

Using LinkedIn and creating an online brand

Skills that this session will develop:

Personal Brand, Networking

By the end of this session the mentee will be able to:

- Explain why people use LinkedIn
- Create a LinkedIn profile

Session Preparation:

Mentee and mentor to review their LinkedIn profile if they have one, or browse LinkedIn pages of friends and colleagues if they don't, and think about what makes a good LinkedIn page.

Session Plan:

Start the session by asking if the mentee uses LinkedIn, and discuss why it is a popular professional tool. Together, work through the content below.

1. Choose the right profile picture for LinkedIn

Your profile picture is your calling card on LinkedIn – it's how people are introduced to you and it governs their impressions from the start. Make sure the picture is recent and looks like you, make sure your face takes up around 60% of it (long-distance shots don't stand out), wear what you would like to wear to work, and make sure you look professional.

2. Make your headline more than just a job title

There's no rule that says the description at the top of your profile page has to be just a job title. You could use the headline to say the type of role you have lined up or aspire to, or programmes you are involved in e.g: *incoming Spring Week intern at (company name)* or *economics undergraduate and aspiring risk analyst* or *Generation 2020 Academy candidate at The Brokerage*.

3. Turn your summary into your story

The first thing to say about your LinkedIn summary is – make sure you have one! It's amazing how many people still leave this field blank when creating their LinkedIn profile. Your summary is your chance to tell your own story – so don't just use it to list your skills or the job titles you've had. Try to bring to life why those skills matter – and the difference they can

make to the people you work with. Don't be afraid to invest some time, try a few drafts, and run your summary past people you know. This is your most personal piece of content marketing – and it's worth the effort.

4. Declare war on buzzwords

Buzzwords are adjectives that are used so often in LinkedIn headlines and summaries that they become almost completely meaningless. Our regular rankings of the most overused buzzwords include terms like 'specialised', 'leadership', 'focused', 'strategic', 'experienced', 'passionate', 'expert', 'creative', 'innovative' and 'certified'. While you don't have to avoid these completely, just using these words won't convince people that you have these qualities. You need to demonstrate them as well – both in the way you describe yourself, and in the way you use LinkedIn profile features to show what you're about.

5. Grow your network

Get into the habit of following up meetings and conversations with LinkedIn connection requests – it's a great way of keeping your network vibrant and up to date.

6. List your relevant skills

It's one of the quickest of quick wins on LinkedIn – scroll through the list of skills and identify those that are relevant to you. Doing so helps to substantiate the description in your Headline and Summary, and provides a platform for others to endorse you. However, the key here is staying relevant. A long list of skills that aren't really core to who you are and what you do, can start to feel unwieldy. Take time for a spring clean of your skills list every now and then.

7. Use endorsements

Endorsements are a feature on your profile that allow peers and colleagues to attest to your skill set by hitting the '+' (endorse) button next to your skills list. Endorsements from other members substantiate your skills and increase your credibility. How do you get endorsed on LinkedIn? For starters, go through your network and identify connections who you feel genuinely deserve an endorsement from you – that's often the trigger for people to return the favour. Don't be afraid to reach out with a polite message asking for endorsement for a few key skills as well. Remember though – relevance matters. Reach out to people whose endorsement you'd really value.

8. Manage your endorsements more proactively

Once endorsements start to come in, you might find that they skew the emphasis of your LinkedIn profile in ways that don't reflect who you are. It could be that your core area of

expertise is content marketing for example, but the people who've worked with you on events are more enthusiastic endorsers. Be proactive in managing your endorsements list using the edit features in the Skills section of your profile – you can choose which to show, and which to hide.

9. Request recommendations

Endorsements give people viewing your profile a quick, visual sense of what you're valued for. Recommendations take things a step further. They are personal testimonials written to illustrate the experience of working with you. There's a handy drop-down menu in the Recommendations section of your profile that makes it easy to reach out to specific contacts and request recommendations. Take the time to think about who you would most value a recommendation from – and personalise your request. It's worth the extra effort.

10. Share relevant content from your LinkedIn feed

It's one thing to have a network of connections on LinkedIn – it's far better to have an active role in that network, appearing in your connections' LinkedIn feeds in a way that adds value for them. Sharing relevant content with your network is one of the most accessible ways of doing this. You can make a start by keeping a close eye on your LinkedIn feed, and sharing content that you find genuinely interesting – and that aligns with your point of view.

11. Add comments

Sharing is great – but it's just the starting point. When you add comments to your shares, you give yourself greater prominence within the feed and start to express why you think a particular piece of content matters. Well-expressed comments also enable you to share a broader range of content. It might be that you don't agree with a point of view but still find it interesting, for example. A comment that can express that viewpoint starts to establish your opinion and thought-leadership. It's also more likely to draw additional comments, which then raise your profile across LinkedIn. Bear this mind when you're writing your comment – and make sure you're saying something you're happy for people to associate with you.

12. Follow relevant influencers for your industry

Following relevant influencers on LinkedIn helps to put a range of interesting content in your feed, which you can then share with others when you think it adds value. It also helps to give context to your LinkedIn profile, demonstrating your passion for what you do.

13. Publish content – and use it to start conversations

The more you share and comment on content, the more you establish your expertise and thought-leadership credentials on LinkedIn. Publishing posts is the natural next step to take. A great starting point is to monitor the response that you get to your comments and shares. Are there particular subjects and points of view that seem to resonate with your network? Are there comments that you have shared which you feel you could expand on in a post? Evolving your thought-leadership in this way keeps it real – and keeps you plugged into the issues your connections are talking about. Be ready for your long-form posts to start new conversations too. Keep an eye on the comments and be ready to respond. Make sure your posts are career related and not about your personal life.

For more information on building LinkedIn profiles:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamarruda/2017/01/15/linkedin-101-how-to-craft-a-stellar-profile/#265e9a485379>

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/linkedin.htm>

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-tips-students-new-grads-linkedin-omar-garriott/>