

Ten Tips for LinkedIn Novices: Set Up and Connection Helpers for First-Timers

April 17, 2012 by [Kelly Blazek](#)

LinkedIn It's never too late to join the 150 million networkers, job seekers and business professionals around the globe whose qualifications are being viewed on the #2 most popular social networking site in America: LinkedIn. Ready to jump in? Congrats – you'll want these helpful tips to avoid newbie mis-steps and create a better LinkedIn experience as you set up your account and add connections. In my next article, I'll share pointers about building an effective profile including headlines, summaries, experience descriptions, recommendations and groups.

1. Sign up using a personal e-mail account, always, for LinkedIn, and save your password! If you want to use LinkedIn for business development, by all means show a work e-mail but ensure that you have a second, personal e-mail approved and in LinkedIn's system (add additional e-mails under SETTINGS > ACCOUNT > Add & Change E-Mail Addresses). If your account is only connected to a work e-mail, you run the risk of losing access to it. It's happened before: someone gets bad news about their job, had their e-mail turned off, and then are left without access to change out their profile to a personal e-mail. And, too many people take a new job and forget to change their primary contact e-mail on LinkedIn - this means a LOT of people are wondering how to get in touch with you, and their requests to connect are going unanswered. As for your password, capture it somewhere. I work with many newer LinkedIn members who are stumped because they can't remember their password. These folks keep on making duplicate new profiles, and it's confusing for others to know which is the active one. Write that password down and tape it to the inside of a closet, drawer or under furniture – whatever works!

2. Don't stress about selecting your Industry, which is a drop down list – there's no option to customize that field. Many job seekers are in transition, moving from one type of employer to another – don't stop filling out your profile because you don't have the perfect answer, today. You can edit your Industry as often as you wish (choose Profile>Edit Profile and click EDIT after your name). Want to be in a new type of job or profession? Select the Industry in which you wish to land. After you spend more time looking at others' profiles, you'll get a sense if your industry should stay, or be changed. In LinkedIn, nothing is written in stone!

3. Make sure your Location says Cleveland/Akron. One of the first questions LinkedIn asks you is for your zip code. When you finally see your new profile page, it states you are in North Olmsted or Cuyahoga Falls as your location. Hmmm – you don't want that – but it's easy to change. You want to be found in searches done in the Cleveland/Akron, Ohio area, and part of

Zip Code:

Location Name: Rocky River, Ohio
 Cleveland/Akron, Ohio Area

that overall candidate pool.

Here's the fast fix: at the top navigation bar, choose Profile>Edit Profile and click EDIT after your name. You'll see your home zip code, with two options. Un-select your neighborhood location (i.e., Medina, Lyndhurst) and choose the "Cleveland/Akron, Ohio Area" option.

4. What profile level do you want? You want FREE. You don't need the Premium account, and very few people ever purchase one. You will probably receive several tempting offers over the next few months to "trial" a premium account, and if you do, make certain you actually turn off the auto credit charge feature. 95% of people have a maximum LinkedIn experience at a minimum cost – nothing. So don't worry that you're missing out on some magical secret experience with a free account – you aren't.

5. The moment your profile is created, you see a page that says **People You May Know** – and are shocked that you actually DO know some of these folks. You wonder, "how did LinkedIn do that? I've been on this for 12 minutes and this system already guessed who I know?" Remember, you sign in to LinkedIn using an e-mail account. If it was a work account, of course LinkedIn recognizes other work colleagues with the same e-mail identifier. And if it's a personal account, you may be showing up in members' e-mail contact lists. Don't freak out – if any of these are authentic connections, people you know, go ahead and click the CONNECT button to start building links!

6. DO NOT let LinkedIn inside your Gmail, Yahoo, AOL, Hotmail or other online contact e-mail lists to "see who you already know." REPEAT – do not succumb to this option, which LinkedIn will hit you over the head with 5 times in your first 15 minutes online.



Keep selecting the Skip This Step or No Thanks option, every time you see this. You will be able to add connections in a smarter way (see Tip #5 above), don't worry. Too many LinkedIn newbies end up sending an invite to connect to everyone who ever sent them an e-mail, and everyone in their contact list. This has an often humiliating outcome: think about what sits in your e-mail. You'll be asking your feuding neighbor whose kids turfed your lawn, the ex-boyfriend who lied about all his other secret girlfriends, the hiring manager you bombed that interview with, your ex-wife's uber-nasty lawyer, the landlord you're in an argument with, the person you asked out and who blew you off, and the potential homebuyers who insulted you with a lowball bid. Besides, of those hundreds of folks living in your inbox, many will be wondering, "Who is this again? I've never met this person, so why would they feel it's appropriate for us to connect? Seems bush league to me." Don't start your LinkedIn life having your judgment questioned – be safe and avoid this feature like the plague.

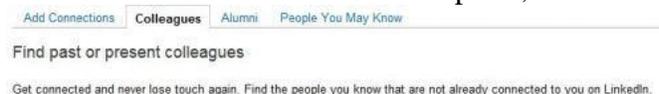
7. Instead, **use these two steps to build your connections** safely and stress-free: 1) Hand add e-mails you have, 2) Add current/past work colleagues. Here's how to easily add connections: **Step 1: Add e-mails by hand.** Have a few e-mails at the ready from business cards, from your place of employment, from an alumni group or from family members. For your very first connections, again, IGNORE the "See Who You Know" lure, shown above, and use this option



instead: Enter E-Mail Addresses. Slug them into the box below, and when you click the SEND INVITATIONS link, you see a box where you can customize a request message. If you want different messages to different people (“Lorenzo, I’m finally doing this, thanks for the encouragement!” or “Looking forward to staying in touch with my UH colleagues”) then enter just one e-mail, write a custom message, hit SEND, and come back to the ADD CONNECTIONS feature this way: on the top navigation bar, click on CONTACTS and then ADD CONNECTIONS and re-use this feature below as many times as you wish.



Step 2: Look for your Current/Past work colleagues. LinkedIn allows you to do this two easy ways. One, go to the bottom of your Home Page, and simply click on the links to employers, shown here at left. You’ll see a list of folks with profiles on LinkedIn, and you’ll recognize some names. Select any that you would like to connect with, and LinkedIn walks you through the rest, including sending the “invite” note. The other easy way to find Current/Past work colleagues is: on the top navigation bar, click on CONTACTS and then ADD CONNECTIONS and then select the COLLEAGUES or ALUMNI option, shown here:



8. Skip the Twitter and Facebook blasts. If you’re new to LinkedIn, you’re probably not a legendary Facebook wizard or a Twitter goddess. As soon as you’ve created a profile, LinkedIn blasts you a big note that says “TELL EVERYONE on Facebook and Twitter that you’ve created a LinkedIn profile and want to connect!” Pass on this – you won’t miss a thing. Just click Skip This Step.

9. New users see pretend connections – don’t worry! When you’ve created a profile, and visit your home page, you see ”activity feeds” from total strangers. You will be thinking, “who the heck are these people” that are commenting on articles, changing their profiles, and adding photos. You’re worried that some awful thing happened – this has to be a mistake. You didn’t do anything wrong and LinkedIn didn’t connect you to these people. This is hilarious, but for all first-time accounts, LinkedIn populates your home page with fake people feeds. Think of it this way: when you buy a photo frame at the store, what’s in the frame? Fake family photos of people you don’t know. It’s the same concept with LinkedIn. These are the faux connections you don’t really have. As soon as you add connections, these pretend profiles go away. Want them gone ASAP? Hover your mouse over the top right corner of each person’s blurb, and you see the word HIDE. Click on it, and these fake friends go away! While you’re here, you can also make the three panel LinkedIn Today news box at the top of your page disappear as well. It’s a feed of

articles for social media experts, and you aren't missing anything of the LinkedIn experience by hovering your mouse over the upper right corner, and selecting HIDE.

10. Speaking of activity feeds, it's important to realize that **you have control over what you share with connections**. If you don't tell LinkedIn otherwise, all of your connections will see a notification that you've added a photo, changed your Headline, or tweaked your Experience or Summary. When you're a seasoned LinkedIn user, you'll get tired of seeing these HEY I CHANGED SOMETHING alerts, called "Activity Broadcasts," and it most often signals someone is ramping up a job search. As a new LinkedIn user with only a small amount of connections, it's not a bad thing when your connections see your own Activity Alerts as you add or edit content. But as you build more connections, and perhaps launch a confidential job search of your own, do you really want current work colleagues to know you're probably looking for a new job? You can make these important edits to your profile without notifying all of your connections that you've done so, and you start at the SETTINGS page: You find SETTINGS at the top of your home page, under your name in tiny blue letters. Once at SETTINGS, under the PROFILE tab is Turn on/off your activity broadcasts. Uncheck the box, and your connections will NOT be seeing alerts when you change your profile. But, if you've just won a Pulitzer, earned your MBA, landed a new job, or booked for a prestigious speaking engagement, turn that feature back on – you WANT your contacts to learn about those impressive accomplishments in a news alert, absolutely!

You're ready to start adding connections, and responding to requests to join. Think of your connections as somewhat of a personal recommendation – so don't accept requests to connect from strangers, and certainly not from the creepy dude in the accounting department that spends too much time in his van in the parking lot. In my next article, we'll review tips for building out your profile, and how to manage those questionable requests to connect. Have fun, and welcome to the powerful world of LinkedIn!