

Introduction to LinkedIn

This leaflet is designed to introduce you to LinkedIn and explores how you can use it effectively as part of your job search.



What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a business-related social networking site (like a professional version of Facebook). You can use LinkedIn to connect with professionals who have similar interests or experiences, or who work in the sector that you are hoping to join. A LinkedIn profile, which is like an online CV, provides a platform to showcase your qualifications, skills and experience to potential recruiters. You can also explore information about companies and their current employees. It can be used for research, to stay up to date with current sector news and to build valuable contacts. LinkedIn can help you become more productive in your job search.

Reasons to use LinkedIn:

- ▶ Increase your visibility
- ▶ LinkedIn is the most popular professional networking website in the world, with more than five hundred and sixty million users.
- ▶ The internet has become a key part of the global economy and the way businesses communicate. It has influenced recruitment processes and the way we can search for job opportunities.
- ▶ If you do not engage with social media as part of your job search, you could miss out on valuable opportunities to broaden your network, increase your sector knowledge, and perhaps, find work experience/job opportunities.
- ▶ You can enhance search engine results. LinkedIn will appear high up on a search under your name in Google. A professional LinkedIn profile is a positive way of managing your 'digital footprint' (the information that exists about you on the internet). Many employers will check what they can find out about you online.

Research

- ▶ Use LinkedIn to explore career opportunities – research what graduates with your degree are currently doing, e.g. search 'Mathematics' and 'University of Surrey'.
- ▶ Find the career profiles of thousands of successful professionals in your field. How did they progress to achieve their current role?
- ▶ You can find out about companies in various sectors, gauging how successful they are and who their key competitors are.
- ▶ Join discussion forums to ask questions about recruitment or other issues in your chosen sector.

Seek opportunities

LinkedIn allows you to increase your network much quicker than meeting people face to face. Once you have connected with people you may be able to enquire about informational interviews (meetings with employers that allow you to seek advice about a job role, your career, the company or industry), work shadowing or work experience opportunities. You can also ask about when companies will be hiring new staff and what their recruitment processes involve.

Once established in your chosen career, you can use LinkedIn to source new clients/business, or perhaps seek a career move or opportunity for promotion.

How do I get started?

Firstly, it helps to understand the different elements of LinkedIn:

- ▶ People – individual profiles.
- ▶ Connections/Contacts – people with whom you have connected on LinkedIn. You can have a 1st degree connection (friend), a 2nd degree connection (friend of a friend) etc.
- ▶ Company – company/organisation profiles. Like Facebook pages, companies have their own profiles on LinkedIn.
- ▶ Group – groups of people with similar interests where discussion forums are permitted.
- ▶ Answers – Q&A boards where you can seek specific advice from other LinkedIn users. As LinkedIn is a professional platform you are likely to receive good advice, but be cautious of individual opinions and comments that could be biased.

Top Tips:

- ▶ Before starting to write your profile, be clear about your objectives. What are you hoping to achieve? Do you have a strategy? A plan?
- ▶ Remember that everything you write will be in the public domain – you must be truthful, accurate and professional. There are many news articles about dismissals due to the inappropriate use of social media. Make sure that employer searches will not reveal anything negative about you.
- ▶ LinkedIn is subject to Terms and Conditions, so make sure you are satisfied with these before progressing.



Did you know?

You can access our leaflet series and further resources on Surrey Pathfinder: [**surrey.ac.uk/pathfinder**](https://surrey.ac.uk/pathfinder)

Writing your profile:

- ▶ LinkedIn has a useful feature that allows you to upload your CV as a word document, recognising the relevant parts and laying them out in the correct order. However, you may decide you want to make adjustments for your profile, so do not feel that you have to include everything. Think about the key messages you want to convey and view other profiles to help refine your own.
- ▶ Choose an appropriate and professional photo – remember LinkedIn is not Facebook. What image do you want to portray to potential recruiters?
- ▶ Aim for 100% completion. This requires a minimum of three references (which you can request using the website), but think carefully about who you approach.
- ▶ In addition, you can highlight skills and get endorsements from other users, but be prepared to endorse others in return.
- ▶ Make the most of your personal statement in order to attract potential employers. Consider: What do I do? Who do I do it for? What results do I deliver? What am I seeking?
- ▶ Remember to keep your target audience in mind – use active verbs to sound dynamic. Highlight the valuable skills that you have to offer an employer.
- ▶ LinkedIn gives you the option to include details such as Twitter profiles, websites and instant messaging addresses in your profile. It may be best to ignore these options, but you can link to a suitable website or Tweeter feed at your discretion. Do not mix private networks with your professional network.

Ongoing use of LinkedIn:

- ▶ Once your profile is online, you can start building your list of connections. Start by adding existing contacts – family, peers, colleagues and employers from part-time jobs and internships/placements, and contacts from volunteering, extra-curricular activities etc.
- ▶ Join some LinkedIn groups – there are over two million groups on LinkedIn. The ones that are most relevant will include sector groups related to your career interests, alumni groups, and geographical networking groups. Being a member of a group is an efficient way of expanding your network when you have limited contacts.
- ▶ Use the search box (top right-hand corner) to find people and organisations in order to help you with your career plans. It is important to build relationships gradually – never ask a new contact directly for a job – ask for information and advice initially. You may find this leads to other opportunities, especially if you keep an open mind.
- ▶ You can also access statistical information about organisations and how they are performing via LinkedIn company profiles. It is possible to ‘follow’ companies in order to receive regular updates. However, be careful of your profile settings and be selective, otherwise your inbox will be inundated with LinkedIn messages.
- ▶ Similar to your CV, you should keep your profile up to date by adding information about new roles, skills and experiences. Remember, employers can view your LinkedIn profile at any time.

Further resources

- ▶ LinkedIn have produced their own Learning Centre, which offers advice on different aspects of the website: <http://help.linkedin.com/app/home>
- ▶ They have also prepared information specifically for students: <http://students.linkedin.com/uk>
- ▶ You can access regular webinars for free to help you get started: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/free-webinars>
- ▶ There is a helpful blog, <http://blog.linkedin.com/> and a Safety Centre to help protect your information online: <https://safety.linkedin.com/>
- ▶ LinkedIn provides a Job Hunting Handbook for students and new graduates: <http://www.linkedin.com/studentjobs>, in addition to posting job vacancies: <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs>.

And finally

Remember that LinkedIn is only one method of creative job seeking and building your professional network. You can find out more by reading the Employability & Careers Centre leaflet *Job Seeking: The Hidden Job Market*, accessed via the resources section of Surrey Pathfinder



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Find out more:
surrey.ac.uk/pathfinder

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