

THE ULTIMATE LINKEDIN CHECKLIST

FOR SMALL AND
MEDIUM BUSINESSES

Lauren Dugan

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Introduction: The Value of a Professional Network

At first glance, LinkedIn appears to primarily be the domain of job-seekers. They post their resumes, direct potential employers to their profile, cross their fingers and hope for the best!

Of course, LinkedIn *is* a great place to showcase your resume. But it is much, much more than that.

I like to call LinkedIn the social business network. This separates it from Facebook, which is the pure social network, and Twitter, which is the social information network. It's the business part of LinkedIn that this eBook is going to focus on.

With over 175 million users, LinkedIn is the best place on the web to leverage your professional network—as a job seeker, yes, but also as a small and medium business.

As a business owner, you've cultivated a vast network of partners, suppliers, employees, vendors, competitors and more in the offline world. By establishing a solid LinkedIn presence, you'll be able to not only connect with your current network, but tap into *their* networks as well. New opportunities to discover talent, form partnerships and find vendors are at your fingertips once you're on LinkedIn— and it doesn't have to cost you a dime.

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Format

This eBook is going to walk you through the steps you need to take to build a LinkedIn presence that improves your bottom line. We'll start with the basics of setting up a profile and Company Page for those who are completely new to LinkedIn. Next, we'll go over several optimization tips, including how to make your profile search-friendly, how to use leverage your Careers and Products tabs, and how to develop a content strategy to keep your page active. We'll finish up with a discussion on using LinkedIn Ads to drive even more business.

At the beginning of each section is an easy-to-follow checklist that highlights all of the actions you'll need to take. I suggest skimming over this checklist, reading the entire section, and returning to the checklist to implement what you just read. Appended to the end of this eBook is a master checklist of all of the steps in each section, so you can print it out and check off what you've accomplished as you go.

Your Goals

Before you dive in to this eBook, take a minute to write down your goals for using LinkedIn. Why do you want to create a Company Page? To generate leads or website traffic? To meet other local business owners? To find potential employees? To get signups for a

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webinar? There are as many reasons for using LinkedIn as there are businesses, so think about *your* reasons carefully.

All of the tactics in this eBook can be applied to any Company Page successfully, but some are better for certain goals than others. LinkedIn Groups, for instance, are fantastic if your goals include establishing yourself as a thought leader and developing your brand. Setting up a Product Page, on the other hand, is more suited for goals surrounding lead generation and increasing social proof.

Your goals will define which tactics you emphasize over others, so it's important that you establish them firmly before continuing.

With that being said, let's begin at the beginning: setting up a LinkedIn Profile.

First Thing's First: Creating a LinkedIn Profile

YOUR PROFILE CHECKLIST	
	Fill out first name, last name, email, password on LinkedIn.com
	Fill out second page of information, including country and employment status
	Verify email address
	Modify profile: create Headline, upload photo, fill out current and past work positions, write summary
	Connect to your offline network using LinkedIn's tools
	Modify your profile URL
	Optional: follow LinkedIn's profile completeness tips

Before any business can set up a Company Page, they must have an administrator who has their own LinkedIn profile. This section will focus on the basics of setting up a profile so that you can create your Company Page, while the remainder of the eBook will focus on the Page itself and networking on behalf of your business.

Setting Up Your Profile

LinkedIn makes it very easy for new users to create an account, so if you haven't ever visited LinkedIn.com, don't fear! You'll soon get the hang of it. And while we're on the topic, go ahead and enter "LinkedIn.com" into your browser now.

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Once on LinkedIn, you'll see an intro page with a form on the left side under the header "Get started—it's free." Follow that advice, and fill out the form: you'll need your first name, last name, an email address and a password.

Hit "Continue" and you'll be taken to a second page with some more data to fill out. Select your country, enter your Zip Code or Postal Code, and fill in some information about your current state of employment. If you are a consultant, you'll want to select "Employed" and "I am self-employed", and then choose an industry from the drop down menu.

LinkedIn will then walk you through a verification process, which requires you to click a link they send to your email. Follow all of the steps after clicking this email, and you'll have a fully activated account!

Note: LinkedIn offers resources for new users in their Learning Center [<http://learn.linkedin.com>]. Here you'll find guides tailored to new users, entrepreneurs, small businesses, consultants and more, as well as brief overviews of all of the main site features. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with this resource if you are totally new to LinkedIn.

Optimizing Your Profile

Once activated, you'll be able to modify your Profile with additional information, such as a headline, a profile photo, current and past

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work positions and a summary section that describes who you are professionally. Fill this out to the best of your ability, focusing on highlighting your skills and expertise.

You'll also want to start building a network that represents your offline or "real-world" network: use LinkedIn's tools for this, including their webmail import

[<https://www.linkedin.com/secure/uploadContacts?displayWebMail>], contacts file uploader

[<http://www.linkedin.com/uploadContacts?displayUploadContacts>] and list of colleagues

[<http://www.linkedin.com/reconnect?displayCategories>] and classmates [<http://www.linkedin.com/edurec?display>].

Lastly, create a custom profile URL that you can use to share your profile with future connections. You can do this by visiting your profile editing page [<http://www.linkedin.com/profile/public-profile-settings>].

It's a good idea to follow LinkedIn's profile completeness tips that appear to the right of your profile. These will help you create a solid profile that can be used as a jump-off point for building your business' presence on the network. These tips cover most things we discussed above, and following them is a good way to keep track of how you're building your profile.