

Top 10 LinkedIn Tips from Co-operative Education & Career Services

If you are like most people who have set up a LinkedIn profile, it is likely that you have filled in the basic sections and then sat back and waited for something magical (a job offer perhaps?) to happen – and then found that it usually doesn't. Once many of us set up our profile, we tend to feel somewhat lost as to what's next. As a result, the Co-operative Education & Career Services team at the University of Guelph has compiled a few tips that will offer some direction and help you make the most of your presence on LinkedIn.

1. **First off, Google Yourself!** Okay, so this is not a completely "LinkedIn specific" tip, but it's important nonetheless. What happens when you Google yourself? If the first thing you see is a photo of yourself partying, you may want to do some damage control. This is a crucial first step to a successful LinkedIn profile and overall social media presence. Remember, employers may use Google to find your LinkedIn profile, so it is important that you are in control of what appears when they do.
2. **Determine Your Overall Message.** Before you create a LinkedIn profile, figure out what you want others to know about you. What do you have that employers will want and who is your target audience? Don't feel discouraged if you have limited work experience. There are things you have done from which you can draw skills and expertise. If need be, ask your friends, family or a Career Advisor to help you narrow it down. Employers are more likely to be interested in and remember you if you give them a clear sense of what you're all about. Once you figure out your message, use your headline as a starting point of relaying it. You do not have to write your current occupation or "unemployed" in your headline, even if any of these descriptions apply to your current job status. Instead, say something like "Aspiring Marketing Management Graduate Seeking Exciting Opportunities" to demonstrate your overall objective. Keep in mind: your skills and goals will change over time and your LinkedIn profile should change too.
3. **Use a Professional Photo of Yourself.** It is a good idea to have a profile photo on your LinkedIn page. In fact, most people on LinkedIn have a profile photo. Not having one may actually send signals that you have something to hide. That being said, a professional photo is key, so if it's between a photo of you at a wild party and no photo, go with no photo until you have a professional, presentable photo of yourself to use. Co-operative Education & Career Services offers free professional headshot photo sessions for students throughout the year, so look out for the next opportunity.
4. **Complete your Profile.** There is no point having a LinkedIn profile if all you have done is entered your name and pasted your resume word-for-word. Your LinkedIn profile allows you to showcase your personality, skills and achievements beyond that of a resume, so use it to your advantage. Add descriptions of jobs you have had, projects you've worked on, and courses you've taken that are relevant to your goals. Be sure to use industry-specific keywords. Keep in mind: having a quality profile is always better than simply throwing together a large quantity of information with no clear message.

5. **Get Recommended!** One of the coolest features of LinkedIn is that you can ask people to write recommendations for you which you can post for others to see. If you've done really well on a project or in a job, why not let others know about it? Employers will be impressed to see that others are willing to attest to your strengths. Remember to only include strong, meaningful, professional recommendations. Recommendations from friends and family may not be as effective.
6. **Master that Search Box!** Did you know that if you type a company name in the search box, but leave the search criteria on "people" you will likely find profiles of people who work at that company? It's magical! If there is a company you want to learn more about, try using LinkedIn to connect with its employees. Find out if you have any connections in common with the company and get introduced. You can also search companies, jobs, updates and seek out groups of interest to you.
7. **Personalize the Generic.** If you are going to invite someone to connect via LinkedIn, erase that generic message that appears when you click the Connect button and write your own. Honestly and thoughtfully let people know who you are and why you are reaching out, and they will be more likely to connect with you.
8. **Be Active and Engaged.** Post and comment on articles and news, join groups, participate in discussions and follow companies and industry leaders. Being an engaged LinkedIn user increases your chances of getting noticed and will help you stay on top of any important updates and even learn about new jobs.
9. **It's Not All about You!** We all create LinkedIn profiles in the hopes that they will contribute to our own career success, but it is also important to reach out to others to help them with their careers. People will remember you and be more willing to help you in the future if you have helped them. So, if you notice that someone has a keen interest in community service and you come across a great opportunity to help out in your community, share it with them. Remember, LinkedIn is a vehicle for networking (aka relationship building) and relationships are always a two-way street. You can't expect others to help you if you don't do the same.
10. **Make Use of Additional Interesting Sections.** There are several extra sections you can add to and fill in on your LinkedIn profile. For example, you can add a "Projects" section where you can list, describe and even link to projects you have worked on (i.e. articles, websites and more). To find these additional sections, look on the right-hand side of your profile for the heading "Recommended for You." These sections offer a great opportunity for you to provide more depth to your profile and showcase examples of your work.

For more tips and insights about LinkedIn, visit the blog titled *I'm on LinkedIn – Now What?* at <http://imonlinkedinnowwhat.com> based on the popular book by the same title.