

How to use LinkedIn to give your career a boost

Worldwide over 150 million people have an account on LinkedIn, and in the Netherlands this is over 3 million since December 2011. Many of you might ask yourself “Why would I use LinkedIn” and “How should I use LinkedIn?”. LinkedIn is an online platform to connect people. It gives you the possibility to get in contact with (former) fellow students and colleagues and, perhaps even more importantly, the chance to get in contact with their network.

Before you sign up for a LinkedIn account ask yourself two essential questions “What is my goal and who are the right people to help me reach this goal.” It depends on your goal how you should fill in your profile and how to use LinkedIn. When it comes down to giving your career a boost you could have one of the following goals:

Goal 1: Finding a job

It all starts with an inspiring profile.

Choose a neutral, professional profile picture of solely your smiling face.

- Choose your professional headline wisely, choose keywords that resemble what you are looking for and that invite people to click further. The keywords that you use increase the chance that you are found by recruiters.
- Divide your information evenly: Some interesting features in your summary, Your expertise in your specialties.
- For each job, a clear description of your tasks, how you have fulfilled these tasks and what the results were.
- Be proactive. Refresh your professional headline regularly and take part in discussions in groups to increase your visibility.
- Build up your network by helping other people and getting introduced to new contacts that could help you to find your dream job.

- Use queries to find information about the job that you are looking for. For example, type in the name of the company you would like to work for and find out what type of people work there; what is their current function; what is their background; do you have contacts in common.

“Your LinkedIn profile is more than a classic resume. You can add more information as long as it is relevant to clarify who you are and what you are looking for.”

Goal 2: Expanding your network

It takes time to build up your network, start on time so you already have a network when you need it! Networking with LinkedIn starts to become really interesting when you have around 250-300 connections. The real power of LinkedIn lies in the 2nd and 3rd layer, the network of your contacts (2)! Most of the time your 1st degree network already knows what you stand for and what you do professionally, it is in their network, the 2nd degree contacts, where you might find your link to reach your goal, for example a (new) job.

- Add a personal message when you invite someone to link. People are more likely to help you if you explain what you have in common or why you think it would be a win-win situation to link.
- Do not take advantage of the people in your network.
- Add a tag to remember who a specific person is and where you met.
- Join groups that have a connection with your interests and goals. When you are a member of a group it makes it easier to link with people that can help you realise your goal.
- With the function Who has seen my profile you can make it visible when you visit other people



Geraldine Sinnema
Owner of Een wereld van verschil

Geraldine Sinnema is the owner of a company in career advice, communication and (self) management skills: Een wereld van verschil (which is Dutch for a ‘World of difference’). Een wereld van verschil offers several trainings on topics like; how to present yourself, time management and how to use LinkedIn to find a job. Geraldine was interviewed to help you answer the question “How to use LinkedIn to give your career a boost?” See the website www.eenwereldvanverschil.nu for more information.

“Try to have the mindset what can I offer them, instead of what can they offer me. Networking is about sharing.”

their profiles. This could lead to interesting new contacts.

Goal 3: Presenting yourself as a professional

If you are not looking for a new job right now or if you would like people to see you as an expert in a specific field and to be able to find you, LinkedIn can be very useful as well.

- Write a clear summary. Make clear what your skills are, what you have to offer and what your professional goals and interests are.
- Actively take part in discussions in groups to increase your visibility and share your knowledge and expertise.
- Ask for a recommendation when you have completed a task or job with success and it is in line with what you would like to fulfil in the future. Make sure to add a personal note with the request to explain why you would like to have a recommendation from that person and how it could help you. If you have at least 3

recommendations you increase your chance of being found in search queries.

In conclusion

Whether you are about to start your search for a job, you want to make a switch in your career or you simply want to let the world know that you are a professional in your field, LinkedIn can be a helpful tool to give your career a boost. The most important thing is to realise what you want to gain with your LinkedIn profile and to adapt your profile to the phase that you are in.

More information and tips and tricks:

- learn.linkedin.com
- Hoe LinkedIn nu ECHT gebruiken (2011, J. Vermeiren & B. Verdonck)
- Solliciteren via LinkedIn (2011, A. Vincent & J. Vermeulen)