours can be the standout.**

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### SUMMARY SECTION

Write an effective summary section. Don't just copy it from your resume. And make your first three sentences amazing!

The trickiest part of creating your LinkedIn profile is writing your Summary Section. Don't just copy info from your resume. The summary section is much more than just a quick synopsis of your resume. Think of it as a marketing document written in an easy to read, narrative style.

Let's take this writing project step-by-step to make it easier for you to create a more effective Summary. First review your purpose for creating a LinkedIn profile that you wrote out above. The more clear you can be about your goals for your LinkedIn profile, the easier the Summary becomes. Before you begin putting your summary together, answer these questions in writing.

- What are the three top selling points you want people to know about you? What will help you achieve the goal of your LinkedIn profile?
- What are your five best career achievements that are relevant to helping you move forward in the direction you want to go?
- What are two or three things that make you stand out from your co-workers or others in your field?

**Read through these tips before beginning to draft your own summary statement.**

#### 1. Choose your narrative style.

Most experts now advise writing your summary statement in the first person. Writing in the first person is fresher and more narrative than a third person biography. Contrary to what you may have done in the past, summaries are no longer advertisements written like they came off a press release, a job description or a resume.

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The initial challenge in writing in the first person is that you are writing about yourself. Many people treat this part of their profile as a biography, but that is a mistake. To be effective, you need to really write it more like a self-marketing pitch but keep it genuine. Tricky, right? Let your personality show while you talk about all the great things you can do!

You can also choose to write in third person, but make sure it is fresh and lively. If you choose to write in third person, you may want to break some of the information into bullet points to keep it from getting too blocky and wordy.

If you have a list of specific skills that you want to highlight, you can put them in a list with bullet points to make them easy to skim quickly.

### 2. Target your reader.

Think about this section as if you were having a conversation with a colleague, a recruiter or a prospective client. Ask yourself these questions:

- How would you talk to them and introduce yourself?
- What would you want them to know?
- What would be the important points they should be told about you, your skills, accomplishments or unique talents?

You want to have your personality come out here too. Be as authentic and real as possible, but remember to keep it professional.

You may have some special background experience or something a boss or client has said about you that you wish to emphasize. Focus the reader quickly because if you don't capture their interest right away, they'll go away. What does your reader need to know about you?

### 3. Make your first three sentences amazing!

If you hadn't noticed, the first three Summary sentences follow you when you post on LinkedIn. They show up in your little breakout box. When someone looks at your profile, unless they hit the "show more" tab, the first three summary sentences will be all they see. These sentences must be strong, powerful sentences that really sell who

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you are and pull the reader in so they want to learn more and hit that “show more” tab. Those are 3 very important sentences.

### **4. Write, Edit, Edit, and Rewrite until you get it Right.**

Break this assignment into a few pieces.

**Write out the top three selling points that you want people to know about you on LinkedIn.** You started on that above. These don't have to be fancy marketing sentences. You can just note what are your best attributes and the top things you are best at on the job. You are likely going to lead with these. You can polish them up later but this is likely a good way to get started.

**Outline your most significant professional accomplishments.** What makes you stand out from others in your field? This can be one or two things. You will have the Experience section to note the major aspects and details of your work.

**Use this Summary to highlight the most important things.** What are the things you love to do in your job?

Now try to write down a couple of things about your personality. What is it about you that you want others to know?

Take time to write out each of these pieces, then put them together to create the first draft of your summary. Then leave it alone for one day. Go back and read it when it's cold. Edit it and rewrite it. Polish it up.

### **5. Write the ending of your summary section with an action step.**

Now you need to write the ending. Create an action step for your reader. How do you want them to contact you? This is a great place to add your contact info. I know you have it in other places on your profile as well, but why risk someone missing it? Your ending will vary depending on the purpose of your profile.

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**For a job hunter:** If you have a great quote that a boss has said about you then you might want to use that at the end. Or talk about what you love about your job or profession. For the final line, write something like this: I'm currently open to new job opportunities, so if you have something that might fit, email me at: paste your email.

**For a consultant or business owner:** You can use a client quote or testimonial or offer other information about your business. You can talk about what you love about helping other people solve the particular problem that you solve. Add your contact info with an invitation to contact at the end.

**For professionals and everyone one else:** If there is a nice quote from a boss or colleague about you, you can use it here as a nice way to end. Or you can talk about why you like your work and end with that. You can also add contact info but it is not as critical as it is for job seekers and consultants.

**Optional: Add media.** You now have the option to add media to your summary. If you have a video of yourself doing a great presentation, or a talk, you can add it here. Many people like to see a video of you in action. This is not a necessary piece, and you can wait and add it later but it can be a great way to use media and links if you have them. *(See cautions below about adding media to LinkedIn)*

**And Day Two is finished!**





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# DAY THREE: The Experience Section and Remaining Profile Sections

**EXPERIENCE SECTION:** Write your experience section in a more narrative style, rather than short and choppy resume bullets.

The Experience Section of your LinkedIn profile is not simply an uploaded version of your resume. You want to list all your career experience, but it looks better in a more narrative style rather than short and choppy resume bullets. Here's an easy way to start.

1. Copy the work experience for your most recent job from your resume over to your LinkedIn Profile.
2. Choose 3-4 major achievements or highlights from this position that you would like to feature. If you're job searching, choose the highlights that are most relevant to the next position you would like to have. Use numbers if possible, including facts and figures.
3. Rewrite your highlights into a short summary paragraph for that job. You can follow up with bullets to add extra info if needed.

### Add the extra info that wouldn't fit on your resume to your LinkedIn Profile

If you have information that didn't fit on your resume, you can add it here. That's the great thing about LinkedIn, it can be an addendum to your resume if needed. Just don't overwhelm the reader with too many bullets for each job listing.

### Extra Tips for the Experience Section:

- Use the same format for each job you list on LinkedIn.
- Use action words as much as possible. Say what it is you do or did – managed, led, grew, promoted, increased sales, saved, etc. Try to avoid using the phrases

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“responsible for” or “duties included.” Use keywords. Again, ask yourself what will recruiters or clients be searching for? Make sure you include those keywords in your job summaries.

- If possible, link your job to your company. If your company has a profile on LinkedIn, you can link your job to that company and the logo will show up on your profile. LinkedIn should prompt you to do this when you enter the name of the company.
- Keep it clear and concise. Write it all up and then read back through it, taking out as many extraneous words as possible.
- Use the correct tense. Use present tense for your current job and past tense for any previous jobs.
- Lead with your achievements, not a boring job description. For instance, instead of saying “Promoted to sales team lead, where I excelled in sales” Try “Increased sales by 12% in the first year following my promotion to team lead.”
- Double check for spelling and grammar. I’ve talked to some hiring managers who automatically discard candidates for spelling and grammar errors on resumes. LinkedIn is another place to get it right.

## FAQ: What jobs should I include?

I’m often asked if individuals should include every job they have ever had on their profile. You will include most full time jobs in your job history, however, you don’t need to include every job you held in college or high school or short term jobs that are irrelevant to your current career goals. Think about what is relevant for the next job you would like or what makes you stand out. But include most full or part roles where you stayed a significant amount of time – even if it was in a different field.

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**True Story:** I once worked with an individual who listed a part time job he held while in college on his resume. He had worked for a large hotel chain, basically as a valet/bellhop, but he mentioned the customer service skills he had been trained in there as a bullet point. The hiring manager had once also worked at the same hotel chain and knew the well-regarded training protocol. Although the position had nothing to do with hotel management, he was hired because of that connection. You never know!

### Include these roles on your profile:

- Full or part time roles where you stayed a significant amount of time and where colleagues will remember you.
- Any roles that provided you with valuable experience and industry knowledge
- Previous career path or jobs – again, you never know! Highlight any transferable skills or training received there

### Do NOT include these on your profile.

- Cutesy job listings such as domestic engineer for time spent at home with children. We all truly understand it's an incredibly important and demanding job (been there, done that) but employers won't take you seriously. Simply leave those years out of your profile (and your resume). You can explain the career break during the interview, if asked.
- Unrelated part time jobs during your education time or while developing your career, for example, waiting tables, unless you can use them to highlight customer service or other skills that are relevant to the job you are seeking.
- Temp assignments or freelance work that lasted less than a month. If you have several of these, you can group them by agency name or type of work and create one entry.

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Be **cautious** about adding images, PDFs, presentations  
AND YOUR RESUME to your profile.

LinkedIn allows you to upload images, PowerPoint presentations and pdf documents, and link them to specific jobs. These can support what you have written in your job description. Don't stress out if you don't have anything to add. It's not a critical component.

However, if you have an image, graphic or pdf that you want to share and that you feel would be helpful to improving your authority, brand or job search, you can add it here.

### TWO IMPORTANT CAUTIONS ABOUT UPLOADING INFO

#### **CAUTION #1**

Be aware that whatever you share is now **public** information so don't use anything that has company specific information, contains sensitive information, or is proprietary information.

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Do NOT upload a PDF of your resume as part of your profile.

**CAUTION #2**

Many people upload a pdf of their resume as a part of their profile. **I do not recommend this.** Your resume often contains private contact information and even if you remove this info, you have made your resume itself public. You no longer have control over it.

Uploading any of this information means anyone is free to view, copy, download, use, pirate or distribute your resume or your pdf/ Powerpoint presentations/ etc. **without your knowledge or consent.** Uploading your resume also screams “I’m looking for a job.” So, if your current employer happens to take a look at your profile, that may raise questions you would rather not answer.

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### Finish the remaining sections of your Profile - Education/ Licensing / Volunteer experience

The education section is easy.

Simply add all your educational degrees here. If you have an interesting or relevant thesis or graduate project, you can add information about that here.

#### Licensing and Credentialing

Add any professional licenses or credentials or certifications here. Include any Microsoft Office certifications or other software certifications. It all helps.

#### Volunteer Experience

Add volunteer experience to showcase your interests, community service and willingness to go the extra mile.

Employers like to see community involvement. It also adds a bit of personality to your profile and shows the kinds of causes you are interested in.

You can list any organizations you belong to, roles you have held in those organizations, awards you have earned or projects you have been a part of. You can be more creative with this section, using either bullets or summary paragraphs.

#### **Caution**

If your volunteer experience is for a political cause, carefully consider whether to add it to your profile. Politics in the US are deeply divisive today and may cause an employer or client to look unfavorably (or favorably) at your profile.

Each person must make this decision for themselves.

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### DAY FOUR: Getting Connected

#### How to Find Connections

Now that you have your LinkedIn profile set up and ready to impress, you will need to start making connections to grow your LinkedIn network.

#### How connections work

LinkedIn classifies people within your network as 1st, 2nd, or 3rd connections.

- 1st connections are people you are directly connected to. You connect with them through an invitation or know them IRL - in real life.
- 2nd connections are people you share mutual connections with ie, you and Bob Barker are both 1st connections with Sally Slider.
- 3rd connections are people with whom you share extended network connections.

Unlike other networks, like Instagram or Twitter where you can simply start following people even if you don't know them personally, LinkedIn encourages you to connect primarily with people you know in the real world. You can begin by connecting with your email contacts, other alumni from your university and others that you know in real life.

#### Caution

*Be careful of requesting too many connections from people you do not know. LinkedIn makes it easy for members to deny requests and mark the request as people they do not know. If you try to connect with too many people who mark you as someone they do not know, then you can be restricted from connecting with others on a temporary basis unless you know their email address.*

*It's **actually** a nice safeguard against getting spammed.*

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### To Connect or to Follow?

On Facebook, you friend people and follow brands, celebrities or professional pages. On twitter, your only option is to follow. On LinkedIn, you also have the option to friend (Connect) or to follow. So what's your best option?

On LinkedIn, if you follow someone, you simply see their posts and what they share on their newsfeed. They receive a message that you have followed them - but you are not a "connection" and won't show up on their feed. You can follow anyone without being connected to them.

Connecting on LinkedIn is like friending someone on Facebook. It involves the other person you are connecting with to take an action and accept your invitation. LinkedIn defines a connection as a "two-way relationship of trust between people who know each other." If you are connected to someone, you're following him or her by default and vice-versa. So what should you do?

**The answer is - always go for the connection,** even if you don't personally know the person. Here's the reason - LinkedIn is a virtual place for people to connect and network in a professional manner. The more people you are connected with, the more likely you are to be seen and heard on LinkedIn.

### What is the point of a bigger network?

The number of connections you have on LinkedIn matters. Remember, the more first-degree connections you have, the more second- and third-degree connections you have, making you literally one connection away from millions of people.

That's important because LinkedIn, in reality, is a giant search engine in which you'll only show up in your connections' searches. In other words, if you're not connected with



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individuals as a first, second or third level connection, you won't come up in their search results. And only those three levels will show up in your searches.

So to make LinkedIn work as a job search or business network, gradually increase your number of first degree connections. This may take some time but it's worth it. This will increase the likelihood that LinkedIn search algorithms will find you and you will show up in more search results.

## How to find connections

To start building your network of connections, go to Networks Tab on the dashboard. You can enter your email address and import your list of contacts and see who is on LinkedIn. You can search for a person you know and click "Connect" on their profile page. You can also click on a friend's connections to see who else you might know. If you have a close real life friend who has a good LinkedIn network, that can be an easy way to find your own real life network.

Here's are some other ways LinkedIn advises you to make connections

**Check your "My Network" Page** - If you have any pending invitations, they will be displayed near the top of the page. Click on them to "accept." You don't have to accept every invitation. Some may be sales oriented and you may simply ignore them.

**Use the "People you may know" feature.** Instead of clicking the connect button below the member's name, click on their profile to connect. That way you can personalize the message. It's best to personalize connection requests by writing a short message. Here's how.

## Personalize Connection Requests

For each person you choose to connect with, send a personal message reminding them of how you know each other. Obviously, if you know each other well, it can simply be a fun

## LINKEDIN UPDATE CHALLENGE

“Hello! Look I’m on LinkedIn!” note. But don’t assume that everyone will remember who you are. Personal messages are always best.

When you send a connection request, add a message. How did you meet? How do you know him or her? Why do you want to connect? Here are some examples of simple but effective connection requests.

- It was great meeting you at \_\_\_\_\_. I enjoyed speaking with you about \_\_\_\_\_. Please accept my request to connect so we can stay in touch.
- I am a fellow member of the \_\_\_\_\_ LinkedIn group, and I saw and appreciated your comments about \_\_\_\_\_. I hope we can connect and stay in touch about this topic.
- I was just reading your blog and really liked your post about \_\_\_\_\_. I really appreciate your thoughts on \_\_\_\_\_. Please accept my request to connect.
- Although I’ve not had the pleasure of meeting you personally, I’ve been following your posts on \_\_\_\_\_ group. I especially liked \_\_\_\_\_. I hope you’ll accept my invitation to connect.

**IMPORTANT:** When scrolling through LinkedIn's list of "people you may know," don't simply click the "Connect" button. If you do, a generic request will be sent. Instead, go to the person's profile page and click the "connect" button there. That will allow you to add a personal note with your connection request.

Make it a practice to review LinkedIn’s suggested connections at least a few times a week. Make it a goal to find people in your industry or niche and to connect with them personally. Try to connect with two or three people each time.

## LINKEDIN UPDATE CHALLENGE

Keep in mind that you only need 501 connections to show the 500+ mark next to your profile and be considered part of the elite expert tier. People who see your profile will know you use LinkedIn to do business, add value and connect.

### Here are some other ways to grow your LinkedIn network.

#### 1. Post Status Updates at least once a week.

It's important to be active on LinkedIn, and that starts with posting status updates regularly. Some experts recommend posting status updates daily. My advice is to post something at least weekly or twice weekly. These aren't Facebook style status updates with photos of your lunch and weekend fun. Keep it professional. You can post an article that you have read in your field, a work update, a question related to your field, or other professional or encouraging comment. Take a few minutes to study what types of posts other in your field regularly use and respond to.

When you consistently stay in the feeds of your connections, there's more opportunity for them to comment, like and share your posts. This interaction gets you introduced to their connections and gives you one more way to grow your network. When people are sharing and commenting on your stuff, it's social proof that you're an expert in your field

#### 2. Engage with Others.

Review your wall regularly and share, comment on and like other people's updates and long-form posts. Engaging with existing connections puts your profile directly in front of their networks; and all it takes is a "like" or comment on their posts. A simple, "Great thoughts" or "Thanks for sharing" can help expand your reach and, quite honestly, it's simply the considerate thing to do when someone's thoughts or content resonate with you.

#### 3. Join and participate in Groups.

## LINKEDIN UPDATE CHALLENGE

Commit to searching for a few new LinkedIn groups to join. Make sure you engage with each group often by commenting, asking questions and liking other people's comments.

A group is a great opportunity to do market research, post links to your updates to get more views and engage with others in your niche, as well as those who aren't. When people see you in groups and interact with you over time, they'll be more likely to connect.

To find groups to join, enter relevant keywords in the LinkedIn search box. For instance, you could enter "therapist" in the search box to find groups of interest to therapists (you have to scroll down to find the groups).

Try it and see how it works. Experiment with different strategies. Let me know how it goes.

You finished Day Four! You're almost finished!



## DAY FIVE: LINKEDIN PUBLISHING

So now, you have your profile set up, connections made and have joined some groups. You know to stay engaged on your home feed and comment on posts by others in your field. So, what's next? The next step is to add posts of your own.

### **Share Posts or Articles:**

A quick and easy way to do this is to simply share articles or stories written by others; however, if you want to establish yourself as an expert, it's time to start publishing some of your own content. There are two ways to do that. First, if you have a blog or website, you can simply share a post from that platform onto LinkedIn. It's a great way to drive traffic back to your site and generate more readership.

## LINKEDIN UPDATE CHALLENGE

### **Publish your own writing:**

LinkedIn also makes it easy for you to write and share articles on their publishing platform. All members can use the article publishing tool from your homepage on a desktop computer or tablet, however, this tool doesn't work on the mobile app.

### What are the benefits of publishing through the LinkedIn platform?

**1. You can give old content new life.** If you have some older content from your blog or even other professional writing that is still relevant, you can post it again through the LinkedIn platform. I've done this with some of my older blogs and had over 1,000 views on the platform.

The more you use the LinkedIn publishing platform, the more your network will become familiar with you and the content you publish.

**2. You can position yourself as an expert or authority in your field.** If you're not a blogger, you now have an easy to use platform. Your latest post shows up right on your profile, just below the top profile box.

When people start to engage with your post or even share it, it further increases your authority. Over time your network will see you as the go-to authority in your field... as long as your content is of high quality.

**3. LinkedIn publisher posts are indexed on Google.** The truth is Google likes LinkedIn Publisher posts and will frequently show them in top search results. Your website will never have the same ability as a site like LinkedIn to rank at the top of search results. It's a powerful publishing platform that is worth spending some time on.

**4. Publishing works even if you have a small number of connections.** If you think that you won't get any traction because your LinkedIn network is too small, think again.

## LINKEDIN UPDATE CHALLENGE

After you publish your post, LinkedIn encourages you to share your article as a status update and add a couple of relevant hashtags that tells readers what it's about.

The benefit of this is that people can follow different hashtags on topics that interest them on LinkedIn. If a person searches for a topic with a particular hashtag, any articles published with that hashtag will show up in the results and that happens even if you are not directly connected.

### FAQ: If I have a blog, should I just share the post from there rather than publishing it through the LinkedIn platform?

Good question. There are benefits to both. By posting from your blog, you are driving traffic to your blog. That's a good thing. By publishing through LinkedIn, you get the benefits listed above and LinkedIn likes you. Another good thing. My solution is to do both. I publish new blogs on LinkedIn and I also create posts that are unique to LinkedIn – often updating old content that I have used before on my website.

If you're a job seeker, using the LinkedIn Publishing platform will help you get noticed.

### Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing on the LinkedIn publishing platform:

- Write in an easy-to-read conversational tone. Be engaging but also specific, clear and concise.
- Write on topics that are current to increase engagement. What's happening now?
- Avoid being self-promotional. How can you help the reader?

- Create a custom banner or cover image for your post.
- Keep each post tightly focused on one topic. Don't ramble. The best posts are tightly written focusing on a small piece of your expertise.
- Make sure to add your name, a short bio, and your contact info (email or LinkedIn URL) as part of your article.

## FAQ: How does publishing help if you are a job seeker?

It makes you visible. Recruiters and hiring managers are active on LinkedIn and are on the lookout for potential employees.

If you are a job seeker, start putting a plan together for 3-5 articles you're going to publish over the next 90 days. Yes. I know. This is going to take some work, but it will put you way ahead of the competition.

As you create your plan, think about these questions:

- What skills or experiences do you want others, particularly employers, to know about?
- Is there something about you that you think is getting missed in your resume or other material?
- Are employers making assumptions about you due to your last job or experience when you have plenty more depth to offer?

Once you have written your posts, share them everywhere - Facebook, Twitter, etc.

You can also add a link to your cover letter, noting the article you published on LinkedIn.

**And you're all set.**

## LINKEDIN UPDATE CHALLENGE

Your LinkedIn profile is shiny and bright and you're ready to connect. Remember to check the job board each day on LinkedIn and to spend a few moments commenting on other's posts and making connections. It takes time - but it's well worth the time and effort.

**Good luck out there!**

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