



Link up with LinkedIn

Whether or not you're a fan of social media, there are plenty of reasons for using LinkedIn as a professional tool. It's quick, easy and free to sign up and create a profile – but that's only the start. Like a website with no traffic, a LinkedIn profile with little information and interaction will hardly be noticed. Conversely, a profile rich in content, well connected and interacting on a regular basis will attract attention. It's an efficient way to network – and a great place to find jobs.

by Garry Britton

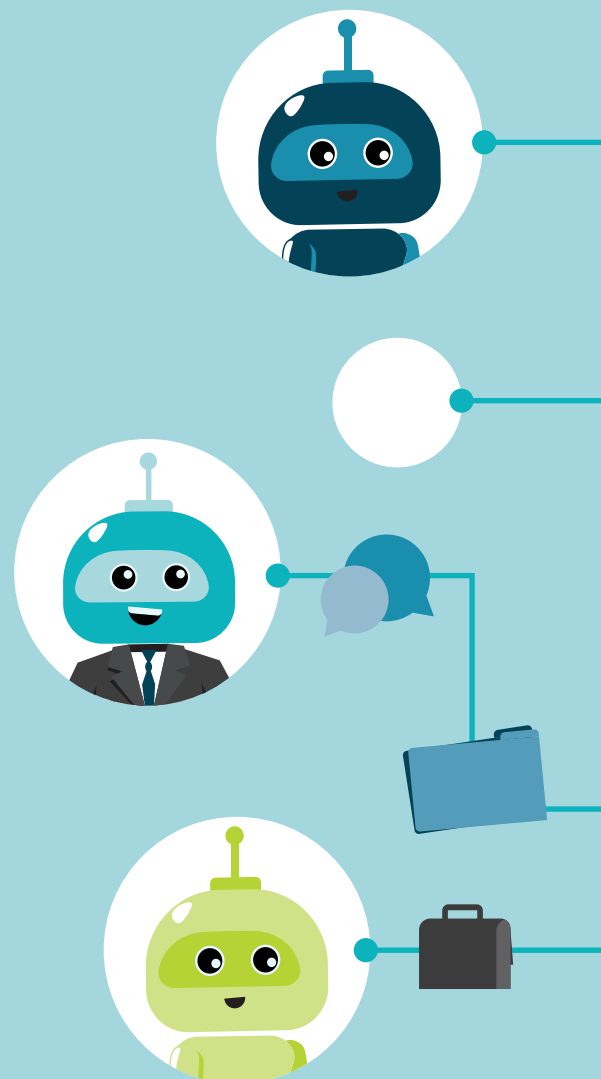
Get started

Before signing up on linkedin.com, be prepared with a good professional photo and a 'banner picture' for your profile. After that, the process is similar to writing your CV, so if you have that ready it will also help to complete the steps. You'll need to write a short heading and a summary paragraph or two that describes you and what you do. Be prepared to list work experience and companies you have worked for, as well as your skills, education and qualifications, with the relevant dates. All of this will get you started.

Connect, follow, message, join

The most important first step is to build up a network. Small networks achieve little, so set a target of connecting with a defined number of people each week. The algorithm suggests 'people you may know'. With 875 million members worldwide, there's a lot of potential. I've read that 500 connections is optimal for increasing a network exponentially, but I only have 385 and am doing just fine – although if you can connect with me, I may reach my 500 sooner! Search my name to connect, or just 'follow' me.

There's one catch to the free version, which is also the key advantage of the platform: you can only connect with 'firstlevel' connections (who you've worked or studied with), but not with people who have no existing link to you – unless you pay for a premium subscription. This will allow you a number of direct messages to anyone each month. But even with the free version, you can 'follow' people in order to see their posts, interact via comments, and join relevant groups for information, discussion or support.





Build your personal brand

Once your network of connections is growing, you can start to build your personal brand. It's not only your profile that shows this off, but also the way you interact. Make regular posts on relevant and interesting topics for your network. I post an English tip every Friday and find this starts conversations with contacts in my network but also with people I don't know, who are interested in my advice. Over time, posting and taking part in discussions on others' posts attracts new followers and contacts to your personal brand.

Find job opportunities and apply

I'm a big fan of LinkedIn, because I got both of my current jobs (writing this, and online Business English training) through the platform. At least 72 per cent of recruiters use LinkedIn, and up to 97 per cent of HR professionals. You can also search for jobs using advanced filters – by location, industry, company size, experience level, salary requirements and more. For some jobs you can apply in one click, sending your application straight from the platform.

Make use of other opportunities

LinkedIn has many other uses; these include creating company pages, learning new skills from training modules, following thought leaders, or even becoming a thought leader yourself by writing articles and posting videos. LinkedIn is as useful and inspiring as you want it to be.

