



LinkedIn for Beginners

Most people have heard of LinkedIn, but do you know what it is and how it can help you with your business?

First, let me define what it is – LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is a professional networking group whose purpose is to provide its members a way to search and connect with other people to find people, jobs and business opportunities. And unlike the sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Bebo, LinkedIn is primarily focused on the business community.

Your individual network consists of your immediate connections, and 2 further levels of people connected to any of your connections. So you can see that very quickly your searchable network can expand very quickly each time you connect to someone new. Just to highlight the power of this network, as of today I have over 700 connections and my total network is over 10 million people!

When you start on LinkedIn, you need to build a profile of yourself, what you do, who you work for etc. This is like an online CV builder, and if you are serious about using LinkedIn, you do need to spend some time getting this right and keeping it updated. People can find you by searching so it is worth putting a smattering of keywords across your profile that reflects your key skills or products. It is worth spending some time to filling your profile out fully, because you never know who can find you online – business contact, ex-colleagues, prospects and even potential employees. As an example of a completed profile here is a snapshot of mine:

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn profile for Andy Headworth. The profile is 100% complete. It includes a header with 'Profile', 'Edit My Profile', 'View My Profile', and 'Edit Public Profile Settings'. The main section features a profile picture, name, and a bio: 'Specialist in recruiting and retaining talent. Will always consider Consulting opportunities and Project work.' It also lists his location as Brighton, United Kingdom. Below this are tabs for Profile, Q&A, Recommendations, and Connections. The 'Current' section lists 'Managing Director at Sirona Consulting Ltd'. The 'Past' section lists 'Ecommerce Manager at Damia Group', 'Manager at Grovetex Trading Ltd', and 'Recruitment Director at Knight Benton Group Ltd'. The 'Education' section lists 'Worthing College'. The 'Recommended' section shows '6 people have recommended you'. The 'Connections' section shows '500+ connections'. The 'Industry' is 'Staffing and Recruiting'. The 'Websites' section lists 'www.sironaconsulting.com', 'blog.sironaconsulting.com', and 'www.jobinablog.com'. The 'Public Profile' section shows the URL 'http://www.linkedin.com/in/andyheadworth'. On the right side, there are 'Ads by Google' for 'Executive Level Jobs' and 'Loyalty Solutions'. Below that is an 'Andy Recommends' section for 'Clare Cork', a Business Development Manager at Damia Group, with a note that they have known each other for eight years.

One of the biggest mistakes people make who join LinkedIn is that they sit back and wait for something to happen, which is only natural and I certainly did to start with. Any form of networking whether that be offline or online, needs you to

be proactive to grow your network. The difference with LinkedIn is that it makes this very easy for you to do. My key phrase with regards to this and other social networking sites is a simple one – 'you only get out of it what you put into it'!

So you need to start building your network, but how do you do it?

Here are my top 10 ways for beginners to grow your network on LinkedIn:

1. Take out your business card collection, or if you're organised use your Contacts in Outlook, or even on your PDA or Blackberry. Go through each one and do a quick search on LinkedIn, and if you find them there, send them an invite using the relevant page (shown below),



Add friends or colleagues to your network?

TIP Add people to your network often? Try the [Outlook Toolbar](#)

A screenshot of the LinkedIn "Add friends or colleagues" form. The form has three columns for "First Name", "Last Name", and "Email", each with five empty input boxes. Below these is a button labeled "Edit/preview invitation text". Underneath is a "Subject:" field with the text "Invitation to connect on LinkedIn". Below that is a "Name," dropdown menu. The main text area contains the message "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn." followed by "-Andy" and a large red "X" mark, indicating that the message is a boring template email.

and make sure you personalise the emails in the box shown (above) with the red cross. There is nothing worse than boring template emails!

2. Spend some time and think of people you have worked with during your career, and if you find them link to them. They may have gone to the same school / college / university, or you have worked with them at current or previous organisations. You **will** be surprised at how many of these people are on LinkedIn.
3. Each time you get a request to join a network, either accept it or archive it. Do not choose the 'I don't know this person' as once a person gets five of these their account is frozen, and you could then be responsible for having them removed! My advice in the beginning would be to accept all requests to link up.

4. Get into the habit of being a 'name magpie'. Each time you think of people you haven't yet linked to write them down somewhere safe. Trust me this will happen, and you will find yourself remembering people you thought you had forgotten about! Next time you are online, go searching on LinkedIn and as before, when you find them, link to them. It is also a great way of finding what people have been up to since you last met – human nature I guess!!
5. If you do find someone in your (now expanding) network who you would like to connect to but don't have an email address for, then you can still contact them. Request an introduction through someone in your network that is connected to the person you want to connect to (if there are multiple connections here, you can even choose which introducer to use!). Just make sure you explain succinctly why you want to be introduced, as the introducer does have the power of veto.
6. Recommendations. Don't be afraid to ask current colleagues, ex-colleagues, business partners etc for recommendations on LinkedIn. They do help in building your profile further, but my advice would be only seeking recommendations from people that you would recommend yourself!
7. Regularly go through the connections of all your 1st level contacts. They are also expanding their networks, and it is likely you will find mutual contacts that you will be able to link to.
8. Connect with power networkers or 'hubs' in your industry. These are the people who have thousands of contacts and are usually only too pleased to link with others. They are often referred to as 'open networkers' and have their email address placed publicly in their profile. Don't be shy with these people; they are motivated by expanding **their** networks. When you next do a search for someone, sort the search by connections (drop down box), and you will find them. Invest the time to link with these power networkers, and you will find your own network going exponential!!
9. The Advanced Search is key to getting the most out of LinkedIn, get used to using it – you will reap the benefits.

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn search interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'People', 'Jobs & Hiring', 'Services', 'Answers', 'My Profile', and 'My Contacts'. Below this is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to 'People' and a 'Go' button. The 'Advanced search' section is expanded, showing several filters:

- Name search:** A text input field with a 'Search' button and a note 'Last name required'.
- Advanced search:**
 - Keywords:** A text input field with an example 'ex: CEO, investment, marketing'.
 - Name:** A text input field.
 - Title:** A text input field.
 - Current titles only**
 - Company:** A text input field.
 - Current companies only**
 - Location:** A dropdown menu set to 'Anywhere'.
 - Country:** A dropdown menu set to 'United Kingdom'.
 - Postal Code:** A text input field with 'BN14 7HZ'.
 - Industry:** A dropdown menu with options: 'Any industry', 'Accounting', 'Airlines/Aviation', 'Alternative Dispute Resolut', 'Alternative Medicine', 'Animation'.
 - Interested in:** A dropdown menu set to 'All users'.
 - Joined your network:** A dropdown menu set to 'At any time'.
 - Sort by:** A dropdown menu set to 'Keyword relevance'.

10. Tell everyone about LinkedIn! LinkedIn kindly provide you with a button (below) that you can add to email footers, websites, blogs etc.



Make sure you use it (go to your profile, 'Promote your profile'), it is great advertising, and you will get people inviting you to join their network.

LinkedIn is a great business tool, and one that I firmly advocate using in business. From a recruitment perspective, I use it as a regular high quality source of prospective candidates, and from a business development perspective you get the chance to do some 'homework' on your business prospects. Trust me, when you get used to using LinkedIn, it will become second nature to you, and you will find yourself 'checking out' every potential business contact you deal with before you meet them!

If you are just starting off on LinkedIn and want to further expand your network to tap into my millions of contacts, then please just send me an [invitation](#) and I will happily oblige.