

How to reach All-Star LinkedIn profile and usage

The sketchnotes above and notes below are from a presentation at the ATID 2016 National Conference in the CafePD session.

I'm still surprised at the number of professionals who either don't have or don't use their LinkedIn profile.

I've had so many people say to me that they have a LinkedIn profile that they set up once when they were job hunting, but they haven't updated it for a while, and don't find enough value to check it regularly.

There are six questions that you need to answer to reach All-Star status on your profile and find value in how you use LinkedIn.

They're not numbered, as they're not sequential. The sketch notes better represent the connection between the questions. Whilst they aren't sequential there is a central question. The question of purpose shapes your answers to all the other ones, so answer this one first.

Why are you on LinkedIn?

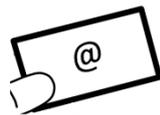


When teaching my kids to play chess, in the early games I'd move to checkmate quickly. They protested, wanting to play, jump the horses and take pawns. They learnt to focus on the purpose of the game. It's the same with LinkedIn – know your purpose as this will shape and improve your usage.

It may be career progression, expanded professional network, business development, raised industry profile, recruitment, publishing or participation in a professional community.

Being clear about your purpose will also help you prioritise your usage. Remember too that others may have a different purpose – don't rant in the comments section of someone else's post that you think it doesn't belong on LinkedIn. If you don't like what someone says, you don't need to judge their purpose, just mute them!

Who are you?



- First your headline. 5 words or less so that people can see it all not the start and ...
- Next, your summary. First person (I am) not third (Neil is).
- Your experience must show 2 previous roles to reach All-Star. Go back as long as you want - but only if it's relevant to your purpose.
- List your qualifications/certifications if they're relevant. Don't list ones that are incomplete. List them when you finish.
- Use a professional picture with your head & shoulders (facing towards the left so that it looks at your profile not away from it). Smile, warm, engaging. Don't crop your face from a group shot. Use a recent photo (last 2 years).
- List your skills. Not sure which ones to list? Find others in your field and copy them! No one is really interested in them or how many people have endorsed you because everyone knows that people endorse things that they don't know the other person has but, having the right skills in your list matters as recruiters will search for people with particular skills. Use the current terms – you don't plan training or build courses, you're an instructional designer.
- List interests where they're relevant to your purpose.
- Personalise your background image and your URL
- Include contact details so that when they find you, they can contact you.

What do you say?



There's a hierarchy to what you say.

1. Like a post
2. Comment on a post
3. Share a post
4. Write your own post
5. Publish an article on Pulse (articles published on Pulse show up in your profile so make sure they're good)

Doing any of these things improves your visibility in your network.

You wouldn't show up at a networking or industry event and then not say anything. You don't have to talk constantly but you do have to say something, regularly.

Who are you connected to?



One word for how you should think about connecting - promiscuous. Why? Because when a recruiter is searching the results are returned to them according to your level of connection with the person who's searching.

This is why your network needs to be both big (50+ to reach All-Star) and wide (across industries in case they filter by industry).

If there are key figures in your industry or profession send them a personalised connection request (do this for every connection request actually).

If you're trying to get into a particular company, follow that company. If you're going for an interview check out some of the people who work at that company. Remember that they may get a notification that you looked at their profile!

You can unlink from people without them being notified. It may be better to keep them in your network and just mute their posts!

Gather recommendations over time, whilst you're in roles and before you leave them. People can see the date that they're given so if there's a bunch of them all at the same time it looks like you've asked for them all. When they're spread out it looks like people have given them.

Who do you listen to?



Many people worry that a big and wide network will mean that their feed is full of irrelevant content. They're right! Fortunately on the top right of posts is a drop down menu with an option to mute that person. Keeping a previous manager who was an \$#!€ may be important in your industry or network, but you don't have to look at them or listen to them!

Who you listen to also includes high profile people, companies, communities of practice, industry and professional groups.

This is where the gold is, on LinkedIn and Twitter. Listen to the right people and your feed will be a constant stream of quality resources and dialogue, inspiration and feedback.

It can get overwhelming in its goodness though, so curate what you read (and yes it's ok to not read everything) using a bookmarking/tagging tool like Diigo (I use this) or Evernote.

Make sure also that the group of people that you listen to isn't too vanilla. Keep some outliers and contrarians in the mix so that you're exposed to ideas that may challenge where you are and keep your feed in the proximal learning zone.

How do you improve? Engage!



Engage intentionally - let your purpose drive your usage. Don't just be on LinkedIn, be on LinkedIn for a reason.

Engage intelligently - make smart choices about what you say, who you listen to and how you present yourself. The best time to do this is while you are still employed.

Engage incrementally - weave LinkedIn into your social media routines. The app has gotten way better over the last year. Spend small amounts of time regularly rather than random bursts of activity.

It's part of your job to develop your network and position yourself in a filtered (by your choices of who you connect and listen to) stream of relevant content. It's part of your life to create the career that you want.

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