

The Beginner's Guide to LinkedIn



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<http://mashable.com/2012/05/23/linkedin-beginners/>

LinkedIn is considered the non-sexy, sleeping giant of social networks. It keeps a low profile, perhaps due to the professional nature of its users. Nonetheless, LinkedIn continues to exert a powerful influence on connected job seekers, brands, recruiters and industries.

Founded by Reid Hoffman in 2002, LinkedIn has grown to 161 million members in over 200 countries, making it the world's largest professional network on the Internet (by comparison, Twitter has 500 million registered users, and Facebook has 900 million). Currently available in 17 languages, LinkedIn remains a relevant platform the world over.

That being said, we doubt you spend 20 minutes on LinkedIn per day, like Facebook's power users do. So, if you need a crash course on what LinkedIn has to offer, browse the network's most prominent features below. Or send this to your recent grad as he or she prepares to enter today's daunting job market.

Have you used LinkedIn to find a job, network with professionals or research hot topics in your industry? Please share your own tips in the comments below.

1. Profile

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn profile for Stephanie Buck. At the top left is a profile picture of a woman with red hair. To the right of the photo, the name "Stephanie Buck" is displayed in bold, followed by "Features Writer at Mashable" and "New York, New York | Writing and Editing". Above the profile picture are two buttons: "Improve your Profile" (highlighted in yellow) and "Edit profile". Below the name and title, there is a section for a recent post. The post is titled "Stephanie Buck Keeping up with Apple's growth is like sneezing with your eyes open — it's nearly impossible." and includes an infographic titled "Apple by the Numbers [INFOGRAPHIC] mashable.com". Below the post are options to "Like", "Comment", "Share", and "See all activity" from "1 hour ago". To the right of the profile, there is a section for "Ask for recommendations" and "Create your profile in another language". Below this is a blue progress bar showing "100% profile completeness". Underneath the progress bar is a section titled "Ads by LinkedIn Members" with three advertisements: "For Medical Professionals" from APU, "Master the GMAT" with a small profile picture, and "NY P/T or F/T opportunity" from Forbes.

Like most social networks, LinkedIn hosts your personal profile, a page on which you may list information like job experience and professional skills.

However, unlike many other social networks, it's important to complete your profile to the best of your ability — especially if you're using LinkedIn for the job hunt. LinkedIn measures your "profile completeness" from 0-100%. The higher your profile completeness, the more likely you are to appear in search results. For instance, when you list skills like "Final Cut Pro" and "Photoshop," potential employers may come across your profile when they perform an advanced search based on those keywords. Handy.

To ensure that your profile is 100% complete, LinkedIn recommends including the following information.

- Industry and postal code
- A current position with description
- Two more positions
- Education
- At least five skills
- Profile photo
- At least 50 connections
- A summary

2. Connections

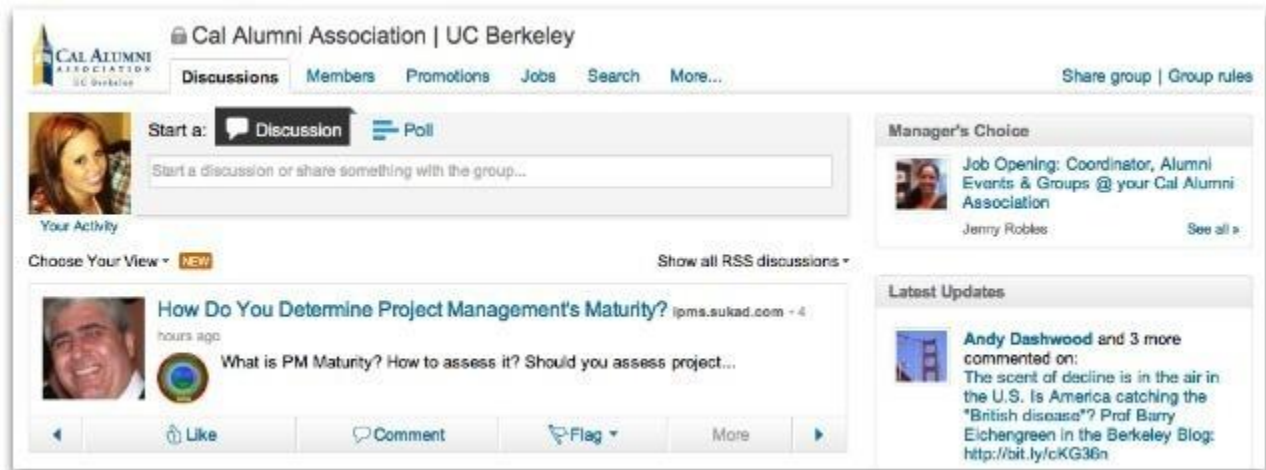
Of course, to get those “50 connections” mentioned above, you’ll have to expand your network on LinkedIn. Don’t worry — LinkedIn’s algorithms and data mining make it pretty easy.

I recommend first performing a series of basic searches to find people you know by name. (See the search box at the top of each LinkedIn page.) Click the “Connect” button next to people’s names to add them to your network. You may send a custom message along with that invitation to make the connection more personalized.

Once you have made several connections, head to the “People You May Know” page. LinkedIn’s algorithm will likely have begun determining additional suggestions based on your connections’ networks. LinkedIn labels these connections by degree. People you’re already connected to are “1st degree” connections. People you’re not yet connected to, but who are linked to your 1st degree connections, are 2nd degree connections. And so on. You’ll see a blue icon that says “1st,” “2nd” or “3rd” next to their names.

You may also choose to connect your email’s contact list to LinkedIn for the purpose of finding additional connections. Head to “Import Contacts” and allow access to your contacts to pull up a list of potentials. Be aware, however, that this may generate a huge list of people, especially if email services like Gmail tend to save every address you’ve ever contacted.

3. Groups



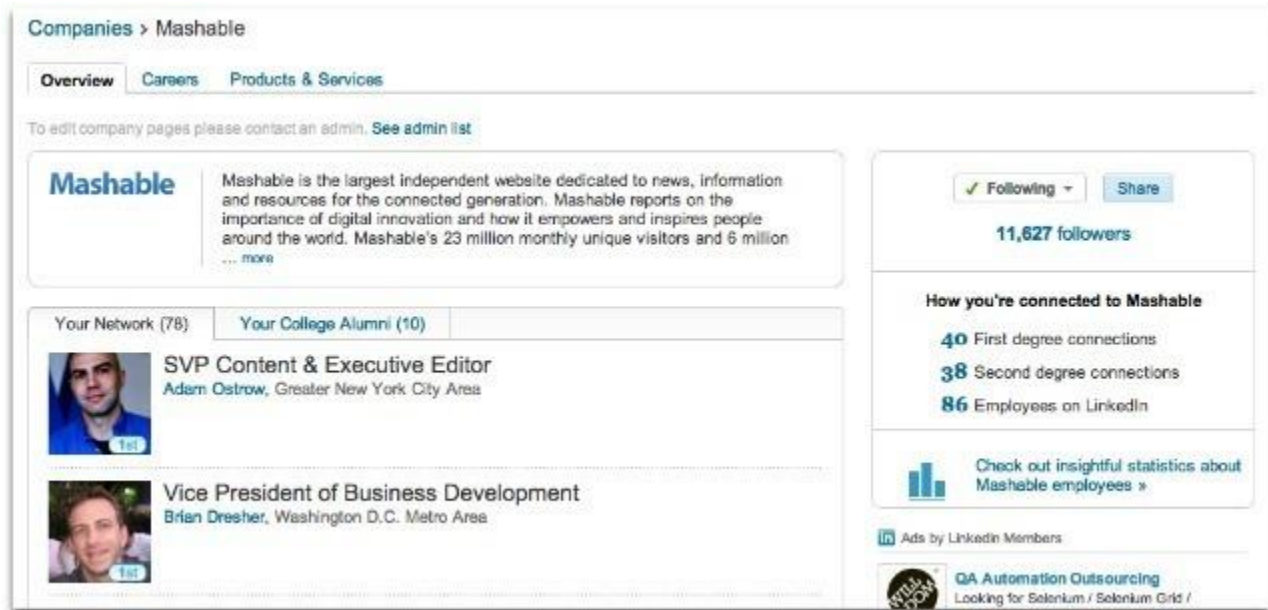
LinkedIn groups are spaces in which professionals and experts can share content, ask for advice, post or search for jobs and network with others. Groups are tailored to brands, associations and societies, support groups, causes, publications and industries in general. That can mean anything from “On Startups - The Community for Entrepreneurs” to “Cal Alumni Association | UC Berkeley.”

On the other hand, don't confuse LinkedIn “groups” with “companies.” Coca-Cola has a “Coca-Cola Current & Former Employees” *group*, but its business lives on “The Coca-Cola Company” *company page*. More on that later.

With over 1.3 million groups to choose from, you're likely to find at few that fit your field and interests. Keep in mind that many groups require authentication before the manager permits you to join. However, nearly one-third of groups don't require review, and are labeled “open.”

Once you're familiar with group functions, you may choose to create your own group. That means you're the group owner, but you may also appoint a group manager and moderator, who are responsible for supervising discussions, subgroups, settings, etc.

4. Companies



The screenshot shows the LinkedIn company page for Mashable. At the top, there are tabs for 'Overview', 'Careers', and 'Products & Services'. Below the tabs, a message states: 'To edit company pages please contact an admin. See admin list'. The main content area features the Mashable logo and a brief description: 'Mashable is the largest independent website dedicated to news, information and resources for the connected generation. Mashable reports on the importance of digital innovation and how it empowers and inspires people around the world. Mashable's 23 million monthly unique visitors and 6 million ... more'. To the right, there is a 'Following' button with a dropdown arrow and a 'Share' button, along with a follower count of '11,627 followers'. Below this, a section titled 'How you're connected to Mashable' displays statistics: '40 First degree connections', '38 Second degree connections', and '86 Employees on LinkedIn'. There is also a link to 'Check out insightful statistics about Mashable employees'. At the bottom, there are advertisements for 'QA Automation Outsourcing' and 'Ads by LinkedIn Members'.

Just as you have a personal profile page, many companies choose to represent themselves on LinkedIn, too. Like Facebook brand pages, you may choose to follow the activity and updates of companies on LinkedIn.

Company pages contain general information, such as a business overview, list of employees and press mentions. Many companies also choose to list job openings on their pages, and some even encourage applicants to apply through LinkedIn, a very handy tool of the network.

Once you follow a company, you'll see its updates appear on your LinkedIn homepage alongside those of your connections. *Mashable*, for instance, tends to post business-related articles on LinkedIn, since that seems to be the content most pertinent to the network's audience. Businesses also use LinkedIn to post company announcements, such as acquisitions, new hires or updated policies. LinkedIn warns against update spam, however: "Businesses that post updates excessively are subject to review by LinkedIn and could risk having their page deleted."

If you're interested in adding your own company to the network, LinkedIn advises you take the following steps.

1. You're a current company employee and your position is on your profile.
2. A company email address (e.g. john@companyname.com) is one of the confirmed email addresses on your LinkedIn account.
3. You associate your profile with the right company. You must click on a name from our company name dropdown list when you edit or add a position on your profile.
4. Your company's email domain is unique to the company.
5. Your profile must be more than 50% complete.
6. You must have several connections.

5. Jobs

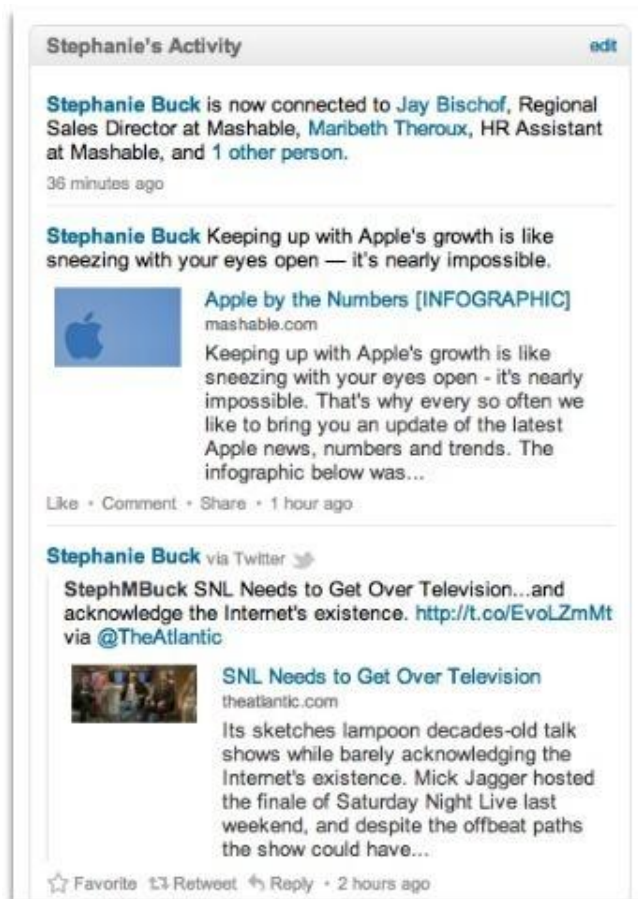
Job search and recruitment tools are among LinkedIn's most valuable features. More and more companies are encouraging candidates to apply for jobs via LinkedIn, due to the social network's credibility and ease-of-use.

Head to the "Jobs" tab, where you'll find options for applicants. Perform an advanced search for available jobs by keyword, title, location, company, salary and industry. (A search for "developer" within 50 miles of Manhattan turned up 488 results.) Save jobs to review later, and even save searches to check back later for updated results.

As an employer, you may post an available job to LinkedIn for \$295 for a 30-day period. (Bulk packages are available for better deals.) Once posted, these jobs will not only appear in search results, but also in the "Careers" tab on your company page.

Finally, recruiters may "find talent" on LinkedIn, but they must upgrade to a premium subscription plan to search for potential hires.

6. Updates



The screenshot shows a LinkedIn activity feed for a user named Stephanie Buck. The feed is titled "Stephanie's Activity" and includes an "edit" link. The first update is a status update from Stephanie Buck, stating she is now connected to Jay Bischof, Maribeth Theroux, and 1 other person. The second update is a post from Stephanie Buck sharing an infographic from Mashable titled "Apple by the Numbers [INFOGRAPHIC]". The infographic text reads: "Keeping up with Apple's growth is like sneezing with your eyes open — it's nearly impossible." The third update is a post from Stephanie Buck sharing an article from The Atlantic titled "SNL Needs to Get Over Television...and acknowledge the Internet's existence." The article text reads: "Its sketches lampoon decades-old talk shows while barely acknowledging the Internet's existence. Mick Jagger hosted the finale of Saturday Night Live last weekend, and despite the offbeat paths the show could have..."

Unlike content shared on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn updates tend to be industry- and professionally-focused. Keep that in mind if you're attempting to increase engagement.

You can share updates from a number of different places, both on LinkedIn.com and from outside web properties. Post a status update from the LinkedIn homepage, and it will be shared as well as posted to your profile under the activity feed. Also, when you engage in discussions in LinkedIn groups, that activity counts as an update.

Post updates from sites like *The New York Times* by clicking the LinkedIn social share button next to an article. Or add the LinkedIn sharing bookmarklet to your browser toolbar to quickly share most sites as an update.

Finally, you may also connect your Twitter account to LinkedIn. This not only expands your network, but allows you to post tweets

on LinkedIn as if they were status updates. Once tweets post to LinkedIn, users can interact with them as if from Twitter.com, by retweeting, replying and favoriting. Like updates, tweets post to the homepage and live in the activity feed on your profile.

Just as LinkedIn advises brands to cool it on excessive updates, you should practice the same self-control. Users appreciate information, not excessive traffic on their feeds. That being said, you can mute certain connections, if you choose. Hover over a user's update on the homepage and click the "hide" button to stop receiving updates from that user.

7. Applications

Applications allow LinkedIn users to customize their profiles and share content in different ways. For example, you may choose to add the [WordPress](#) app so that your latest WordPress blog posts share with your LinkedIn network. Do the same for [SlideShare](#) presentations you or your company have created.

Keep in mind that most apps require permissions to access some of your basic profile information, such as your name or job title. However, all applications must abide by LinkedIn's privacy policy, which means they're not allowed to reach any private information not easily accessible by browsing the site.



8. Mobile

LinkedIn has mobile applications for iPhone, iPad, Android, BlackBerry, Windows and Palm devices. The app is useful for posting status updates and checking group updates on-the-go, but its inherent advantages lie in networking.

Pull up the mobile app to find LinkedIn connections and exchange information at events. After meeting someone, you may choose to email that person a link to your profile, so he or she may connect with you later — no business cards needed. Or search for that person on your LinkedIn mobile app and add him as a connection then and there.

You may also choose to download LinkedIn connections to your smartphone's address book for later contact.

9. Upgraded Account

Once you've explored LinkedIn Free, you may choose to upgrade to a LinkedIn account with more features. Starting at \$15.95 per month, LinkedIn has premium subscription plans for businesses, job seekers, recruiters and more.

One of the distinguishing features of most upgraded accounts is the ability to send InMail to anyone. InMail is an internal LinkedIn message sent to a person with whom you are not connected. You can message people you are already connected with free-of-charge, but you can't message non-connections; you must InMail them — and those InMails are limited. The Basic business premium account allows you three InMails per month, while the Business Plus plan allows 10, and the Executive 25 per month. So, choose your InMails wisely.

Upgraded accounts also have access to more search results, which can be a huge bonus for LinkedIn recruiters. You also have access to additional tools for saving and organizing profiles, and you can view the full list of people who have viewed your LinkedIn profile.