

Author Directions: Understanding LinkedIn and How to Effectively Utilise It

Advice and tips for getting to grips with LinkedIn



Introduction

The world of social networking can be a daunting place and knowing what content to share on what platform is vital in ensuring you reach the correct audience. It is important to promote yourself as well as your work, and the information you share can have a huge impact on your success.

The question is, what should you share on LinkedIn? What content will be the most effective to promote yourself to your connections? The aim of this guide is to answer those questions and improve your understanding of what LinkedIn is, how it differs from other social networking platforms and how to use it to effectively promote yourself and your work. To ensure you receive the best advice possible we have worked with some of our authors, Leo Bottary, author of ***What Anyone Can Do***, and Deirdre Breakenridge, author of ***Answers for Modern Communicators***, to provide you with helpful tips for using LinkedIn.

Understanding LinkedIn:

1. About LinkedIn
2. What content should you share
3. The Do's and Don'ts
4. How to create your profile

About LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a great platform for professionals to network and build relationships. With around 562 million business professionals on the site, according to **Expandedramblings.com (2018)**, you can stay up to date with industry news and trends, share information and updates with your connections and create groups dedicated to your subject area and hold discussions with those that join.

Many consider LinkedIn to simply be a place to upload your CV and find a job, however it is much more than this. You can connect with those within your field, make and receive recommendations for different skills, gather marketing intelligence from who has visited your profile and research people and their background to ensure you are connecting with relevant professionals.

What content should you share

It is important to remember that LinkedIn is a professional networking site so the content that you share should be relevant to your field of research, 'What is important on a 'professional' social network is that quality trumps quantity' (Alan Charlesworth, *An Introduction to Social Media Marketing*, Routledge, 2015).

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We asked Routledge Author, Leo Bottary a keynote speaker, workshop facilitator, adjunct professor and thought leader, what type of content he shares with his LinkedIn connections;

"Blog posts, podcasts and other shares that are designed to provide professional value to my connections. I stick to content that is in my lane, so to speak. This helps reinforce the unique value proposition I bring to LinkedIn and allows me to learn from experts in other areas who actually know what they are talking about! I'm also active in reading, liking and commenting on other's content. This is also very important."

Leo has also provided some tips on how to use LinkedIn to promote your book;

"A combination of content and promotion, but leading with content. I've shared hundreds of articles and posts over the years and hope that in large part I'm regarded as someone who provides a value-add, so when I do post something that's promotional, such as pre-ordering my book, there's still a value-add component to it."

The more active you are on LinkedIn, the more your network will grow. Be sure to 'Like' and 'Share' your connections' posts and then when you share your own content you are more likely to receive the same. It is also always a good idea to respond to any comments you receive on your articles or updates.

The Do's and Don'ts

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Routledge author, Deirdre Breakenridge has provided us with a list of do's and don'ts she follows for sharing content on LinkedIn

"Here are few items that should be on your "Do" list:

- *Take the time to learn all of the features LinkedIn has to offer. For example, you can use the platform to see who is viewing your profile, and which of your posts are doing the best.*
- *Get familiar with data analytics on LinkedIn engagement to spot industry trends and find out what is resonating with people on the platform. Also, look at your own analytics and see what content is performing the best with your audience. Uncovering this information will help you to customize your content toward a specific audience and make the content you share more relevant to them.*

Here are a few items on the "Don't" list:

- *Don't use LinkedIn as a substitute for real-world interactions. Social media can be used to connect and grow a relationship that you can hopefully move offline for an in-person meeting.*
- *Don't focus so much on the numbers. While having an impressive number of contacts is important, what is more important is quality and networking. Customize the way you're reaching out to people instead of using the robotic default requests.*
- *Don't jump into any social community without understanding the culture. LinkedIn is not like any other social networking site. It has a specific culture different from that of Facebook or Twitter. Learn how your audience likes to engage and adopt the norms of the community.*

Although LinkedIn is a business community, people don't like when you "sell" or you share your "spammy" messages. This type of content generally doesn't perform well. It's much better to listen to your community and share your professional perspective to showcase your values and vision."

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How to create your profile

Now you know how to use LinkedIn and what to share with your connections, it's time to set up your profile and ensure you are presenting the best image of yourself. The more time you put into your LinkedIn marketing efforts, the better the rewards.

Your profile should contain the basics of your CV, a summary of yourself, contact information, and any links to blogs, articles, books you have written etc. Be sure to use a professional photo too, it is the first thing people will look at, so you need to make a good first impression. If you don't have access to one, then make sure that the image you use is good quality and presents you in the best possible light.

It might also be useful to join relevant groups to contribute to discussions on certain subjects. By offering your expertise in discussions you will establish your reputation as an expert in your field. Leo Bottary finds groups a great way to connect, "They are a way to connect with like-minded people and be introduced to really knowledgeable people across myriad subject areas." There is also the option to create your own LinkedIn group for your title so that your contributors can hold discussions with their connections.

Once you are happy with the content of your profile page you can go ahead and start connecting with people. Connect with those within your professional circle and then use their network to connect with further people relevant to your field of research. These connections can also endorse you for skills and provide you with recommendations.

Deirdre Breakenridge provides some great advice for making your profile successful;

"A successful profile is one that is accessed most often by the people who need to hear from, work with you, or learn from you. You can create keywords in your page description and specialties to attract professionals who will use keyword searches and find you as a result. A successful profile also serves as an effective tool for your audience to get to know who you are professionally. Always use your social networks to drive to your hub, such as your website or blog, where you can interact more with your audience and they can find out more about you and your work. Finally, make sure your profile is interactive, share your thoughts on trends and news, engage with others in discussions, and create posts that will help be helpful to your audience."

For further advice, be sure to use the **LinkedIn Help** options.

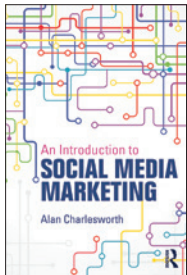
Conclusion

Social media is one of the most effective ways to promote yourself nowadays so having a strong understanding of the platforms and how to best utilise them is crucial. LinkedIn is a great place to develop your network and connect with professionals within your field of research. It can be overwhelming if you aren't that social media savvy already, however it is definitely worth taking the time to understand how it can benefit you.

Acknowledgements

While researching this snapshot's topic, we turned to Leo Bottary, author of *What Anyone Can Do*, and Deirdre Breakenridge, author of *Answers for Modern Communicators* for their advice based on their professional experience. We are grateful to these contributors and appreciate them for taking the time to share their knowledge with our audience.

References



An Introduction to Social Media Marketing

By Alan Charlesworth

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LinkedIn Help: www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin?lang=en

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