

LinkedIn for beginners



Thousands of entrepreneurs running small companies are using social networking website LinkedIn to make contacts. But can the service really benefit your business? Andy Headworth, founder of Sirona Consulting, investigates.

Most people have heard of [LinkedIn](#), but do you know what it is and how it can help you with your business?




First, let me define what it is – LinkedIn is a professional networking group whose purpose is to provide its members a way to search for new contacts, jobs and business opportunities. Unlike sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Bebo, LinkedIn is primarily focused on the business community.



Your individual network consists of your immediate connections, and two further levels of people with links to any of your contacts. This means that your searchable network can expand very quickly. Just to highlight the power of this network, I currently have around 325 connections and my total network is over 6 million people!

When you start on LinkedIn, you need to build a profile of yourself, what you do, who you work for etc. This is like an online CV builder, and if you are serious about using the site, you need to spend some time getting this right and keeping it updated.

People can find you by searching so it is worth putting a smattering of keywords across your profile that reflect your key skills, products or services. It is worth spending some time filling your profile out fully, because you never know who can find you online – business contact, ex-colleagues, prospects and even potential employees. As an example of a completed profile, here is a snapshot of mine:

[Edit My Profile](#) [Edit My Public Profile](#)
[View My Profile as others see it](#)




[Forward this profile](#)

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[\[Edit \]](#)

[Profile](#) [Q&A](#) [Recommendations](#) [Connections](#)

Current


- **Managing Director at Sirona Consulting Ltd** [\[Edit \]](#)


Past

- Ecommerce Manager at Damia Group
- Manager at Grovetex Trading Ltd
- Recruitment Director at Knight Benton Group Ltd

Education

- Worthing College

Recommended

4 people have recommended you
2 clients, 3 partners

Connections

323 connections

Industry Staffing and Recruiting [\[Edit \]](#)

Websites

- www.sironaconsulting.com [\[Edit \]](#)
- blog.sironaconsulting.com [\[Edit \]](#)
- www.jobinablog.com [\[Edit \]](#)

Ads by Google

Direct Sales
 Thousands of UK Sales Jobs. Search & Apply Online Today!
www.Sales-Ladder.co.uk

Searching for Interims
 Register with us to access projects Looking to place senior execs now.
www.intramezzo.co.uk

Andy Recommends

People (5)
Peter Gold
 Owner, Hire Strategies Limited
 Having worked with Peter for over three years
 L...

[Recommend more people](#)

One of the biggest mistakes people make after joining LinkedIn is sitting back and wait for something to happen. Any form of networking whether offline or online, needs you to be pro-active to grow your network. The difference with LinkedIn is that it makes this very easy for you to do. My key phrase with regards to this and other social networking sites is a simple one – you only get out of it what you put into it!

How to build you network

Here are my top 10 ways to grow your LinkedIn network:

1. Take out your business card collection, or if you're organised use your Contacts in Outlook, or even on your PDA or Blackberry. Go through each one and do a quick search on LinkedIn, and if you find them there, send them an invite using the relevant page. Make sure you personalise the emails in the box shown below with the red cross. There is nothing worse than boring template emails!

LinkedIn Welcome, **Andy**
[Sign Out]

Home People Jobs & Hiring Services Answers
Connections Invitations Other Contacts Colleagues Classmates

Search People Enter keyword, name, company or title

Add friends or colleagues to your network?

TIP Add people to your network often? Try the [Outlook Toolbar](#)

First Name	Last Name	Email
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

▼ Edit/preview invitation text

Subject: Invitation to connect on LinkedIn

Name, ▼

I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.

-Andy

2. Think of people you have worked with during your career, and if you can find them link to them. They may have gone to the same school, college or university, or you may have worked with them at current or previous organisations. You will be surprised at how many of these people are on LinkedIn.
3. Each time you get a request to join a network, either accept it or archive it. Do not choose the 'I don't know this person' as once a person gets five of these their account is frozen, and you could then be responsible for having them removed! My advice in the beginning would be to accept all requests to link up.
4. Get into the habit of being a 'name magpie'. Each time you think of people you haven't yet linked to write them down somewhere safe. Next time you are online, go searching on LinkedIn and as before, when you find them, link to them. It is also a great way of finding what people have been up to since you last met.
5. If you do find someone in your network who you would like to connect to but don't have an email address for, then you can still contact them. Request an introduction through someone in your network that is connected to the person you want to connect to (if there are multiple connections here, you can even choose which introducer to use!). Just make sure you explain succinctly why you want to be introduced, as the introducer does have the power of veto.
6. Don't be afraid to ask current colleagues, ex-colleagues, business partners etc for recommendations. They do help in building your profile further, but my advice is to only seek recommendations from

people that you would recommend yourself!

7. Regularly go through the connections of all your first level contacts. They are also expanding their networks, and it is likely you will find mutual contacts that you will be able to link to.

8. Connect with power networkers or 'hubs' in your industry. These are the people who have thousands of contacts and are usually only too pleased to link with others. They are often referred to as 'open networkers' and most have their email address in their profile. Don't be shy with these people; they are motivated by expanding their networks. When you next do a search for someone, sort the search by connections (drop down box), and you will find them.

9. The Advanced Search is key to getting the most out of LinkedIn, get used to using it – you will reap the benefits.

10. Tell everyone about LinkedIn! LinkedIn offer a button (see below) that you can add to email footers, websites, blogs etc.



Make sure you use it (go to your profile, 'Promote your profile'), it is great advertising, and you will get people inviting you to join their network.

LinkedIn is a great business tool, and one that I firmly advocate using in business. From a recruitment perspective, I use it as a regular high quality source of prospective candidates, and from a business development perspective you get the chance to do some 'homework' on your business prospects. When you get used to using LinkedIn, it will become second nature to you, and you will find yourself 'checking out' every potential business contact you deal with before you meet them!

If you are just starting off on LinkedIn and want to further expand your network to tap into my millions of contacts, then please just send me an [invitation](#) and I will happily oblige.