

Your guide to making the most of LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social media platform for professionals with over 690 million members worldwide and 28 million of those are in the UK. Its main purpose is to enable its users to network but, in this guide, we will show you it can be much more than that, supporting both your career and development too. In this guide we will provide advice on five key areas:

1. Completing your profile.
2. Building your network.
3. Finding your next role.
4. Creating & sharing content.
5. Professional development.

1. Completing your profile



LinkedIn has five levels of profile strength ranging from “just beginning” to “All Star”. The strength meter gauges just how robust your profile is. The strength of your profile will increase as you add more content to it.

You might be asking why adding your work history and uploading a headshot is so important and it’s because profiles with photos receive up to 21 times more views and 9 times more connection requests, and profiles that state their current role are 16 times

more likely to be discovered by recruiters who are searching for candidates.

Once the meter is full and all prompts are complete, you’ll receive an All-Star profile rating. As well as building your profile if you want to achieve ‘All-Star’ status, you must have at least fifty connections.

Here’s our two tips to help you build up your connections.

1. Sync your email contacts. To get you started select the “My network” tab in your profile then select “more options” on the left. From there you can sync your phone contacts from various email providers allowing LinkedIn to offer more suggestions to grow your network.

2. Use the search box. Start with who you might know such as current and former colleagues. From your study you can also try your alumni network. Using the groups function is also a great way to connect and engage with new people.

Finally, there are two resources we highly recommend to help you get started on your profile:

[How do I create a good LinkedIn profile.](#)

You’ll find advice from LinkedIn on how to develop and improve your profile page including useful features.

[The OU Careers Website.](#) Head over to our website and select “attend a webinar” where you will have access to our range of recorded talks focussed on helping you make the most of LinkedIn.

2. Building your network

Now let us take a look at what is arguably LinkedIn's most important and influential purpose - networking and relationship building.

Your LinkedIn network could help you with; understanding different sectors and roles, finding out about new roles (advertised and hidden), learning about specific employers, finding new business and offering information, support and advice.



In section one we showed you how to get started with building contacts using email sync and the search function. LinkedIn also helps out by offering suggestions for members you may know based on your existing contacts. The larger your network grows, the more you will come into contact with the connections of people you are already connected with. LinkedIn explains this theory further which you can read in their [article 'Your Network and Degrees of Connection'](#).

To help you move forward with your network and relationship building here are our five top tips.

1. Develop your own connection strategy.

This should cover who you reach out to and who you accept requests from. This should be unique to you so don't feel pressure to follow the crowd. Whilst it's true that a larger network has more reach this alone does not guarantee the quality or impact of those connections.

One approach you could follow is to develop contacts in your current sector or a sector you are interested in moving into.

2. Reach out. Use the three Ps of purpose, personalisation and politeness. LinkedIn allows you to [personalise your connection requests](#) which is a good way of introducing yourself if it's someone you do not know or is only an acquaintance.

3. Keep active. By this we mean sharing relevant updates in your news feed, commenting on articles and in groups, offering your insights on events. Build time in your schedule, little and often works well. Activity like this increases your visibility to other members.

4. Use the [groups function](#). It's great you might already be a part of the Open University Careers Network (TOUCaN) but use the "discover" tab next to "My groups" which offers some further suggestions. You may even want to start your own group!

5. [Publish an article](#). This is a great way to share your thoughts, demonstrate your capabilities and also interact with people who comment on your article.

3. Finding your next role

Although LinkedIn shines with its business networking functionality the fact you can search and apply for roles within the platform is sometimes overlooked. Just remember that as much as you want to find new roles you also need to make sure you can be found easily by employers and recruiters by fully completing your profile and using relevant keywords.

In this section we share our best advice to help you explore the thousands of potential roles that LinkedIn could open up for you.



There are more than 20 million active job listings on LinkedIn, many of which you can apply for in one click with your LinkedIn profile and the “Easy Apply” feature. To make sure you stand out for the right reasons it is really important that your profile is fully complete and has been checked for errors.

To help get you started sourcing your next role we have compiled our five top tips.

1. Have a strong headline with relevant keyword phrases to the role you are seeking and primary skills a hiring manager would search for. We would recommend stating “seeking opportunities” in your profile summary rather than your headline.

2. Let recruiters know you are open to opportunities by changing your preferences on the [LinkedIn jobs homepage](#) and then editing your “career interests”.

3. Using the LinkedIn jobs search box you can use “Boolean” searches to refine your results. When you find a role LinkedIn will helpfully suggest similar jobs to boost your search. When you find a role you usually have

two options. Apply on the company website or use the “Easy Apply” button. This means using your profile as the application, but you also have the option of attaching your CV.

4. Use the company pages to get the latest company updates and industry news and learn about new job opportunities. Simply type the company name in the main search bar and “follow” them.

5. If you have built your network let them know you are looking for a new role by posting an update. This will appear in your contacts news feed. People can’t help if you don’t ask!

4. Creating and sharing content

It is entirely possible to use LinkedIn passively i.e. just complete your profile and do no more. However, if you're looking to exploit the potential of a social platform, that will mean engaging with other people. A key part of raising your profile on LinkedIn is giving people a reason to interact with you. A great way to achieve this is to post/share, comment, ask and publish.

In this section we share our advice on getting the most from LinkedIn's powerful content creation and sharing features.



When you post an update, share an article or publish your original content this becomes part of your professional profile. The default settings of your post's visibility are public. You can change your privacy settings by following the steps in [LinkedIn's article](#).

It is understandable if you are reluctant at first to "put yourself out there" and start posting.

If you are not confident, a useful first step is reading other people's posts and articles and then progressing this with our three top tips.

1. Ask yourself this question. How active are you in your network? Sharing content relevant to your industry (or the industry you want to break into) with your network is one of the easiest ways of doing this. You can make a start by keeping a close eye on your LinkedIn news feed and sharing content that you find genuinely interesting. You might want to share an article from another news source and then add your own viewpoint and insight.

2. Let people know what you think. Comment on your own "shares" and also consider adding your view on other people's posts and content. A particularly informed comment can raise your profile and credibility

in your field and even lead to connection requests.

3. Think about publishing. A status update has a 1,300 character limit whilst publishing has a 40,000 character limit. Publishing offers increased reach and traffic to your profile. It can also boost your personal standing if you are writing an informed piece which showcases your expertise.

Finally, just remember that the usual social etiquette rules apply when sharing, publishing and commenting, so be mindful that the power of social networks runs both ways in being a force for both good and bad.

5. Professional development

Part of the value of LinkedIn rests in the huge amount searchable data that has been created as people complete their profile and share content. From a career development perspective this content can be useful in finding out how to develop in your current role or move into a completely new sector.



In this final section we share our advice on the tools and techniques that can help shape your ongoing professional development.

Behind every successful career is a personal journey that has overcome obstacles.

Finding out more about this story can be the key to your own success as our three top tips will demonstrate.

1. There are professionals using LinkedIn currently in a similar role to you and also members in the role you want to move into. A simple question to ask yourself is, “how do you compare to them?”. Perform a simple search using relevant keywords to find people. You may want to connect. Look at member profiles and think about their education, skills, experience and how they are articulating their value through their profile, posts and content. What could you learn to help improve your own profile? Are there areas you’re really underselling (or not even mentioning). Perhaps there’s a qualification you need that is holding you back. Honesty is important here; this process isn’t meant to make you feel bad but to really gauge where gaps exist that could be holding you back from achieving your goals.

2. Follow companies you might be interested in working for. Why? Well when you follow a company, you’ll receive regular updates from them in your news feed. For example, you will

see news articles about the company, information on new job openings, and other updates. You can use this information (as well as the information on the company page) to learn about the company’s culture and what’s important in their world. This will help you build vital commercial awareness. All essential ingredients if you end up applying for a role and secure an interview.

3. Career path insights. We believe one of the most powerful yet simple questions you can ask someone about achieving career success is “how did you do it?” Most people are happy to share their story so never be afraid or too proud to ask for advice. Breaking into a new role or sector can be tough but usually the paths we want to take are well trodden. Post updates for advice, message connections who might be able to help (or make introductions) and join groups that can help connect you to people you can learn from.

We hope the ideas in this guide have given you some inspiration and confidence to maximise the potential of the platform and move your career forward. If you’d like to speak to someone further in a one-to-one setting about a careers-related question you have, you can [book a careers consultation](#) with one of our consultants.