Common Sense is not Common Brief: LinkedIn

5 Must-do best practices to develop your LinkedIn Profile

It's been said that if you're not on LinkedIn then you don't exist. I tend to agree…at least when it comes to communicating your personal brand. Here are a few tips to get you started.

#1 Settings

Before you even think of making any updates to your LinkedIn profile, make sure you're not bombarding your connections with useless announcements of every little change you make. This is a good idea even if you're not beginning a new job hunt. Not only do you not want your current employer to see your latest activities, it's also common courtesy since, let's be honest, your connections don't care that you edited your past experience. Additionally, taking the few simple steps below will ensure that you are only broadcasting items that align with and/or magnify your personal brand.

Step 1 - Turn off activity broadcasts

Log into LinkedIn. Find your way to the Privacy & Settings page which can be found on the dropdown menu below your profile picture in the top-right corner (you may be asked to log in again). About half way down the page (in the Profile tab on the left you'll find all Privacy Controls. Click "Turn on/off your activity broadcasts" and uncheck the box. Then click the "Save changes" button.

Step 2 – Limit who can see your activity feed

Follow the directions above to get to your Privacy Controls. Click the next option down, "Select who can see your activity feed" and change it to "Only you." Then click the "Save changes" button.

Bonus tip - Browse anonymously

Just like you love seeing who's been taking a peak at your profile, others are alerted when you browse their profile. Whether you're job searching or just snooping around to help identify some good keywords (see 5 More Must-do basics to optimize your LinkedIn Profile for more details), you may not want folks to know that you visited their profile. How much information those people see (whether just an ambiguous mention of your title and company or your full name, photo, etc.) depends on the settings you selected.

If you prefer to remain anonymous (recommended), follow the directions above to get to your Privacy Controls. Then click on the third option, "Select what others see when you've viewed their profile" and choose the last option "You will be totally anonymous." Then click the "Save changes" button.

#2 Photo

According to LinkedIn, adding a profile picture makes your profile 14 times more likely to be viewed by others so make sure to add an updated profile picture. Your photo should be professional and represent you at your best but should reflect some personality. Remember to smile!

To add or update your profile picture, find your way to your profile which can be found on the top menu (between Home and Connections). Click on "Change photo" which will appear once you run your mouse over your picture in the profile. In the "Adjust Photo" section, click on "Change photo" and browse your files for a photo to upload. You may also want to set privacy settings for your photo (so only your connections or those in your network can see it) since the default setting allows everyone to see your photo. Keep in mind that your profile picture is automatically visible to anyone you message.

For best practices regarding your profile picture, check out LinkedIn's 5 Tips for Picking the Right LinkedIn Profile Picture.

#3 Complete Profile

Make sure to complete your profile thoroughly and honestly with only career related information. This is not Facebook!

Cover every section -- including your summary, experience, skills, etc. – incorporating keywords (check out [More Must-do basics to optimize your LinkedIn Profile](#) for more details) as often as possible. Add in honors and awards…as they say, it ain't bragging if it's true! Don't forget to connect with people and actively work on your endorsements and recommendations.

Bonus tip – Make sure you're showing up at the top of searches

Endorsements and recommendations that include keywords push you up in search results!

Lastly, illustrate that you have your finger on the pulse of your industry by joining relevant groups and following industry leaders. For more tips, review the [More Must-do basics to optimize your LinkedIn Profile](#).

#4 Headline

Do not waste this valuable real estate and simply list your current title and company! We are no longer in the 50's or 80's (or pick a decade when you had job security and could retire from the company you started out with) and your current title and company does not define you!

Utilize as many of the 120 characters as you need to communicate your value proposition and make sure it's optimize with keywords. You can use the "|" symbol (shift \ on QWERTY keyboards) to separate 2-4 focus descriptors for a clean look.

#5 Profile URL

Don't just go along with whatever URL LinkedIn gives you. Change it to your name and use it on your resume.

Log into LinkedIn and go to Edit Profile. Click the URL link under your profile photo (it will be an address like www.linkedin.com/in/yourname and might have some numbers at the end). Click the Edit icon and type in the last part of your new custom URL. If you have a popular name and the URL you want isn't available, select a different one. Then click the Save.

Bonus tips

- Your custom URL can have 5-30 letters or numbers.
- Don't use spaces, symbols, or special characters.
- If your desired URL is not available, select a different one by adding a middle initial or one of your keywords.
- You can change your URL up to 5 times within 180 days.
- Add your LinkedIn URL to your resume, blog, website, and/or email signature. There are even special "View My Profile" badges you can use.

These are just the basic "must-do's" but there are many other best practices when it comes to optimizing your LinkedIn profile and how you show up in searches. Check out some of our other educational PDFs regarding LinkedIn profiles to properly communicate your personal brand and help protect your online reputation.

Happy personal branding! ☺