

20 steps to a better LinkedIn profile

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Professionals – particularly salespeople – invest a lot of time and resource in building brands. We're trained at it – and we're good at it. But how often do we apply those skills to building our own personal brands? For many of us, it's nothing like as often as we should. I know that there's more that I could be doing to build my own profile on LinkedIn – and I know that I'm not alone.

We don't get around to it because we're busy, and because it can sometimes feel selfish or [egotistical](#) to invest time in marketing ourselves. However, when we neglect personal branding, we don't just sell ourselves short – we also miss a big opportunity, from a sales perspective. The [impact of employees who share content is huge](#). And the most effective employee sharers are those who've built their personal brand on LinkedIn.

The LinkedIn profile page is the foundation for your personal branding. And we regularly add features to increase its capabilities as a personal marketing platform and give you new ways to signal your skills and motivations. If you haven't checked your profile page recently, you might well find new ways to build your personal brand.

Here are 20 profile features you should check and update for 2020. Some of them are very quick wins, some of them may take a little bit of time – but all of them are very worthwhile. They will help to give you the LinkedIn profile and personal brand that you deserve.

1. Choose the right profile picture for LinkedIn.

Your profile picture is your calling card on LinkedIn – it's how people are introduced to you and (visual beings that we are) it governs their impressions from the start. There are some great posts explaining [how to pick the right profile picture on LinkedIn](#) – but here are some quick tips to start with: make sure the picture is recent and looks like you, make up your face takes up around 60% of it (long-distance shots don't stand out), wear what you would like to wear to work, and smile with your eyes!

2. Add a background photo.

Your background photo is the second visual element at the top of your profile page. It grabs people's attention, sets the context and shows a little more about what matters to you. More than anything, the right background photo helps your page stand out, engage attention and stay memorable.

3. Make your headline more than just a job title.

There's no rule that says the description at the top of your profile page has to be just a job title. Use the headline field to say a bit more about how you see your role, why you do what you do, and what makes

you tick. If you've got sales reps at your company who are on the ball with social selling, then take a quick look at their profile page headlines for inspiration. They will almost certainly have more than their job titles in there.

4. Turn your summary into your story.

The first thing to say about your LinkedIn summary is – make sure you have one! It's amazing how many people still leave this field blank when creating their LinkedIn profile. Your summary is your chance to tell your own story – so don't just use it to list your skills or the job titles you've had. Try to bring to life why those skills matter – and the difference they can make to the people you work with. Don't be afraid to invest some time, try a few drafts, and run your summary past people you know. This is your most personal piece of content marketing – and it's worth the effort.

5. Declare war on buzzwords.

Buzzwords are adjectives that are used so often in LinkedIn headlines and summaries that they become almost completely meaningless. Our regular rankings of [the most over-used buzzwords](#) include terms like 'specialised', 'leadership', 'focused', 'strategic', 'experienced', 'passionate', 'expert', 'creative', 'innovative' and 'certified'. Now I'm not saying you can't describe yourself as these things – or that they don't matter. However, just using these words won't convince people that you have these qualities. You need to demonstrate them as well – both in the way you describe yourself, and in the way you use LinkedIn profile features to show what you're about.

6. Grow your network.

One of the easiest and yet most relevant ways to grow your LinkedIn network is to synch your profile with your email address book. This enables LinkedIn to suggest people you could connect with. It's amazing how effective this can be at surfacing relevant people for you to reach out to – and no connection requests are sent without your permission, so you can vet all of the potential connections. Beyond this, get into the habit of following up meetings and conversations with LinkedIn connection requests – it's a great way of keeping your network vibrant and up to date.

7. List your relevant skills.

It's one of the quickest of quick wins on LinkedIn – scroll through the list of skills and identify those that are relevant to you. Doing so helps to substantiate the description in your Headline and Summary, and provides a platform for others to endorse you. However, the key here is staying relevant. A long list of skills that aren't really core to who you are and what you do, can start to feel unwieldy. Take time for a spring clean of your skills list every now and then.

8. Spotlight the services you offer.

Services is a new LinkedIn feature that helps consultants, freelancers and those working for smaller businesses to showcase the range of services that they offer. Filling out the Services section of your profile can boost your visibility in search results.

9. Spread the endorsement love.

Endorsements from other members substantiate your skills and increase your credibility. How do you get endorsed on LinkedIn? For starters, go through your network and identify connections who you feel genuinely deserve an endorsement from you – that’s often the trigger for people to return the favour. Don’t be afraid to reach out with a polite message asking for endorsement for a few key skills as well. Remember though – relevance matters. Reach out to people whose endorsement you’d really value.

10. Manage your endorsements more proactively.

Once endorsements start to come in, you might find that they skew the emphasis of your LinkedIn profile in ways that don’t reflect who you are. It could be that your core area of expertise is content marketing for example, but the people who’ve worked with you on events are more enthusiastic endorsers. Be proactive in managing your endorsements list using the edit features in the Skills section of your profile – you can choose which to show, and which to hide.

11. Take a skills assessment.

A skills assessment is an online test that enables you to demonstrate the level of your skills, and display a Verified Skills badge on your profile. Data shows that candidates with verified skills are [around 30% more likely to be hired](#) for the roles they apply for – and displaying proof your abilities strengthens your personal brand more generally as well. Displaying the results of your skills assessments is entirely voluntary, and you can retake the tests as often as you like before showing that you’ve passed.

12. Request recommendations.

Endorsements give people viewing your profile a quick, visual sense of what you’re valued for. Recommendations take things a step further. They are personal testimonials written to illustrate the experience of working with you. There’s a handy drop-down menu in the Recommendations section of your profile that makes it easy to reach out to specific contacts and request recommendations. Take the time to think about who you would most value a recommendation from – and personalise your request. It’s worth the extra effort.

13. Showcase your passion for learning.

When you complete a course on LinkedIn Learning, you’ll have the opportunity to add a course certificate to your LinkedIn profile. You do this from within the Learning History section of your LinkedIn Learning account – where you can also send updates about your learning to your network if choose.

14. Share media and marketing collateral.

The marketing collateral that you produce for your business can add an extra dimension to your own profile as well. Sharing case studies, white papers and other brand content helps to show what the business you work for is all about – and helps people understand what makes you tick. It demonstrates passion and commitment as well.

15. Get credit for your thought-leadership with Publications.

The Publications section is one of the most under-used elements in LinkedIn profiles – and that means that you can really stand out from the crowd when you use this feature to draw attention to existing thought-leadership content. Have you helped to write an eBook or a White Paper? Or written a post on your company's blog? The Publications section links your profile to these assets.

16. Share relevant content from your LinkedIn feed.

It's one thing to have a network of connections on LinkedIn – it's far better to have an active role in that network, appearing in your connections' LinkedIn feeds in a way that adds value for them. Sharing relevant content with your network is one of the most accessible ways of doing this. You can make a start by keeping a close eye on your LinkedIn feed, and sharing content that you find genuinely interesting – and that aligns with your point of view.

17. Add comments.

Sharing is great – but it's just the starting point. When you add comments to your shares, you give yourself greater prominence within the feed and start to express why you think a particular piece of content matters. Well-expressed comments also enable you to share a broader range of content. It might be that you don't agree with a point of view but still find it interesting, for example. A comment that can express that viewpoint starts to establish your opinion and thought-leadership. It's also more likely to draw additional comments, which then raise your profile across LinkedIn. Bear this mind when you're writing your comment – and make sure you're saying something you're happy for people to associate with you.

18. Follow relevant influencers for your industry.

Following relevant influencers on LinkedIn helps to put a range of interesting content in your feed, which you can then share with others when you think it adds value. It also helps to give context to your LinkedIn profile, demonstrating your passion for what you do.

19. Become an employee advocate.

LinkedIn Elevate is our platform for helping businesses to launch and manage employee advocacy programs – and it generates some fascinating insights on the impact that employee sharing has for those doing the sharing. In fact, 86% of employee advocates say that sharing content for their business has had a positive effect on their own careers. If your business is using Elevate, then it's a great way to take a more active role in getting your brand content out there. If it's not, then it's still worth reaching out to colleagues and asking who's producing content that would be worth sharing on LinkedIn.

20. Publish long-form content – and use it to start conversations.

The more you share and comment on content, the more you establish your expertise and thought-leadership credentials on LinkedIn. Publishing long-form posts is the natural next step to take. A great starting point is to monitor the response that you get to your comments and shares. Are there particular subjects and points of view that seem to resonate with your network? Are there comments that you have shared which you feel you could expand on in a post? Evolving your thought-leadership in this way keeps it real – and keeps you plugged into the issues your connections are talking about. Be ready for

your long-form posts to start new conversations too. Keep an eye on the comments and be ready to respond.

Getting your LinkedIn profile working harder for you doesn't have to take up hours of your time. Try working through these ideas, building from one to the other – and you'll find that you can make progress quickly, even if you're just able to set aside a few minutes over a lunch break or in the evenings. Once you're flexing the full advantages of your LinkedIn profile you'll be amazed what a difference it can make to both you and your business. Make 2021 the year it happens!