

New College Grad? Time to Polish LinkedIn Profile

With more than 1.6 million graduates searching for jobs, set yourself apart online.

by Sandra Rimetz
Community contributor



Sandra Rimetz
Photo courtesy of Brian Lombardo

According to research from the National Center for Education Statistics, more than 1.6 million students will receive bachelor's degrees this month. To prepare for their entry into the job market, many of these students will have strolled through career fairs, met with recruiters, networked with professionals and attended seminars on how to write the perfect resume. However, what many new graduates forget to add

to their "to do" list as they step into the job search arena is polish up (or build) their LinkedIn profile.

With more than 275 million users worldwide, a newly minted "university pages" platform and unbelievable growth, it is no surprise that more than 90 percent of job recruiters are reviewing LinkedIn.com profiles of new graduates every day. Its presence on the web for over the past decade has changed the art of job seeking whether you are a new grad or ready for a career change.

Like the well written resume, building an attention getting profile can get you noticed. Here some helpful tips to get you started.

Professionalize your email name. Use or create an email name that looks professional and includes your last name. Use this as your contact in LinkedIn and any job related communications.

Have a professional picture taken. Seriously now, we know you love that head shot at the beach during spring break but that is not what employers want to see. Have someone take a picture that includes only your head, neck, and a bit of your shoulders. Dress professional and smile!

Create a profile heading that stands out. Keep your profile heading honest and creative; it is what appears when someone searches your name. Include your area of study and identify a unique selling point that will attract recruiters. Up to 120 characters can be used so be resourceful.

Personalize your web link. Every LinkedIn profile is assigned a personal web link (URL), linkedin.com/in/yourname, which is used for public viewing. You can use this URL on

your resume to let others know that you also have a professional online presence. When searching for a job, make your public profile visible to everyone. You can return to the settings feature any time to change this setting once you have settled into your new job.

Your summary should be your best writing (much like a cover letter). Engage your readers. Do your research on the industry you are targeting, use their jargon. Prove your attention to detail by spell checking your content!

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Experience and job listings should be specific and simple. Be sure to include any internships, volunteer experiences or impressive projects that you managed throughout your education. According to National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook survey, employers are looking for skills in teamwork, verbal communication, decision making and problem solving, obtaining and processing information and the ability to plan, organize and prioritize work.

Choose your five strongest skills. Emphasize those skills you are best at. Your connections can endorse these skills for recruiters to see. It's a great way to validate your strengths.

Search and connect. The mission of LinkedIn is simple: connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. Once your profile has been checked and rechecked for accuracy and content, use the LinkedIn database to find individuals to "connect" with.

Professors are always a good resource. Just last year educational institutions rolled out "university" pages where they provide information on careers and alumni. See if your college has a LinkedIn presence and connect with them.

Maintaining your LinkedIn profile is an ongoing commitment. Consider it a work in progress, visit your profile often to change and tweak its contents.

Embrace the power of LinkedIn to network, engage in its connectivity to encourage others to view your profile and remember to keep it real, personable and professional. Happy linking! —*Sandra Rimetz is a professor at Manchester Community College in the department of Information Management & Technology and invites you to connect with her on LinkedIn.*