

Are You Synched in With LinkedIn?

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10 Easy Steps
to get the
Job You Want!

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Huh? LinkedWhat?

If you have no idea what I'm talking about, listen up. Welcome to Networking 101 in 2010.

Then again, many of you are reading this post right on LinkedIn, so I know you're synched in! But are you using it effectively?

So, what is LinkedIn?

It's a social networking site geared at business professionals. Think Facebook, for grownups. Just kidding! Facebook is great, and the number of users over 35 is growing rapidly. However, while Facebook remains an excellent social networking site for personal use, its business applications are limited compared to LinkedIn.

With over 50 million users world wide, LinkedIn is an excellent online tool designed to build and maintain your network of professional contacts. It's been around since 2003, and has been gaining momentum ever since. It's become quite a "household name" among business professionals especially in the last few years.

LinkedIn has become particularly useful for job seekers. I highly recommend anyone looking for work to add LinkedIn to their job search arsenal. You may find your next opportunity through networking on LinkedIn. In addition to networking, you should also use it to research industries, companies and people.

Setting up your profile is an important first step in starting to use LinkedIn effectively. Here are some basic things to keep in mind:

Headline. This is the first thing people will see, right under your name. Try not to duplicate your current or most recent job title - people will see that in your work experience. Instead, provide a concise description of what you do. Although including your email address in the headline allows people to connect with you, it also opens you up to spam and unsolicited connection requests.

Status Update. Refresh your status regularly to keep your profile in front of your connections. Keep your updates interesting and relevant, not frivolous.

Summary. Provide a concise and accurate description of what you do, your interests, skills and objectives. Don't go into too much detail about your experience, as there is a separate area for that. Use this real estate wisely.

Experience. This is where you can provide information about all your work experience, including the organizations you've worked for, job titles and accomplishments. Don't use this space to duplicate your resume - save the specific details for communications about specific opportunities. If a good profile is available for the companies you worked for, link to them. Otherwise, write your own.

Recommendations. Testimonials give you credibility and add another dimension to your profile. You should feature a handful of well written testimonials that provide different perspectives, but don't overdo it. Although testimonials are valuable, remember that "less is more."

Personal Information. Provide appropriate contact information so people know how to get in touch with you, at least via email and telephone. Otherwise, what's the point?

Contact Settings. There is an area where you can specify what you're interested in, in terms of using LinkedIn. If you're looking for work, be sure to check off "career opportunities" so people know you're in the market.

Once you have your basic profile set up, you can start learning more about the other useful LinkedIn features. As a search professional, I'm a huge fan of the site and use it every day to maintain and grow my network. I also love talking about LinkedIn, so you can expect related articles in the future. I'll expand on what I've introduced above, and explore other topics as well. There are countless articles already out there on the subject, and I encourage you to educate yourself on this powerful tool.

Now go out there and get LinkedIn!