InspiredWork™

OPTIMIZE YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE TO GET HIRED FASTER



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Introduction

You probably already know that LinkedIn is the single most powerful online platform for finding your next job. Yet, it comes with a caveat: since there are more than 394 million professionals who use the social network,[1] you need to complete your LinkedIn profile (only 50% of people complete their LinkedIn profile according to LinkedIn's only stats) AND you need to put your best foot forward with your digital brand so that you stand out, and in a *good* way.

Most professionals know that they need to distinguish themselves from other potential hires. It should be easy – you're a unique individual with a specific set of strengths, talents, and experience that inherently sets you apart from the sea of others, right? While that may be so, there's no guarantee that hiring managers and other professionals from potential employers will notice these aspects of your profile – unless you present them in the right way.

It goes without saying that we're all short on time these days. So, your goal on LinkedIn is not just to make a powerful impression, but to do so as efficiently as possible so that executives, hiring managers, other recruiters, and any other potential connections will notice you right away.

Not only will these tips boost your "Who's Viewing Your Profile" metrics, but they'll help you achieve results that matter. Whether that's getting noticed by recruiters at your dream company or opening doors into a new career field, the optimization of your LinkedIn profile can get you there.

Also, don't worry if you're not a professional writer. The reason these tips are so effective is because they use a specific formula to precisely target the audience you want to reach: recruiters, hiring managers, and connections who can get you in. When you follow these tips, you can't go wrong. You won't find any intricate writing processes here; we'll focus only on the most effective fundamentals that will catch the eyes of the professionals you want to get noticed by most. Besides, throughout this entire process, you'll be writing about the person you know best – yourself!

We'll take this process step-by-step, and with just a little time and thought, you'll have a professional, attractive LinkedIn profile optimized to stand out in your target industry. As an individual, your unique blend of skills, knowledge, and experience is what makes you a potential asset who can offer significant value for the right employer. Now, it's just a matter of putting the spotlight on those skills and experiences so that you can make a powerful, unforgettable first impression.

If you're ready to get started, I recommend that you grab any information you might need (including dates of past employment), and set aside a few hours during which you'll be able to work uninterrupted. Keep in mind that putting in the extra effort now is what can make the difference between getting the job you really want versus having to settle for something less.

We'll start with the basics and move on from there, so that everything from your profile name to your status updates are optimized to best attract the people with whom you want to connect. If you're ready to begin, then let's get started!

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[1] http://www.statista.com/statistics/274050/quarterly-numbers-of-linkedin-members/, November 2015.

The Basics

When it comes to optimizing your LinkedIn profile, there's nothing that's off-limits. In other words, with every single aspect of your profile, there's an opportunity to capitalize on those seemingly insignificant character counts so that you can truly make your profile stand out. Let's take a look.

Name

This step is as simple as it gets: your name has a 60-character maximum, and it's the most basic form of identification you can include. For this portion of your profile, keep it short and simple – include your first and last name, and avoid using any nicknames, contact information, or keywords in this area, as it could make you appear inauthentic.

URL

Don't overlook the URL. Optimizing this portion of your profile gives it a neat appearance, and more importantly, makes it easier for others to share. Customize your URL so that it appears this way: linkedin.com/[yourname]. If your name is already taken, consider incorporating some other distinguishing characters, but don't include a ton of numbers, nicknames, or any other unprofessional content.

Photo

Each day, it's estimated that 45 million profiles are viewed on LinkedIn. One way to ensure that your profile gets included in that number is to incorporate a professional photograph – this makes your profile seven times more likely to be viewed.[2] If you can, go for professional headshots; if not, make sure that the image of you is professional in appearance (business attire, plain background, and no selfies!).

Background Photo

Part of having an eye-catching LinkedIn profile is making sure that you've achieved 100% completeness. While you might not consider the background photo (a feature that was added to LinkedIn in June 2014) to be of significant importance, this is an opportunity to personalize your page a bit more and gain the attention of professionals in your industry. Keep in mind that it should still be professional – if you're in accounting, why not choose an image with numbers? You can get a little creative yet still choose an image that fits with your niche and helps you get noticed in a good way.

Headline

In just 120 characters, you have to sell yourself as the most captivating potential hire that recruiters, hiring managers, and your network of connections won't be able to forget. Essentially, your headline should reflect your personal brand promise – it should say who it is that you help, what value you can deliver as a professional, and why you're the best choice (what makes you unique). Here's where you can include relevant industry keywords that describe your role and key skills that hiring managers are seeking. What words do you hope to get found for when your potential employer does a search? Include those in your headline – but make sure that the verbiage still flows naturally. In other words, don't make

[2] Mauney, Brad. LinkedIn Blog. (Jul. 29 2013). Retrieved from http://blog.linkedin.com/2013/07/29/five-simple-ways-to-boost-your-professional-brand-on-linkedin-infographic/ Nov. 26 2015.

it obvious that you planted those keywords in your headline; make sure that they fit into the overall message of your personal brand promise.

Location

Like your name, this aspect of your profile is pretty straightforward. But before you move on so quickly, consider this: if you live on the outskirts or within commuting range of a big city, it may benefit you to list that city as your location. This can improve your odds in search results, and is especially beneficial if your dream company is located in a major city.

Industry

In addition to optimizing your location, you need to tailor the industry section of your profile so that it effectively attracts the recruiter or manager that you want to connect with. To target your potential employer, ask yourself this: what would he or she search for in the "industry" section to find me? If you have a paid profile (and thus, have access to the "Who's Viewed Your Profile" insights), then you may want to experiment with incorporating different words into your "industry" section. After a few tries, you should be able to find out which phrase is resonating best with your target employers.

Contact Information

You're on LinkedIn to make connections, so make sure it's super easy for anyone who views your profile to get in touch with you. If you're only a third-degree connection or beyond, it's likely that someone who's interested in connecting with you won't bother to send an introduction or buy an InMail to get in touch. You can still make it easy for people to reach you by optimizing your contact details. You can include up to three websites as well as a Twitter handle. Don't forget about the "Advice for Contacting" section, in which you can incorporate any information that makes you easy to reach, such as an email address or phone number.

Experience/Position Description

Here, you have 2,000 characters to describe your role and your significant accomplishments. Envision the skills/experience that would define you as a key player in the role for which you're seeking employment. How can you illustrate the ways in which you've grown, made key accomplishments, and truly benefitted your past or current employer(s)? Don't be afraid to incorporate numbers here. Most importantly, show, don't tell! If you can provide links to past projects or include any eye-catching media such as videos, images, presentations, or documents to your experience section, then do so. Whenever possible, let your work speak for itself. Also, be sure not to rattle off past projects, duties, and/or responsibilities in a resume-like format. Your goal is to make your profile stand out and come to life. If you're questioning the readability of your Experience section, then run it by a couple of friends or family members to see if it needs any edits.

Publications

Like the Experience section, Publications has a 2,000 character limit. Here, you should include any examples of work you've done – from blog posts to papers and any other published written content, any work-related content you've completed in the past will exhibit credibility in your industry for anyone who's viewing your profile.

Summary

The LinkedIn Summary is of monumental importance when it comes to getting noticed, and optimizing it is what will give you an edge over your competition. Some people fail to bother with their LinkedIn Summary altogether, which is a big mistake.

Your LinkedIn Summary is so important – perhaps the most crucial element of your entire LinkedIn Profile – that I've dedicated an entire section of this eBook to it. Most likely, you'll spend the most time working on your profile summary. While it's only 2,000 characters, the part that can be most difficult is taking advantage of those characters and using them to your best ability so that your summary gives a well-rounded, captivating description of you as a professional without being overly-detailed, or conversely, too nondescript.

The summary has a 2,000 character limit, and it's in your best interest to use those characters up. Specifically, research suggests that profiles with summaries of 40 words or more are more likely to be featured in employers' search results.[3] That's a great reason to put a little extra thought into your summary.

One of the easiest ways to get started on your LinkedIn Summary is to revisit your headline. Remember, your headline should reflect your promise of value. It indicates why (and how) you could be a valuable asset for a potential employer. To create your summary, you'll simply build on that statement. Here are a few questions to consider when writing your summary:

- What would you like to communicate to recruiters and potential employers about yourself?
- What type of impression do you want to make on people who view your profile?
- What qualities are you known for? Think of ways in which you can illustrate how your work embodies your core values, skills, and talents.

Also, there are some words you may want to consider avoiding altogether. One of the most commonly over-used phrase (according to LinkedIn themselves!) is "motivated."[4] You might think that this would be a strong adjective that any recruiter would consider important, but the truth is that nearly everyone includes this word in their profiles. Instead of using these adjectives, focus on explaining the things that set you apart as a viable candidate. How did your motivation drive better results in a past role? Did you use your motivation to find a creative solution to an ongoing dilemma? Remember the rule: show, don't tell!

As for some other words to avoid, the remaining list of "the most overused, underwhelming buzzwords" and phrases of 2014 according to LinkedIn includes: passionate, creative, driven, extensive experience, responsible, strategic, track record, organizational, and expert.[5] Keep in mind that these aren't necessarily "bad" words, they're simply overused. The reason they're overused is because nearly all

[3] Cavazos, Nicole. ZipRecruiter. (2015). Retrieved from https://www.ziprecruiter.com/blog/optimize-your-linkedin-profile-in-7-easy-steps/ Nov. 27 2015.
[4] Fisher, Catherine. LinkedIn Blog. (Jan. 21 2015). Retrieved from http://blog.linkedin.com/2015/01/21/brand-you-year-how-to-brand-yourself-without-sounding-like-everyone-else/ Nov. 27, 2015.
[5] Fisher, Catherine; see above.

employers want to hire candidates who fit these descriptions. The secret is showing *how* you fit these descriptions (although you shouldn't pick all of them; target a few of these or other key adjectives that fit best with your unique professional history), instead of just listing the qualities you exhibit.

Your summary should also have an organized structure. You shouldn't rattle off past accomplishments or try to woo potential employers by taking on a salesy tone. The summary should have a logical flow that highlights a few specific past accomplishments and successes of note. You can also discuss the things about which you are passionate (as long as they pertain to your industry) and any special skills or experiences you have that set you apart. Your tone should be 100% genuine. Don't forget that you can always ask friends or family members to proof your work and provide any suggestions for improvement.

Essentially, the summary section affords you the opportunity to tell the story of you. While it should be professional and the focus should be on your career (avoid details about your personal life, of course), you don't have to make it sound too formal or forced. Be sure to write your summary in the first person, and always begin by building on your promise of value.

Here is an example of some feedback I recently provided for a client about optimizing the introduction of his LinkedIn Summary, or what I refer to as "the personal brand statement":

> "Helping [target employers/clients] do [role/deliverables] so that they can have [benefits/results]. I am especially good at [list differentiation] which is why I am known as the [ultimate brand position e.g., Career Happiness Coach]. I stand for/am committed to [values/things you and your brand to stand for 100% of the time]."

Please keep in mind that your personal brand statement needs to include the top keywords that are best optimized to attract employers from your target industry.

Some other details you might want to consider including in your summary are the amount of years for which you've worked in your industry; or, if you're making a significant career shift, the reasons why you're switching career paths and what past experience makes you a unique, valuable candidate.

If you are struggling in organizing your summary, consider first making bullet points to address experience, strengths and talents, noteworthy accomplishments, and skills. You can always build upon these points and draft a cohesive summary from there. Or, conversely, you may want to choose to keep some of your summary in bulleted format. For instance, I've found that listing key values/differentiations in a bulleted list is effective and helps draw the eye down the list. Remember, readability is an important part of having a LinkedIn profile that gets you hired. So, you might want to include key values such as "Commitment to applying new learnings to day-to-day responsibilities to optimize performance in the workplace" or "A-Player who collaborates well by capitalizing on strengths and aligning goals across teams and departments" in a bulleted list.

Finally, don't forget to include a call-to-action at the end of your summary. You need to make profile visitors feel as if they should get in contact with you *now*. This is the part where you essentially "seal the deal" and do your best to convince recruiters that you're the candidate they've been looking for.

Additional Profile Sections

Now that you've completed your most challenging profile section (your summary), completing the remaining portions of your profile will feel easy in comparison. Resist the urge to skip them altogether; though. Remember, a LinkedIn profile that's 100% complete is more likely to get noticed and picked up during search results.

Skills

It's recommended that LinkedIn users list at least 10 core skills. You can receive endorsements from others, and in return, you can provide endorsements for them as well. Even without a premium profile, you can list up to 50 skills. I recommend listing as many as possible – this is one instance in which more is better. Think of it this way: the broader your skillset, the more likely you are to appeal to a recruiter who's searching for a candidate with a specific skill. Don't forget to check off that you're interested in receiving endorsements for your skills; and, once you begin receiving them, be kind and return the favor for others. More than 10 million endorsements are given every day on LinkedIn, but the average user has only five endorsements.[6] This is one area in which you can easily surpass your competition by increasing your number of endorsements beyond the average.

Education

Many LinkedIn users stick to the basics in this section, but the Education portion of your profile provides yet another opportunity to capitalize on your history to attract recruiters and connections. One thing to keep in mind when writing your education section is to expand on your degree so that it includes any relevant keywords. You have 100 characters for this section, so feel free to use them! Also, avoid listing information about your high school education. Even if you are a recent college graduate, most employers simply don't look at this portion of your education. Keep in mind that you have 1,000 additional characters to expand upon your education in the Education Description section – discuss, using keywords, how your schooling is relevant to your target industry and career.

Honors & Awards

Don't leave this 1,000 word section blank. Even if you feel as if you've "never won anything," there must be some point in time during which your efforts were recognized. Use this section to highlight superior performance, and if possible, tailor it to fit with skills and talents that would help you excel in your target employer's industry.

Volunteer Experience & Causes

In many instances, volunteer experience can be likened to career experience; in fact, 42% of hiring managers polled in a LinkedIn survey say that they consider volunteer work to actually be equivalent to formal work experience.[7] Not only does it emphasize your values and your ability to work well with others, but it also rounds you out as a professional with a vision and purpose.

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[6] Schaffer, Neal. Maximize Social Business. (Aug. 28, 2015). Retrieved from http://maximizesocialbusiness.com/professional-linkedin-profile-tips-checklist-9648/ Nov. 27, 2015.

[7] Mauney, Brad; see above.

Connecting With Others

Once you've tailored your LinkedIn profile using the strategies discussed so far, you can begin optimizing your profile through the connections you make with others. Take a look:

Connections

How many connections should you have on LinkedIn? While the simplest answer might be "the more, the better," here's one benchmark for which you can aim: multiply your age by 10, and try to achieve that many connections.[8] Having a low number of connections might not give you enough exposure on LinkedIn, so be sure to think back to past business relationships so to build up your network.

Groups

LinkedIn Groups are an ideal way to get connected with other professionals in your industry, which can certainly include recruiters and hiring managers. When you join a group, other group members become able to contact you through the messenger (essentially bypassing the first-degree connection stage altogether). The majority (81%) of LinkedIn users belong to at least one group,[9] so be sure to use this tool to your advantage and join as many groups as you can manage.

Status Updates

Being an active user on LinkedIn is just as important as building a compelling profile. You can publish status updates to draw attention to yourself; just be sure that it's business-oriented. If you're feeling shy about sharing your thoughts, consider writing posts that are helpful and relevant in your industry, or even sharing articles that might be interesting to your connections.

Find a Job

This is the part you've been waiting for! Once you have built an effective LinkedIn profile, gotten connected with others, and use the platform regularly, it's time to search LinkedIn Jobs. You can used the "advanced" feature to search using title, industry, keyword, location, experience level, company, and more. You can also complete a brief survey, which will then help LinkedIn to provide you with positions for which you might be an ideal candidate, based on the preferences you've provided.

Staying Visible

Being active on LinkedIn increases your visibility. Updating your status once per weekday is recommended, and based on research, may help you connect with about 60% of your target audience.[10] It's also recommended that you continue to update your information regularly – only 42% of users do so, and it's one way that you can stand out against other potential hires.[11] You can also rearrange your profile sections and continue to monitor your profile activity to see what's most effective.

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[8] Schaffer, Neal; see above.
[9] Schaffer, Neal; see above.
[10] Knight, Warren. LinkedIn Pulse. (Sept. 26, 2014). Retrieved from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140926175351-938929-the-social-media-frequency-guide-how-often-should-you-post Nov. 27, 2015.
[11] Schaffer, Neal; see above.

Conclusion

The steps listed in this eBook serve as the fundamentals for how you can create an effective and compelling LinkedIn profile. Optimizing your LinkedIn profile is one of the best ways to get hired, as networking online is critical for getting noticed by recruiters, hiring managers, and other professionals.

With that being said, it's only one of the ways in which you can optimize your visibility and get hired. In my experience as a career coach and brand strategist, I have come up with dozens of other ways in which you can take your skills, strengths, talents, and experiences and use them to your advantage to get hired in the role and industry you most desire. For more information on how you can create your most fulfilling career, visit www.InspiredWork.com.