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## Getting the most out of LinkedIn means investing time to learn its power

By Katrina Lennon

**D**id someone once tell you to set up a LinkedIn profile? It probably went something like this; “LinkedIn is the professional Facebook. It’s great for business and networking. You really should be on there.” Did I get it right? So you took that leap and created a profile. But now what?

There are many people out there on LinkedIn who have no idea how to use it to their advantage. They think that simply being on LinkedIn is enough. I am here to tell you that you are wrong. If you haven’t done so already, you should learn how to mine the riches that LinkedIn has to offer. Here’s how you can tap into LinkedIn and use it to your advantage:



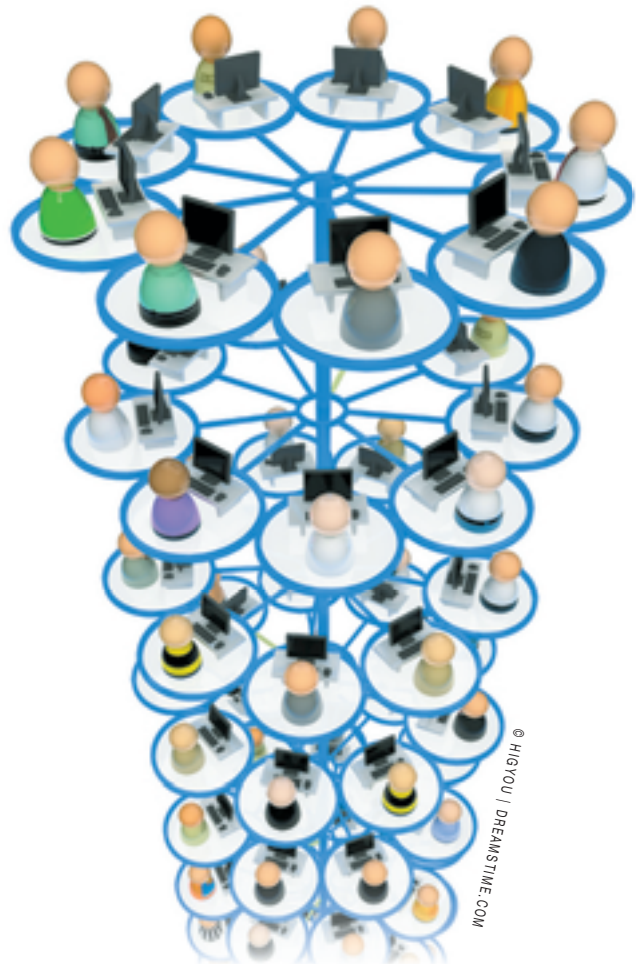
Katrina Lennon

- **Complete your profile** — The first step you must make is to complete your profile. See that annoying bar on the right hand side that says you are only \_\_\_\_\_% complete? Do what they suggest in order to get that all the way up to 100 percent mark. One of the things this requires is asking for recommendations from other people on LinkedIn. Aim for four or five people from different areas (different jobs, a colleague, a superior, a friend etc.). Ask for recommendations from a wide range of people covering the full span of skills and knowledge you have acquired throughout the years.

- **Expand your network** — LinkedIn is a networking site, so use it to its fullest. Search for people you know with the search box in the upper right hand corner. Ask them to join your network. Both of you will benefit. In addition, look at the networks of people to whom you’re connected for people you’d like to know. Ask them for an introduction. Lastly check out the “people you may know” block you’ll find on your homepage. Going through this list every once in awhile will alert you of people you may know who are also on LinkedIn. Add them to your network.

- **Join LinkedIn Groups** — Another way to expand your network is to join LinkedIn groups. These are people who share common professional interests or fields of work. There are many groups out there covering all sorts of industries and interests. Once in a group you can do any (or all) of the following to build up your LinkedIn community:

- ✓ Participate in discussions
- ✓ Create your own discussion thread
- ✓ Post an article
- ✓ Connect with people in the group
- ✓ Think about creating your own group



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- **Update your status frequently** — The idea here is you want to keep a steady LinkedIn presence so your connections recognize your name. Remember, some of your connections have never personally met you before, so reminding them what you can offer them as a connection is important. Your status updates show up in their feed and act as this reminder.

- **Explore the “More” tab** — Once you have successfully done the above, why not have some fun with it? LinkedIn has a handful of

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applications that you can add to your profile. This option is under the “More” tab on the top of your page and then under “Application Directory.” According to LinkedIn, applications “enable you to enrich your profile, share and collaborate with your network, and get the key insights that help you be more effective.” My personal favorite is tripit, which allows me to let my connections know when I will be in town so we can meet up for a networking cup of coffee.

- Get familiar with LinkedIn Answers — This is also under the “More” tab and then “Advanced Answers Search.” This tool allows you to search for topics in your area of expertise to find a question you want to answer. Some experts in the field suggest a few ways to get involved on LinkedIn Answers. They include:

- ✓ Do some research on the person asking the question to find a way to tie in a more personalized response
- ✓ Provide all that you can when answering the question (website links, tips, recommend an expert to them, etc.)
- ✓ In your answer give them an invitation to contact you privately for more help

- Establish meaningful relationships with LinkedIn — Here are several tips from some of the best minds in social media:

- ✓ Watch your timing. As soon as you make some sort of connection on LinkedIn don’t wait weeks or even months before interacting with your new connection. Ask them a question, pay them a compliment, ask for an introduction to someone else etc.
- ✓ Take advantage of events. LinkedIn has a feature that allows you to create an invite to an event. Keep an eye out on your connections and what events they might be attending. You can also look at the RSVP list of an event. Connect with a few of those individuals and get in touch with them before the event either through a message (if they are a connection) or

an inmail (if a second or third degree, or no group connection). Let them know that you will be at the event and are looking forward to meeting them in person.

- ✓ Sync geography with your travels. Most of the time, you will have connections from all over. If you are traveling somewhere on business, click on the “contacts” tab up top and then on the “locations” link on the left. This will tell you how many of your connections are in each area. If you have some free time on your business trip, suggest meeting up with some or all of your connections in that area for coffee, lunch, a small networking dinner
- ✓ Don’t hesitate to ask for advice. Reach out to an influential connection. Socialmediaexaminer.com explains crafting your message as follows: first introduce yourself and explain who you are, reference a common connection, give a genuine comment, ask for advice with an explanation of why you are asking.
- ✓ Become a resource. Find out where you can add value by keeping an eye on status updates and group discussions. Your value can be added insight, advice, finding a new connection etc. Once you are seen as a resource, your connections will classify you as a valued relationship in your network.

And for the grand finale, use your url to ask people to connect with you on LinkedIn. You should encourage everyone you meet to connect with you on LinkedIn in order to expand your network.

So have I convinced you that simply being on LinkedIn is not enough by now? Follow these steps and you will be the person telling others how wonderful and beneficial LinkedIn is.

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