

Crafting a Compelling LinkedIn Profile: A Step-by-Step Guide

Here, we present a step-by-step guide on how to write a LinkedIn Profile that will garner attention, reward you with new connections, and enhance your credibility.

“Everybody uses their LinkedIn profile as an online CV, right?”

Wrong! While some people use LinkedIn as an online CV and job-finding service, that's not your objective or the point of this article. Utilising LinkedIn for marketing purposes—the focus of this article—involves combining your corporate brand and core strategic message with your personal brand and personality. Striking the right balance is not difficult but requires careful thought.

First Principles – Who/What/Why?

If you can't answer these three simple questions, hold off on making changes to your profile. Clearly answering these questions should alter how you present your profile and what content you include:

WHAT ... What is the 'purpose' of your LinkedIn presence - sales, brand building, awareness, online CV, etc.

WHO ... Who do you want 'looking' at your LinkedIn profile - be specific.

WHY ... Why should they look at your profile (USP's, point of difference, etc).

Your LinkedIn profile is what prospects will use to 'check you out' before agreeing to connect or talk to you. Its primary job is to persuade 'strangers' that you are a decent, credible human being, knowledgeable in your field of expertise, and worth 'risking' a connection or conversation with.

Step 1: The Essentials of an Outstanding LinkedIn Profile

Only three elements of your profile—your name, your profile photo, and your headline—are shown on LinkedIn if you are being seen by others. Make sure these are 'fit for purpose'!

It might seem odd to write at length about your name, photo, and description, but this is where many people make fundamental errors.

Name: Be precise—ensure your name uses capital letters (i.e., Fred Smith). Only put letters after your name if it genuinely makes a difference to your prospects.

Photo: Your photo is your 'shop window' to 'you' and should be a nice, well-lit, cropped head-and-shoulders shot, ideally smiling and looking presentable. **DO NOT** use holiday photos, shots with family or friends, old images, blurry shots or any other poor quality image.

Headline: Use this space to allow prospects to learn about what you can do for them. Explain the benefits of your services or products and how they will 'feel' once they experience your support. This is arguably your "Ronseal Statement" – you'd better do what it says on the Headline.

Step 2: Let's talk about 'Above the Fold' – The Intro section according to LinkedIn

Now we focus on what your profile shows most users when they first come to it—what's 'above the fold' (i.e. visible without scrolling).

Header image: Add an image to avoid LinkedIn's generic placeholder. Use an image that is 1584 x 396 pixels, being cautious of text placement. Remember, your own photo (headshot) will be placed over the image.

Profile URL: Edit your profile URL to make it easier to use – get rid of those random letters and numbers!

Contact details: Ensure your contact details, including website links, email, telephone number, and location, are accurate and relevant to your prospects. LinkedIn allow you to show 3 website URL's so use them all – even if you only have one website, you can provide links to three different pages but what about also linking to your calendar booking service, etc.

Step 3: Completing your LinkedIn profile

Assuming the first view of your profile doesn't put visitors off, they're going to scroll down and look further at your profile, so the 'additional' elements you can present include:

About section: Use this space to explain how prospects will benefit from being connected with you.

Featured section: Showcase a brochure, video, post, or link that draws attention to something your prospects might find interesting ... but make sure it is 'worth' of being featured – don't just feature a bunch of normal posts!

Experience: Use this section to provide detailed information about your current role and emphasize the benefits you bring. You can also show your history here but keep it relevant and recent – no one cares that you delivered newspapers when you were young!

Education: Keep this section relevant – remember, from a marketing perspective, this isn't a CV!

Step 4: Building your credibility

LinkedIn tries to help you present prospects with credibility, but this is a continuous task. There are two areas you can display and make use of, requiring the help of others:

Skills: List skills that your prospects would want you to demonstrate and ask connections to endorse them. Ideally, aim to get a 'decent number' of endorsements as you can be viewed negatively if you 'only' have a small number of endorsements for your primary skill!

Recommendations: Seek recommendations from previous customers or colleagues to provide testimonials. These are harder to get than skill endorsements as your customers need to spend time writing them – but try to get into the habit of regularly requesting and gaining new testimonials as this provides genuine social proof of your abilities.

Building the Perfect LinkedIn Profile – Summary

Your profile is there to encourage people to connect and work with you. In other articles, we discuss 'working' LinkedIn to generate leads and business opportunities.