

Use LinkedIn to Advance Your Career

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LinkedIn — the social media tool most often used by professionals — allows you to establish an online presence, connect with others, and find business and job opportunities

Social media is here to stay. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and other Internet-based applications have gone beyond the social realm and are permeating the business and technical world. *CEP*'s social media series started by exploring the professional benefits engineers can derive from social media tools, and offered advice on how to use such tools effectively (Jan. 2012, pp. 37–39). This article explains how you can get started on the professional networking site LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), and follows the three fictional chemical engineers introduced in the first article — Marissa, a process development engineer; Joel, an engineering consultant; and Parker, a business development manager — as they use LinkedIn to advance their professional and career goals.

Introduce yourself

Your LinkedIn profile is a mini-résumé that lets you establish a professional presence and control the first impression people get when searching for you online (Figure 1). Your profile helps you to connect with others and find career and business opportunities.

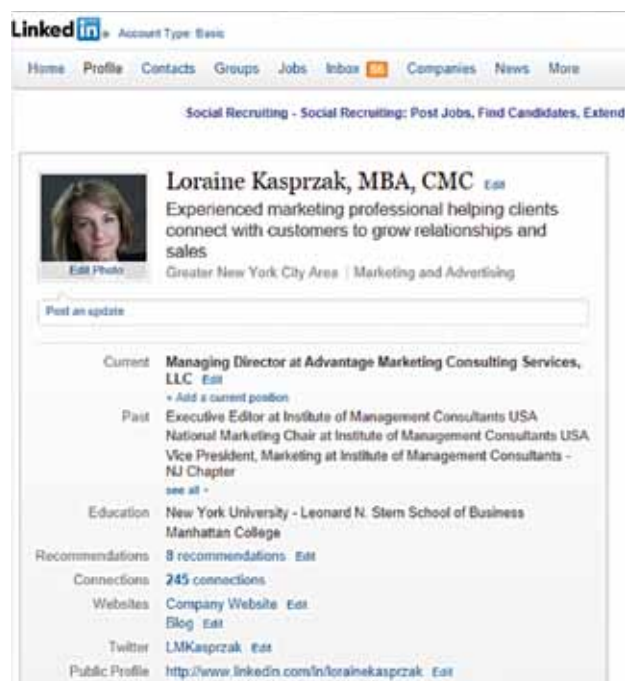
“There’s no excuse today for not having a LinkedIn profile,” says Bodo Albrecht, chief executive officer of BASIQ Corp., a technology consultancy. “The world has gone digital and people are using LinkedIn to keep track of others in their networks. They want to be able to find you on LinkedIn.”

To set up your LinkedIn profile, you need to input your contact information, experience, skills, and education. This can be time consuming. The easiest approach is to invest a half hour a day until your profile is complete and then keep it current with monthly updates.

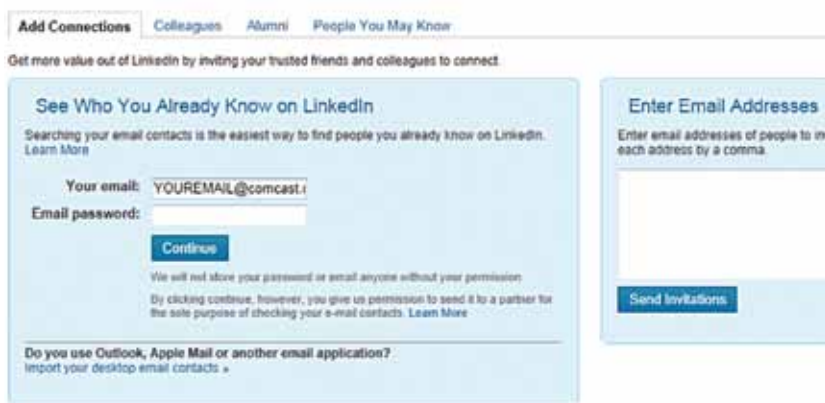
Albrecht offers this advice for completing your profile: “People skimming LinkedIn profiles are looking for spe-

cific skills. Use specifics, not buzzwords to describe your experience.” The most overused words include “creative,” “effective,” “extensive experience,” and “problem solving,” according to LinkedIn (1). Albrecht adds, “Keep it real. People want to know you as a person. Set up your profile so that it is authentic and reflects who you are.”

Marissa and Parker approach setting up their profiles differently:



▲ **Figure 1.** Your LinkedIn profile establishes your online presence and influences others' first impression of you.



▲ **Figure 2.** Use LinkedIn's **Add Connections** page to connect with people you already know.



Marissa registers on LinkedIn, uploads a professional photo, and crafts a headline (the text that appears next to her photo) that includes “process development engineer” and “alternative fuels.” These keywords describe her experience and help search engines find her profile. She adds her company’s website

and her Twitter name, and selects “oil and energy” as her industry. She also sets up a customized LinkedIn URL (www.linkedin.com/marissadiaz), which is easier for people to remember than the default URL LinkedIn provides. Next, she adds a summary of her professional experience and goals, and lists her specialties, including project management, computer simulations, and process scaleup.



Parker rushes through his profile, and does not complete it before he begins building his LinkedIn network. He then learns that members who have complete profiles appear higher in LinkedIn **Search** results, and realizes that completing his profile can help him find more opportunities for the specialty chemicals

company where he is the business development manager. On his **Edit Profile** page, he clicks the *Improve Your Profile* link and discovers it is a tool that analyzes his profile and offers recommendations. Parker knows he cannot perfect his profile overnight, so he schedules 15 minutes each day to work on it.

Connect

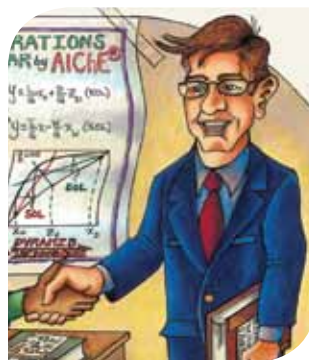
Every social media tool has its own personality. If Facebook is the local pub where you go to relax, then LinkedIn is the trade show, with a more formal social structure and more professional relationships. LinkedIn, like a trade show, provides opportunities to connect with vendors, customers, prospects, partners, employees, and employers — even competitors.

To ask others to join your LinkedIn network, you simply send them invitations by one of several methods:

- Click the *Connect* button on the right side of another member’s profile.
- Search on a person’s name and then click *Connect* to the right of the person’s information.
- Go to the **Add Connections** page (Figure 2) and search your email address book to find contacts, or enter email addresses for those to whom you want to send invitations.
- Click on the *People You May Know* section on your **Home** page, and then click *Connect* next to the person’s name to send an invitation.

Those who accept your invitations become first-degree connections. You can view their connections and develop these relationships to further your professional goals and help others in your own network.

Use LinkedIn’s *Share an Update* feature (Figure 3) to stay “top of mind” with your connections. Share information or links once or twice a day that your connections will find compelling or noteworthy. This could be a link to a news story, research article, or company announcement. Do not post an update just for the sake of posting. “The biggest risk to your online reputation is to be irrelevant,” says Albrecht. Posting too much personal information or content that is not relevant to your audience is a big LinkedIn *faux pas*.



Joel uses LinkedIn to initiate and foster relationships after presenting a paper at a separations technology conference in San Diego. After his talk, he meets several prospects interested in working with his firm, Pyramid Separation Technologies. When he gets back to his hotel, he signs on to LinkedIn and writes personal

invitations to each prospect, referring to their conversations earlier in the day. While on LinkedIn, he searches for the conference keynote speaker’s profile. He clicks on LinkedIn’s *Get Introduced through a Connection* and learns they have a



▲ **Figure 3.** Post relevant content to stay “top of mind” with your connections.

common connection. He writes a short, personal email to that contact and requests an introduction to the speaker. Later that night, Joel is not only connected to his prospects, he is also connected to the keynote speaker and has arranged a face-to-face meeting with her.

Show your expertise

Perhaps LinkedIn’s greatest value for a professional is the opportunity to be seen as an expert. You can build an expert reputation by creating original content that is relevant to your audience and linking to it on LinkedIn. Such content can include white papers, case studies, tip sheets, blog posts, or how-to videos.

Joel, for instance, posted a link to a summary of his conference talk. Two of his connections shared his summary with their networks, and one of those people emailed Joel to schedule a meeting.

Another way to build your expert reputation is to give and receive recommendations (Figure 4). Endorsements from other professionals build your credibility in your network.

Parker knows that the best way to get recommendations is to give them. He reaches out to several former colleagues and clients and offers to write recommendations. They reciprocate, and their recommendations are displayed on Parker’s profile page. His recommendations, in turn, are posted on their profiles, giving him exposure to their networks.

LinkedIn Groups enable those with similar interests to come together to discuss and share news and insights. You can create your own LinkedIn Group and use it to showcase your expertise and that of your company. These Groups, however, are not the place to pitch your product or service. Instead, you should offer expert advice that solves someone’s problem.

Joel, for example, is an expert in separation technologies. He joins groups with members who are likely to be prospects for his company and he participates in those groups’ conversations. He also starts a LinkedIn Group called We

Know Separation and invites other separation technology engineers to join. He initiates conversations on timely topics to get momentum going. Other group members begin posting comments and questions, and soon several lively discussions are underway.

LinkedIn also has a **Companies** feature that allows businesses to create their own branded pages, post updates, list products and services, announce job opportunities, and display recommendations.

Through **Companies**, Parker learns about a prospect’s new product line before it is announced to the trade press. He reaches out to his contact at the firm and offers a solution that could help them save money on raw materials.

Find career opportunities

If you were changing jobs in 2005, you would have bought a ream of high-quality paper, printed your résumé, added a cover letter, and mailed it off to dozens of companies. Fast-forward to 2012.

“That big, heavy paper looks dated to hiring managers,” says Lisa Rangel, managing director at job-search consultancy Chameleon Résumés. “Your LinkedIn profile is the new résumé; it’s the first thing recruiters want to see.” To make your profile more appealing to recruiters, Rangel advises:

- *Go for 100% completeness.* When your profile has all the elements that LinkedIn wants to see, your profile will rise in LinkedIn’s Search results.
- *Craft a memorable headline.* For example, “Project engineer with whom non-techies love to work” or “Prominent ChE seeking new opportunities with global chemical firms.”
- *Add your picture.* Your profile is nine times more likely to be accessed by recruiters if they see your photo, says Rangel.
- *Focus on measurable achievements.* Did your process

Ask the people who know you best to endorse you on LinkedIn

1 Choose what you want to be recommended for

Managing Director at Advantage Marketing Consulting Services, LLC
[Add a job or school]

2 Decide who you’ll ask

Your connections: [Search bar]
You can add 200 more recipients

3 Create your message

From: Loraine Kasprzak, MBA, CMC
LKasprzak@Advantage-Marketing.com

Subject: Thank you for offering to recommend me on LinkedIn

Hi Cindy,

It was wonderful catching up today, and I really appreciate your offering to recommend me on LinkedIn.

-Loraine Kasprzak, MBA, CMC

▲ **Figure 4.** Giving and getting recommendations is an easy task on LinkedIn. Recommendations help you build credibility in your network.

LINKEDIN BY THE NUMBERS (2)

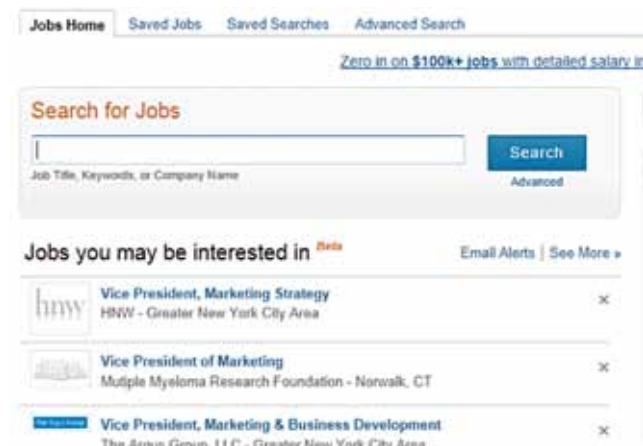
Five founders and 350 of their friends launched LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) on May 5, 2003 — a day its employees call *Cinco de LinkedIn*. Today, it is the world's largest professional network.

2	Professionals per second join LinkedIn
15	Language versions, including English, Russian, Turkish, and Romanian
75	Fortune 100 companies hire through LinkedIn
200	Countries with LinkedIn members
1+ million	LinkedIn Groups
2+ million	Companies have LinkedIn company pages
135+ million	LinkedIn members worldwide

improvements save your company money? Write about achievements such as this in the *Experience* section of your profile. Use relevant keywords and be concise in your descriptions.

Rangel also recommends that you join up to 50 Groups, the maximum LinkedIn allows. This expands your reach without affecting the quality of your direct connections. “Make friends with those in your groups,” she adds. “Call or email them and take your relationship to a deeper level. When possible, build these relationships before you need them, so your approach seems more genuine.”

LinkedIn's **Jobs** is an important career development resource, with 75 of the Fortune 100 companies using it to post open positions (2). From the **Jobs** page (Figure 5), you can filter job postings by location, company, and other search terms. The **Jobs** page also features a *Jobs You May be Interested In* section that recommends positions based on your profile keywords. LinkedIn allows you to see who posted each job listing, and how you are connected to the



▲ **Figure 5.** LinkedIn's **Jobs** page, an important career development resource, allows you to search for jobs. It also lists jobs that may interest you, based on your profile statement and keywords.

company. You can also use your profile to apply for many jobs directly through LinkedIn — no résumé required.

Marissa uses the **Jobs** page to follow several bioenergy companies. She receives an email when one of her target companies posts an opening for a bioenergy manager. One of her first-degree contacts is connected to a senior engineer at the firm, and she asks her contact for an introduction. After Marissa is introduced, she sends a LinkedIn message to the senior engineer to ask for advice on landing a job at his firm. With his advice, Marissa crafts a keyword-rich résumé and writes a focused cover letter that she emails to the hiring manager.

A final tip

Take time to explore LinkedIn. The site often adds new applications that can help you broaden your network and present more facets of your experience and expertise. Over 20 apps are available under the **More** tab on LinkedIn's navigation bar. Current apps worth exploring include: **Events**, which lets you find professional events and connect with others attending them; **Reading List by Amazon.com**, which allows you to share a list of the books you are reading with other LinkedIn members; and **Google Presentations**, which enables you to upload presentations and embed them in your profile.

Looking ahead

The next article in *CEP*'s social media series will discuss how chemical engineers are using blogs to share their experience, solve technical problems, and discuss social issues. It will also share best practices for those who want to start a blog of their own. Future articles will cover Google+ and other social media tools.

CEP

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1. **LinkedIn Press Center**, “LinkedIn says the 2011 most overused professional buzzwords in the United States are ‘creative,’ ‘organizational’ and ‘effective,’” <http://press.linkedin.com/node/1051> (Dec. 13, 2011, accessed Jan. 31, 2012).
2. **LinkedIn Press Center**, “About us,” <http://press.linkedin.com/about> (accessed Jan. 31, 2012).