

# Get More More Momentum from LinkedIn

If you're clear about starting a business, check out **LinkedIn for Entrepreneurs** but spend some time with this section too, since you will learn tricks and tools to help you better understand the LinkedIn universe.

Once you finish polishing your LinkedIn profile, ask a detail-oriented friend or resume professional to proof it. When it is ready for the world to see, you've only just begun. Your next task is to engage LinkedIn's infinite networking potential to prepare for a job search. Recent research indicates that 27 percent of Americans use LinkedIn with 675 million members worldwide logging in each month. Of those, 61 million are senior level influencers, and 40 million are in decision-making positions.<sup>8</sup>

## 1. Research Employers

As you update your LinkedIn profile and your network grows, you will be able to view more profiles and see what positions people hold at specific companies. Most large companies create their own LinkedIn page, which can give you a sense of whether they're using LinkedIn thoughtfully to recruit employees.

If you identify and follow the LinkedIn company page for fifteen to thirty target companies, you can:

- receive notices when new positions are posted to see if they match your skill set and to determine if the company is expanding.
- learn who in your network is connected to employees of a specific company and ask for introductions, networking meetings, or informational interviews. (At massive companies like Nike, be careful to only ask for introductions if you have reason to believe they are linked to someone in a targeted department or role. Someone in accounting at Nike, for instance, may have never met someone in women's golf and may find it annoying for you to ask for a reference or an introduction.)
- investigate which groups and professional associations employees belong to so you can engage with them, either in LinkedIn groups or at in-person events.
- target a cover letter appropriately to a person who has posted the position and potentially send them a direct message expressing your interest.
- Prepare for an interview, showcasing your knowledge of the company and latest newsworthy developments.

## 2. Expand Your Network

Try to thoughtfully augment the number of people in your LinkedIn network. The more people in your network, the greater the chance they can introduce you to someone in your new career field or a targeted business, but they will also gain access to your network as well. Aim for five hundred or more contacts by examining your current network. (See how many Connections you currently have by clicking "See connections" in the right column of your Profile page.) You can use each of LinkedIn's four tools for finding people who you already know under the "Add Connections" tab:

### • Import email addresses

<sup>8</sup> <https://foundationinc.co/lab/b2b-marketing-linkedin-stats/>

Click "See Who You Already Know on LinkedIn." Once you upload your addresses, you see a symbol next to the people who are on LinkedIn. Remember to send a personalized message when you invite people from your past who may not remember you.

### • Locate former colleagues

Select the tab that will review your experience section and show you names of people who also worked at that organization. Using this function, I reconnected with one of my now dearest friends.

We met for coffee years after we had been co-workers and found we had shared interests in nonprofits, sustainability, politics, and dystopian science-fiction movies.

### • Locate former schoolmates

Selecting "Alumni," in a similar function to "Colleagues," and scanning profiles for people who graduated from the same colleges you have listed under Education on your profile.

### • Cast your net

Letting LinkedIn guess "People You May Know" based on location, keywords, and connections you have.

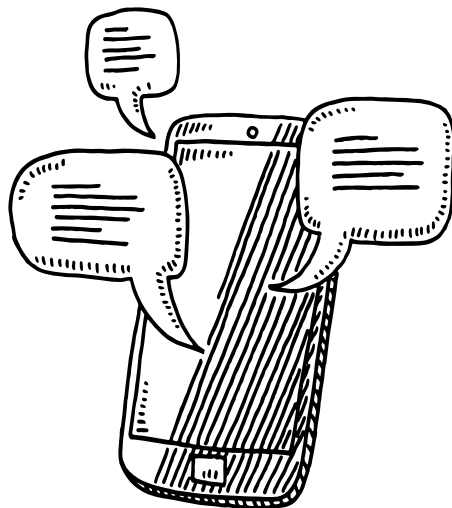
Unfortunately, we all get LinkedIn invitations and scratch our heads, asking things like "Who the heck is Leo Shrepnek?" We vacillate between believing our memories are disappearing and that Leo's invitation is spam. Since you don't want to accept anyone who you don't know, you have three choices.

- Select "View Invitation" and choose "Ignore."
- Read Leo's profile and, if he is in your industry, send him a note that says, "I may not recall meeting you, but because of our common interest in Reproductive Rights, I am glad to accept you into my network." You might also choose to "link" to someone who shares a connection with a trusted friend or colleague.
- Respond with a message: "I may be forgetting that we have met. I would appreciate it if you could refresh my memory and let me know how we could be of help to each other on LinkedIn."

Treat your LinkedIn Network like your refrigerator. Every few months, go in and discard contacts you no longer remember or trust. (Click on the "Remove Connection" that pops up when you hover over the ellipses in the right-hand corner of their profile). The person will not get a notice that they have been removed.

You may also want to organize your list so that it is easier to find who you want. When you're on your Profile page, click on link that indicates the number of LinkedIn connections you have (i.e., "241 Connections") to reveal your **Connections** page, which lists your connections and lets you tick boxes on eleven filters (after clicking on the "All Filters" button), including:

- **Keywords** (Type in keywords like "ceramics" or "sustainability" in the search box in the upper lefthand corner.)
- **Connections** (Choose among first-, second-, and third-degree connections.)
- **Connections of** (A field will appear in which you can type in the name of a first-level contact and see their linked contacts.)
- **Location**
- **Current Companies**
- **Past Companies**
- **Industries**



- Profile Language
- Schools
- Contact Interests
- Services

You can also type in a name, title or company in yet another filter to find a specific person. A LinkedIn Premium membership allows you to filter your search of your connections further and lets you direct-message (“InMail”) people at the second and third tier, among other perks.

### 3. Get Introductions

Once you have a network of at least one hundred contacts, it is time to initiate getting introductions to second-degree contacts, people whom your first-degree contacts can introduce you to. Here are three approaches.

- **Review Your Contacts’ Contacts** (second degree). Choose a few of your connections likely to have contacts in the field you are investigating. When someone accepts an invitation to connect, you can see the profiles of the people in their network, including the “mutual contacts” you share. If you see that a first-degree contact is linked to a person you would like to meet but are not linked with, message or email your mutual connection to ask if they would be willing to introduce to you. (If you’re hoping to set up an informational interview with the person, mention that to your mutual connection and tell them what you hope to learn. Keep your message brief.) Don’t send the individual you are hoping to meet a LinkedIn request until you have secured an introduction and made contact with them over email, in person, or by phone.

- **Search by Job Title Keywords.** While you’re still on the Connections page, input a job title in the search field, such as “Massage Therapist” or “Energy Analyst.” LinkedIn will show you the profiles of local individuals with these job titles. Look for the number 2, which will indicate second-degree contacts to see if you have a mutual contact to introduce you. Even if the person is a third-degree contact or is completely out of your sphere, it may be useful to examine their education and work experience to see how they prepared for their current position.

- **Search by Employer.** Most midsize and larger employers have a LinkedIn page. On the Connections page, click on “Companies” and type in a company about which you are curious. LinkedIn will show you people who work for that organization, once again indicating with a “2nd” if they are known to your contacts. Even if there are no people in this organization to whom you can be introduced, you can review employee profiles to see if you have a similar background to target the organization. In addition, you can see which LinkedIn Groups a person belongs to and join those groups to build the relationship.

From the home page, you can also input job titles and yield a similar result. (Find the search field next in the upper-left-hand corner to the right of the LinkedIn logo.)

### 4. Offer and Ask for Recommendations

If your nature is to be generous and help people, being a job seeker can be difficult because you feel like you are always asking people for assistance. Do you know anyone at Energy Trust? Do you have twenty minutes for an informational interview? Could you proof my resume? Making a regular practice of offering recommendations to colleagues and professionals who have provided you services is a great way to balance the scale. It doesn’t matter if the person in question is in a position to help you or not. Our feelings confirm what biology tells us—oxytocin is released in our bodies when we do a good deed, improving our mood and sense of well-being.

## Finding Work That Matters

While it can be tempting to bury your head in the sand in an era of political division, I challenge you to see this complicated time as an opportunity for a fulfilling career transition. Resolve to volunteer at least once a week with an organization that you know makes a difference, whether it’s your kid’s middle school, a scrappy nonprofit, a community project, a political campaign or activist group, or your place of worship.

These small expressions can feel like a whisper in the dark but, over time, will make a difference. Taking the next step of offering your skills to a nonprofit, a social entrepreneurship venture, or a political cause can help illuminate places where your values and your vocation intersect. At a minimum, surrounding ourselves with a variety of individuals broadens our self-understanding and strengthens our network. Focusing on an issue we care about can deepen your understanding of the political processes and social forces that eventually effect change.

Try not to give in to despair or cynicism. Every social movement was propelled at some point by anger or frustration. These feelings have the potential to either paralyze or motivate you. When we are told we cannot do something or feel threatened, aggravation can channel us to focus our goals, emboldening us with formidable determination. Yoga, meditation, and exercise can work beautifully to expel the harmful effects of negativity and direct the increased adrenaline to a worthy cause.

Remember, many careers start with an act of injustice. Erin Brockovich, an office worker, became a clean-water activist by involving herself in a litigation against PG&E; Barbara Roberts, the mother of an underserved special-needs child, took action that put her on a path to become governor of Oregon. Gandhi led India’s resistance to British colonial rule after being thrown off a train by a British officer.

Here are seven steps to strategically steer your frustration about a social problem toward a new potential career path:

- 1. Seek a paid or volunteer position at a nonprofit, government entity, or political campaign or advocacy group that shares your values.** You can search for a volunteer opportunity on VolunteerMatch.org that aligns with your skills and sensibilities.
- 2. Use your network on LinkedIn, Facebook, and in person to learn about the organization’s values.**
- 3. Surf the web to check out their mission and if they have a track record of viable accomplishments.**
- 4. Once your foot is in the door, be specific about the skills you want to build and actively take on projects with increased responsibility that show off your skills.**
- 5. Network and share your career goals with the people you meet in this organization.**
- 6. Take opportunities to represent the organization at events to give voice to your values and broaden your network in the community.**
- 7. Ask the people with whom you work for recommendations both in print and on LinkedIn.** Offer to reciprocate by writing a recommendation for them, too. Remember Margaret Mead’s timeless quote, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Even if you don’t mean to change the world, some group of “thoughtful, committed citizens” is looking for someone just like you.

Under “Profile,” select “Recommendations,” where you can scroll down and either search for someone by name or select from your list of contacts. LinkedIn gives you an example to suggest three characteristics about the person/professional that you want to recommend. These recommendations are typically shorter than recommendation letters. Keep your recommendations honest, succinct, and fact-based.

### LinkedIn Recommendation Writing Tips:

- **Mention the company** at which you both worked and your professional relationship: “employer,” “colleague,” “former client,” etc.
- **Use active language** to describe the problem they helped you solve, the role they fulfilled, or the service or product they offered—“managed a marketing team in my department,” “designed my logo,” “consulted the team to convert our company’s website to a mobile-friendly experience,” etc.
- **Describe the results** you received, including measurable and tangible details, if possible. You can use emotion to describe the experience of working with this individual, but be clear and specific: “I was over the moon with the results of Valerie’s PR training series – my team ranked her classes highly, and our organic social media impressions increased by 45 percent within three months.”

Start by reviewing former bosses, colleagues, and clients you have helped in various positions; see if you can write at least one for each former position under your Experience section on your profile.

After you have written a few recommendations, you will likely be more inspired to request them. You may not need to offer suggestions, but if you haven’t worked together for more than a year, don’t be afraid to offer a few suggestions. Remind them of a compliment that they once offered. “Liza, you once praised me for my creativity and responsiveness as a web designer. The clients I’m hoping to attract will value those traits, so if you wouldn’t mind mentioning these qualities, I would really appreciate it.” If the people you would like to reach out to are unlikely to spend much time on LinkedIn (or you would simply like to re-warm the connection), don’t hesitate to call or text them.

## 5. Explore LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn Groups are an overlooked resource for researching specific fields and job titles. While still exploring a new industry, you can not only use groups to build your professional community and set up informational interviews. When actively job searching, groups are a terrific resource for interview assistance and forging connections with hiring managers and other decision-makers.

There are two easy ways to locate groups you may be interested in. Go back to the **Connections** page and click on the “Groups” tab, and LinkedIn will show you a list based on key words in your Profile. Then search for keywords and phrases such as “mindfulness” plus “art therapy” or “ER nursing.” (You can also go to the search box at the top of the home page to search for groups.) Initially, choose six to ten groups to review and then pick a small number with content you enjoy that also appear relevant to your field.

Look for the groups with recent posts and other signs of robust engagement. Don’t judge groups on size alone – larger groups will grant you a wider range of perspectives and geographic coverage, but smaller groups may offer more conspicuousness and accessibility.

### Use Groups and Company LinkedIn Pages for Research

LinkedIn actually makes researching jobs and specific field easier

than ever before – you can review the “Experience” sections on the profiles of the company’s employees who hold job titles that interest you and peruse their previous job titles, college degrees and trainings, and volunteer experience. Think of it as “reverse engineering” someone’s profile. You’re looking back in time to see how they earned a position you aspire to. Not everyone with the same position followed the same route, so look at several profiles to get ideas about how to plot your own course. If there are few people in your network with positions in your desired field, this is another reason to join a group to expand your potential to link with relevant contacts.

- **Ask career research questions.** Large LinkedIn groups with a national scope can help you focus your research of specific job titles. If you have specific questions about a field, use a LinkedIn group to ask questions in an online forum or ask if someone would spend fifteen minutes with you on the phone or in a Zoom meeting. As with any informational interview, prepare your questions in advance, take notes, and stick to the time frame that you requested.
- **Research typical career paths in target companies.** In addition to individual profiles, LinkedIn allows companies to have LinkedIn pages where information about most midsize-to-large employers can be found. These provide a goldmine of information on company size, recent hires, and backgrounds of employees holding different positions. LinkedIn is the most-used social media platform among Fortune 500 companies, and 30 million companies, at last count, have LinkedIn profiles.

### Use Groups for Networking and Job Search

- **Comment and post in groups.** As you would with regular posts that you share on LinkedIn, only share relevant articles and other content. Find discussions that already have a lot of interest—those are indicated by a lot of likes and comments—and share thoughtful comments aimed at adding value, not self-aggrandizement.
- **Ask thought-provoking questions.** Seek to engage people and demonstrate your curiosity and enthusiasm.
- **Follow LinkedIn Influencers.** LinkedIn Influencers include the world’s leading thinkers and innovators like Brene Brown and Richard Branson who typically have thousands of followers and can offer inspiration and hard-won wisdom. You can find them through targeted searches – Brene Brown emerges at the top of the search results for “University of Texas” and “Researcher,” for instance. Influencers will have the Influencer “tag,” which features the “i” inside the blue quote bubble.
- **Write and post articles.** Every day 130,000 people are posting and sharing their articles. If they get LinkedIn’s attention, LinkedIn Pulse picks it up, garnering you more exposure and credibility and giving you a boost in confidence.
- **Review the profiles of members.** Introduce yourself to people with whom you would like to connect. Hopefully, your conversations with them will spark the potential for informational interviews or referrals to job leads.
- **Seek out local groups.** Local groups offer the advantage of possibly meeting people in person. In most cases, you can message members of a group even if they are not a first-degree contact. Ask someone interesting if they would be willing to meet for coffee or attend an event together that is germane to the field of interest (or another evident shared interest).