



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The B2B professional's guide to
looking good on Social Media



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THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

(why you're reading
this guide)

Remember when business cards, and possibly an executive bio, contained the only public information others got to see about you? Those days are gone! Today, there are a mind-boggling number of online places people can go to find out more about you simply by typing your name. It's time to take control of one place in particular where people are checking you out — LinkedIn.

Only if you've been on Mars the past few years could you not be at least fleetingly familiar with LinkedIn. Since its founding in 2002 as a job-search site, LinkedIn has quickly morphed into the world's largest business-to-business (B2B) network. As of this writing, it has over 430 million members with two new members joining every second. It's an exciting place to be, and one that is increasingly becoming a necessary part of any B2B buying decision.

So what about your profile? Why is it so important? Because potential buyers, clients, employees, investors, partners and who

knows who else go to LinkedIn to check out and connect with people who can help them:

- solve a problem
- reduce the risk of a purchasing or vendor selection, or
- take advantage of an opportunity

The place they start - and continue to return to - is your personal profile.

That's probably why you're reading this guide.

However, for anyone who needs further convincing that a solid, top drawer LinkedIn profile is worth the time, let's look at three reasons.



Reason #1 **REFERRALS**

The business-to-business buying process has changed tremendously over the past few years – even in traditionally referral-based industries such as professional services. Why? Because buyers (your potential new clients) now have access to tons of information that was unavailable to them before the Internet in general and, LinkedIn in particular.

Buyers visit LinkedIn to look at the profiles and learn more about people and firms that have been recommended to them. Some visit LinkedIn to get a referral in the first place. And many referrals these days are actually referrals of people someone has heard about or seen on LinkedIn.

60% of professional services buyers use social media to evaluate new providers ([Source](#)).

Reason #2 **FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT!**

According to experts, in the offline world it takes about three seconds for someone to evaluate your appearance and form an opinion about you. These rapid-fire opinions are notoriously hard to change.

LinkedIn is no different. Visitors to your profile page glance at your photo and your headline and maybe the first paragraph of your summary, and quickly decide whether or not they want to read any more about you.

If you pass that test and they read further into your profile, they then decide whether or not you're someone they should get to know.

The reason you want to invest time in polishing your profile and keeping it that way is pretty much the same as why you dress up for work, especially if you're seeing customers or clients. Your profile has the power to turn them away or draw them to you.

Reason #3 **VISIBILITY**

Within LinkedIn's database of 430 million+ members lies a remarkably effective search engine in constant use by members to find experts on every imaginable topic. Members can search their entire expanded networks or they can search within groups; and the point is – even if they don't find you, they probably will find your competitors.

Much of the method LinkedIn uses to determine who should show up on a particular search is based on personal

profiles. The best way to be sure you're included when a buyer or potential new client searches for someone with your expertise is to craft your profile to reflect that expertise.

Google also seems to favor LinkedIn. When clients are using Google to search for someone with your capabilities and "LinkedIn", your name could pop up. We've seen this happen on numerous occasions.



BUYERS ARE LOOKING

Whether you see LinkedIn as a powerful tool for business and reputation development or you'd rather it all go away, buyers don't need your permission to look at your profile. Considering it an offensive or defensive move is your choice, but either way, you want to look good.

Let's dig further into how to do that.



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?

The world's best LinkedIn profile begins not with you but with the people you want to attract. Who are they? What are they looking for? And what do you want them to feel, think and do after they read your profile? Taking a few minutes now to think through these questions will pay massive dividends in the effectiveness of your LinkedIn profile.

If you've already defined your target audiences - maybe for some other marketing or business development program - you've got a head start. In this case, target audiences are the people you want to reach or connect with on LinkedIn. Most commonly, these are customers, clients, prospects, potential new clients, partners, investors, media and employees. Some readers might also want to stand out to hiring managers and recruiters, but that's a different Guide.

For each target audience, identify them a little further. What are their industries, titles,

company sizes, responsibilities, and pain points? What problems can you help them solve? What keywords might they use to find you?

Then, think about what you want them to do. You may or may not have a different action for each audience. For example, you may want potential new buyers to contact you right away while you want potential employees to check out your company page. Or, you may just want them all to connect with you.



Here's a questionnaire to help you organize your thoughts.

1. What are your LinkedIn goals and objectives? How will you know you've done a good job?

.....

.....

.....

2. Who do you want to connect with on LinkedIn? What are their titles? What types of companies do they work for?

TARGET AUDIENCE

TITLES

INDUSTRY

RESPONSIBILITIES

**PAIN POINTS &
PROBLEMS**

KEYWORDS

3. How will these people benefit from connecting with you personally?
How have you helped similar people in the past?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Why are you passionate about your industry and your job?

.....

.....

5. What are your greatest achievements as it relates to your current job?

.....

.....

Next, we'll look at the most important elements of your new profile.



KEY ELEMENTS: THE MOST IMPORTANT PROFILE ELEMENTS

There are two ways to look at which elements deserve the most attention on your profile:

1. the elements LinkedIn considers necessary for your profile to be 100% complete and
2. the elements that are most likely to send relevant viewers your way and make them want to connect with you.

Fortunately, if you build your profile to appeal to your target audiences, you will need to add only a few easy elements to be 100% complete.

Why do you care about having a complete profile? LinkedIn says “people with completed profiles are 40X more likely to receive opportunities through LinkedIn.” One reason may be that completed profiles rank higher in LinkedIn’s search results. Another reason is that they are more appealing to viewers. A completed profile makes you appear more engaged and better showcases your expertise.

Here are the profile sections you need to include in order to have LinkedIn consider your profile complete ([Source](#)):

1. Your industry and location
2. A profile photo
3. An up-to-date current position (with description)
4. Two past positions
5. Your education
6. Your skills (minimum of three)
7. At least 50 connections

Interestingly, one of the most important elements of your profile is missing from this list and that is your Profile Summary. You’ll find detailed information about writing a profile on the next few pages.

Now let's look at the elements that are most important to your target audiences.

YOUR PHOTO

Some people consider this the most important part of your profile because it gives visitors an immediate visual sense of the kind of person you are. As the old saying goes “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and it's no different here. This is not the place to put an out of focus, poorly lit snapshot. **Here are a few “rules” to keep in mind:**

1. **High quality.** If you don't use a professional photographer, at least have someone who knows what they're doing take the picture.
2. **Big enough to fill the space.** (50 pixels wide by 50 pixels high)
3. **“Professional” attire.** How formal you need to be depends on your business and the image you want to convey. How do you dress when you visit a client or customer? If it's a suit, wear a suit in your photo. Ditto a dress shirt or blouse. Men - at minimum have a collar on your shirt.
4. **Just you.** No family. No friends. No pets. Absolutely no cocktails. Save those shots for Facebook.
5. **Up close.** What's known as a “head shot”. From the top of your head to just below your shoulders. Let us see your eyes - not your skiing technique.

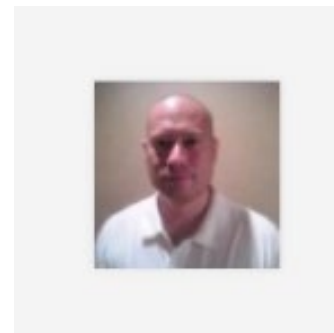
Examples of Bad LinkedIn Profile Photos



Distracting background, too far away and out of focus.



Unless you really are a football player.



Too small and out of focus.

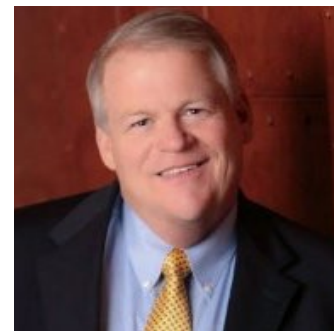
Examples of Good LinkedIn Profile Photos



Good lighting, clear.



Coat and tie not required if you don't wear one at work.



Nice contrasting background.



HEADLINE

Your “headline” is the phrase that shows up underneath your name on the profile:

Roger Sanford

▶ EVP Global Strategic Alliances at Appticity Corporation
Irving, Texas | Computer Software

The headline is important because the three lines you see above are often all a prospect gets to see to decide if he/she wants to know more about you or not. For example, when someone is looking through a list of members in a LinkedIn group or searching LinkedIn with keywords, this is what they will see.

Unless you tell it otherwise, LinkedIn will use your current title as your headline. Sometimes this is descriptive enough but more often than not it requires a rewrite. Short headlines are good. (Some headlines these days are ridiculously long.) But it needs to communicate enough to let the viewer know whether or not to click on your listing and learn more about you.

Descriptive versus Non-descriptive Headline

▶ IronPlanet VP Helps Heavy Equipment Sellers and Buyers Manage Assets and Get Best Value for Used Equipment
Dallas/Fort Worth Area | Machinery

Descriptive

▶ Partner, Hemming Morse LLP
Greater Los Angeles Area | Accounting

Non-descriptive

Slogans versus Functions

Many LinkedIn “experts” will tell you that, rather than function related, your headline should be more of a slogan to emphasize the benefits you bring to your customers or clients. Although The Conversion Company helped pioneer the use of benefit-oriented headlines several years ago, we find that things have gone too far and the use of slogan type headlines must be approached very carefully.

You'll find some headline templates in the next section.



SUMMARY

This is where you get to tell your story; and because it's all about you in an essay format, the Summary can be the most challenging part of your profile to write. ***It's also one of the most important, so don't skip it.*** In general, this section is used to provide an overview of your background, talents/skills and reasons your target audience might want to connect. (This is where you can get as benefit oriented as you want.)

A few things you'll want to include in your Summary:


- 1.** BRIEF background & how it relates to what you are doing now—
- 2.** Detailed description of the specific benefits you provide clients or customers
- 3.** Something about your passion & how it relates to the above
- 4.** Call to action – invite the reader to contact or connect with you

While it's easy to copy and paste your bio from another source such as your website, we recommend you don't. You'll come off looking stiff and uninteresting. The best Summaries are written in conversational tone, and we highly recommend using 1st person – “I” or “we” instead of “he” or “she”.

Here's an example of a good profile summary. Its owner is the founder and president of an architecture, engineering and environmental consulting firm. His objective for being on LinkedIn is to increase visibility for himself and his company and to showcase his thought leadership.

Here's his profile summary:

Background



Summary

As the founder and president of GLE Associates, I lead a highly diverse team of engineers, architects, environmental consultants and construction experts to design fast and effective property solutions. My team collaborates across disciplines to save clients hundreds of millions of dollars a year by engineering efficient land use, designing beautiful, functional buildings, managing environmental risk, and solving environmental problems.

Property owners and managers routinely contact us regarding occupant complaints concerning indoor air quality, sick building syndrome, asbestos, lead, and mold. We've helped clients prevent legal and public relations disasters by quickly and efficiently resolving IAQ problems; save millions of dollars on demolition costs by expertly navigating asbestos regulations; and address mold and lead in even the most sensitive of hospital environments, with minimal disruption. We provide catastrophe response services to facilities that were damaged by hurricanes, tornados and other natural disasters.

Lenders rely on us to mitigate environmental and construction risk via Phase I and II site assessments and building condition assessments. We help clients avoid costly mistakes by uncovering hidden problems, and negotiate favorable terms on contaminated property. Our construction consultants help lenders by providing accurate plan and cost reviews and construction loan inspections.

Clients tell us they appreciate that we bring both deep and broad expertise to find highly functional, fast, and cost-effective solutions. Our services include:

- >> Indoor and outdoor environmental
- >> Building forensics
- >> Industrial hygiene
- >> Civil engineering
- >> Architecture
- >> Construction consulting
- >> Mechanical and electrical engineering
- >> Building condition assessments
- >> Catastrophe response

I invite you to connect with me to share ideas and best practices around real estate investment, latest environmental regulations, and ongoing liability questions.

This profile summary works because, after reading it, you almost feel like you know Bob; as if you'd actually met him. You know exactly what types of people he wants to connect with and why those people should be interested.

You'll find Bob's Summary broken down paragraph by paragraph in the template section of this guide.



WORK EXPERIENCE

As we've already mentioned, it's a "must" to include your current position and two previous positions — company, your title, the time you worked there, where you were located and a description of your job. Without this information LinkedIn will not consider your profile to be 100% complete and you'll be penalized in the search results. Remember, the job description should be more about your accomplishments and the impact you had on the company and its customers or clients.

We've included some examples on the template in the following section.

EVERYTHING ELSE

Your LinkedIn profile gives you ample opportunity to include any additional background information that might be interesting or helpful to your target audiences. In particular, the following are quite useful.

Publications. You can use this section to feature any content you've created and published or presented in the past. You can link to content on a website, a PDF, a video or a slide presentation. LinkedIn likes profiles that include rich media, such as videos and slide presentations.

Projects. This is a great place to promote events your prospect may be interested in, such as webinars, speaking engagements, lunch-and-learn opportunities.

Certifications. This is where you list all the licenses and certifications you hold. According to LinkedIn, members with certifications on their profiles get twice as many views.

Education. As mentioned above, LinkedIn requires your education to be included in a 100% complete profile. It's also important to showcase relevant degrees; and by including the places where you went to school, you will automatically gain access to others who went there too.

Volunteer. By including any non-profit organizations you volunteer for or support in other ways, you are letting others see more of you - and what's important to you.

Skills. Think of these as keywords that will help others find you. It's also one of LinkedIn's must-haves. Include at least three.

In addition to these sections, LinkedIn also provides areas for Languages, Organizations, Honors & Awards, Patents and other information. You decide which are relevant and important to your audience(s).

At this point you may be thinking that crafting a great profile is an exercise in creative writing, and in a way it is. Which is why we've included templates in the following section for you to use as guidelines.



LINKEDIN PROFILE TEMPLATES

A few notes to get you started:

- Your LinkedIn profile should be written in conversational first person (use “I” and “we”) – as if you were telling the reader about yourself.
- Focus on things that are important from your prospect’s point of view. Humans naturally want to know “what’s in it for me.” It’s your profile, but it’s really all about making you interesting to them.
- Try to use keywords. Like Google, LinkedIn uses keywords to determine whether or not you should show up on a specific search. The most important places to use your keywords are in 1) your Headline, 2) your Title and 3) your Summary.



YOUR PROFILE HEADLINE

▶ IronPlanet VP Helps Heavy Equipment Sellers and Buyers Manage Assets and Get Best Value for Used Equipment

Your headline should be a benefit or keyword related statement that will make prospects want to look further into your profile. (Note: This is often the first and only thing a prospect sees about you. It is important to communicate your relevance to your target audience.)

LinkedIn limits the length of a profile headline to a maximum of 120 characters.

Here is a fill-in-the-blanks approach:

Benefits approach with company name

Use this when you want to build your personal network while also promoting company awareness

[your company] [your title]
[verb – helps, drives, etc]
[benefit] for [who]

Examples:

GLE Asbestos Expert Helps Property Managers Control Costly Environmental Issues
HalcyonFT Managing Partner drives IT excellence and savings for capital markets firms
CEO of Membrain - Building the #1 Sales Effectiveness Platform to Achieve Consistent Performance

Specialty approach

Use this when indicating your seniority and area of expertise is enough. You can add your company name – especially if it is well-known

[your title], [area of expertise]

Examples:

Partner, Forensic Accounting, Expert Witness
Senior Partner, representing employers in all areas of human resources.
Partner, Transfer Pricing Economist
CEO of IronPlanet, the Leading Online Global Marketplace for Used Heavy Equipment



YOUR PROFILE SUMMARY

This section is used to provide an overview of your background, talents/skills and reasons the prospect might want to connect. LinkedIn limits the length of this section to a maximum of 2000 characters. The example provided is a profile Summary built using this template. The profile's owner's objectives were to generate awareness for his company and further his own position as an expert.

First Paragraph:

What are you doing now and how does that benefit customers and prospects?

You:

Example:

As the founder and president of GLE Associates, I lead a highly diverse team of engineers, architects, environmental consultants and construction experts to design fast and effective property solutions. My team collaborates across disciplines to save clients hundreds of millions of dollars a year by engineering efficient land use, designing beautiful, functional buildings, managing environmental risk, and solving environmental problems.

Second / Third Paragraph:

Company branding information. (Note: Skip this section if your company is not important to your objectives.)

You:

Example:

GLE Associates is a leading integrated architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting firm, headquartered in Tampa, Florida, with offices throughout Florida and the Southeastern United States. Founded in 1989, we focus on providing our clients with quick-response, turnkey solutions that draw on a broad range of property and building services expertise. Our architects, engineers, geologists, industrial hygienists, and construction consultants collaborate to provide our clients with a full toolbox of expertise for any project.

GLE services include: Indoor Environmental, Building Forensics, Industrial Hygiene, Outdoor Environmental, Civil Engineering, Construction Consulting, Architecture, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Property Condition Assessments and Catastrophe Response.

Third / Fourth Paragraph:

Your professional history as it relates to your current position and LinkedIn objectives. Include quantifiable results where possible.

You:

Example:

An environmental engineer at heart, my professional experience was gained at GLE, conducting and then overseeing projects of all sizes for public and private, local, regional and national companies. Over the course of my career, I've managed hundreds of projects including: Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments, asbestos surveys, asbestos abatements and indoor air quality studies. Today those services are often integrated into larger, more complex projects.

Next paragraph:

What drives you? What do you love about your current work?

You:

Example:

I believe that my success, and GLE's success, is firmly attributed to putting the client before everything else. I'm proud to be part of a team that works hard and delivers results that delight our client base.

Last paragraph:

Call-to-action. What do you want the reader to do?

You:

Example:

I invite you to connect with me if you're interested in learning more about our firm and how we can help your business.



YOUR EXPERIENCE

In the Experience section, you'll list your current and past employers and positions. It is not necessary to include every job you've ever had – especially if it happened early in your career and has no relevance to your current business or your future plans. LinkedIn limits titles to a maximum of 100 characters and description to a maximum of 2000 characters.

Position #1:

Your current position. First sentence should be a description of the company. Next talk about why you came to (or founded) this company and what you do here. Again, try to relate it to helping clients.

You:

Example:

Title: President

GLE Associates is a leading integrated architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting firm, headquartered in Tampa, Florida, with offices throughout Florida and the Southeastern United States. Founded in 1989, we focus on providing our clients with quick-response, turnkey solutions that draw on a broad range of property and building services expertise. Our architects, engineers, geologists, industrial hygienists, and construction consultants collaborate to provide our clients with a full toolbox of expertise for any project.

Additional experience:

For each of your previous jobs, include your title and follow a similar pattern to the description of your current job. You do not need to go into great detail on positions that are not relevant to your current position or your current interests.

You:

Example:

Division Manager - Asbestos Consulting Services
Law Engineering
1979 to 1989

I began my career as a geotechnical and materials engineer in Law's Atlanta office. In 1984, I moved to the Tampa office and established an environmental group, specializing in asbestos consulting and abatement management. Over the next 5 years, I established and managed indoor environmental departments throughout Law's offices in Florida.

OTHER

You can follow the LinkedIn profile wizard to complete the rest of your profile. This wizard is built-in and appears when you are in profile edit mode.

NOTE: Special thanks to Heather Head at [Scopcity](#) for creating the first of these profile templates for our use.



7 STEPS FOR UPDATING YOUR PROFILE

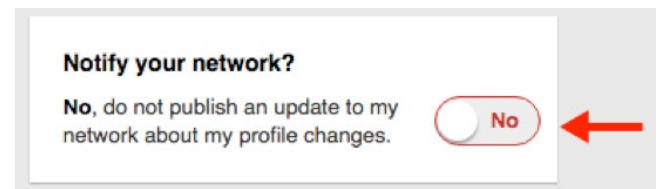
Now it's time to bring your new and improved profile to life.

1. Complete the planning questionnaire on page 7 of this guide to identify your target audience and your objectives for using LinkedIn.
2. Write out your updated Headline, Summary and Experience. LinkedIn does not have a staging site and any changes you make will go live as soon as you click on Save. It's much safer to craft these sections of your profile offline (using Word, Docs or other text application) and make sure you're happy with it before you copy and paste to LinkedIn.
3. Go to the Edit Profile page. To get there, hover your mouse over "**Profile**" on the upper left side of the top navigation and click "**Edit Profile**" in the dropdown menu. You will now be in the profile wizard.



As you hover your mouse over each section in your profile, a pencil icon will appear. Click on that to make your changes.

4. Set "**Notify Your Connections**" to the OFF position. LinkedIn makes it possible to automatically notify your connections whenever you update your profile – convenient at times; but when you are making numerous changes, you don't want it sending a notice every time you click the Save button. The Notify Your Connection control is located along the right-hand side of the Edit Profile page.



5. Upload your new professional image (if applicable).
6. Copy and paste your new Headline, Summary and Experience text into the profile. Be sure to save each entry.
7. Follow the profile wizard to update any other sections you want to update.



BONUS STEPS

8. You may want to notify your network that you have updated your profile. To do this, change the “Notify Your Connections” setting to “Yes”. Then “edit” your Summary by making a small change, changing it back and clicking on Save. Your connections will receive a notification that you’ve updated your Summary. (You might want to set it back to Off afterward just in case you make minor changes in the future.)
9. Get your custom URL. Go to [Customize Your Public Profile](#) and follow the instructions on that page to create a custom URL. Unless you have a very unique name, you will likely find that someone else already has that URL, but try to get something as close to your name as possible. Stay away from nicknames, employer names or anything that may change in the future.
10. On this same page, you can also customize the profile that will show up when people find you via a search engine.
11. If you have a premium LinkedIn account, you can add a header image, which will help set you even further apart from others and reinforces your brand.

**That’s it.
You’re ready to take
on LinkedIn!**



ASK ABOUT OUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PROGRAMS

LinkedIn waits for no one. Clients and prospects are checking you out now. Make sure you give the very best impression. We can help you attract the right buyers, increase awareness and grow your bottom line.

For more information, call us at **919-246-9936** or email **hello@theconversioncompany.com**



Author

Susan Tatum is founding partner of The Conversion Company, a B2B Social Media Consulting and Implementation firm focused on helping companies and professionals use social media to enhance their bottom line. She is a seasoned business marketing professional, author, and a pioneer of the use of LinkedIn as a sales and marketing tool.

First Impressions

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