

7 GOOD (AND BAD) WAYS TO USE THE LINKEDIN STATUS UPDATE BOX

Several features on LinkedIn allow you to share, but by far the best sharing feature on LinkedIn is the Status Update Box. Using it to share pertinent business information is a strategy that will pay dividends if used correctly.

That being said, many people are using this feature as if it were a Twitter or Facebook feed and are talking about all kinds of personal, not-even-close-to-business information. This information really turns me off, and I hear many of you expressing the same feeling. I know sometimes the lines are somewhat gray and it is a matter of personal judgment, but we need to keep in mind that this is a business networking site and approach it accordingly.

With these perspectives for attracting and sharing in mind, I now want to give you some specific ideas (both good and bad) to help answer the question: "What should I use the Status Box for?"

DO THIS:

1. Share links (using a URL shortener) to interesting articles, websites or video you have found that some individuals in your network might appreciate. Don't worry about whether all of your connections will find the information equally valuable. Also, try to use words that grab the readers and encourage them to click the link.
2. Pose a question that could lead to solving a problem you have, like: "Anyone know any good controller candidates?" One of my connections saved \$20,000 in recruiting fees by posting an update like this a couple days before calling a recruiter. (I apologize to all recruiters for having to mention this situation.)
3. Conduct an informal poll of your network (which consists of many smart businesspeople) relating to a topic that is of interest to you, such as: "What interest rates are you seeing for lines of credit in the current environment?"
4. Mention a person or a situation that might be helpful to some of your connections, like: "I just met with John Jones from ABC Insurance Company and found out they are saving companies lots of \$\$ on workmen's compensation insurance."
5. Talk about an event you are attending or have attended to encourage involvement and/or questions about what you learned there.
6. If you are a job seeker, don't use this to say, "Hey, I'm still looking for a job." Rather, mention job fairs you are attending, people you are interviewing with, networking events you are going to, etc.

Remember--having your name show up on a consistent basis on your entire network's home page is extremely important whether you are in job-seeking mode or not.

7. Use the "Like" feature when you see a helpful update from one of your connections. Doing this shares that update with your entire network. This is a great way to give the writer of the helpful update exposure to your network that he/she wouldn't normally have.

DON'T DO THIS:

1. Mentioning personal things--like what you had for breakfast and the fact your dog is sick today--is just wrong. This suggests to the business professionals in your network that you don't really respect their time.
2. Continually talking about specific products and services takes people back to the days of big newspaper ads and screaming radio messages. This is not the purpose of social media, especially LinkedIn.
3. Avoid talking about topics that might be sensitive to some of your audience. I am too embarrassed to even think about, let alone share, some of the items I see posted as status updates. You know what I mean. If your mother wouldn't want you talking about it, don't put it in your LinkedIn Status Box.
4. Think twice before posting your physical whereabouts. I have heard several real-life examples of people's homes being broken into after putting out an "I-am-out-of-town" update on Twitter. (Sorry, all you Foursquare users, but I had to share that.)
5. The LinkedIn/Twitter interface is causing people to have too many LinkedIn updates as well as inappropriate updates. So, if you are using that interface, be selective about the updates you share between the two platforms. LinkedIn and Twitter are designed with different purposes and strategies.
6. The netiquette on LinkedIn is no more than a couple updates per day, whereas on Twitter you are almost expected to tweet twenty times per day. (I apologize to my Twitter followers for not getting out twenty per day!) So, watch the frequency of your LinkedIn status updates.
7. Don't waste your time reading updates from people who violate all of the above. By using the "Hide" function, you can stop an individual's status updates from showing up on your home page.

When you see an annoying status update and decide you do not want to see any further updates from this person, simply scroll over to the right side of that status update and unveil the word "Hide." Once you activate this function, you will be freed from receiving further updates from that person.

Follow these simple suggestions, and you will be on your way to being a model LinkedIn citizen!