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FOURTH EDITION

The Power Formula for

LinkedIn

Success

Kick-start Your Business,  
Brand, *and* Job Search



Wayne Breitbarth

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# Contents

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Introduction</b> .....                         | <b>1</b>   |
| I Never Even Wanted to Be on LinkedIn!            |  |
| <b>Chapter 1</b>                                  | <b>A New Way to<br/>Look at Social Media</b> ..... |
|   | <b>7</b>   |
| The LinkedIn Power Formula                        |  |
| Your Unique Experience                            |  |
| Your Unique Relationships                         |  |
| The Tool  |  |
| <b>Chapter 2</b>                                  | <b>The Million-Workstation Project</b> .....       |
|   | <b>11</b>  |
| LinkedIn—Making the Invisible Visible             |  |
| <b>Chapter 3</b>                                  | <b>Where's the Beef?</b> .....                     |
|   | <b>23</b>  |
| The LinkedIn Profile: Basics                      |  |
| <b>Chapter 4</b>                                  | <b>Your 10-Second Bumper Sticker</b> .....         |
|   | <b>29</b>  |
| The LinkedIn Profile: Personal Identification Box |  |
| Your Name   |  |
| Your Photograph                                   |  |
| Your Headline                                     |  |

|                  |  |           |
|------------------|--|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 5</b> | <b>Put Your Best Foot Forward</b> . . . . .                                  | <b>37</b> |
|                  | The LinkedIn Profile: Additional Top Box Items                               |           |
|                  | Background Photo   |           |
|                  | Your Location  |           |
|                  | Summary Intro  |           |
|                  | Current Company Name   |           |
|                  | Most Recent School Attended  |           |
|                  | Contact Info   |           |
|                  | Websites   |           |
|                  | Public Profile URL   |           |
| <b>Chapter 6</b> | <b>Resume on Steroids</b> . . . . .  | <b>47</b> |
|                  | The LinkedIn Profile: Experience and Education Sections                      |           |
|                  | Experience   |           |
|                  | Education  |           |
| <b>Chapter 7</b> | <b>That's My Boy!</b> . . . . .  | <b>55</b> |
|                  | The LinkedIn Profile: Summary Section  |           |
| <b>Chapter 8</b> | <b>Aren't You Any Good?</b> . . . . .  | <b>63</b> |
|                  | The LinkedIn Profile: Recommendations  |           |
|                  | How Many Recommendations Should I Have?                                      |           |
|                  | What Should My Recommendations Say?  |           |
|                  | Why Are Recommendations So Important?  |           |
|                  | Tips for Getting Recommendations   |           |
| <b>Chapter 9</b> | <b>Not Your Average Joe</b> . . . . .  | <b>71</b> |
|                  | The LinkedIn Profile: Adding Media, Special Sections,<br>and Calls to Action |           |
|                  | Adding Media   |           |
|                  | Additional Profile Sections  |           |
|                  | Volunteer Experience   |           |
|                  | Skills & Endorsements  |           |
|                  | Calls to Action  |           |

|                   |   |            |
|-------------------|---|------------|
| <b>Chapter 10</b> | <b>Who Do You Want to Find?</b> . . . . .                           | <b>83</b>  |
|                   | Searching on LinkedIn   |            |
|                   | Saved Searches  |            |
|                   | Monthly Search Limit  |            |
| <b>Chapter 11</b> | <b>I Found You—Now What Do I Do with You?</b> . . . . .             | <b>93</b>  |
|                   | Contacting the Person You Just Found                                |            |
| <b>Chapter 12</b> | <b>There’s Gold in Them Thar Hills</b> . . . . .                    | <b>101</b> |
|                   | Expanding Your Network  |            |
|                   | Connecting with Classmates  |            |
|                   | “Recommended for You—People”  |            |
|                   | “Who’s Viewed Your Profile?”  |            |
|                   | Accepting or Declining Connection Requests                          |            |
|                   | Connecting with Competitors   |            |
| <b>Chapter 13</b> | <b>Keywords Are King</b> . . . . .                                  | <b>113</b> |
|                   | Maximizing Your Ability to Find and Be Found by Others              |            |
|                   | Exact Phrases   |            |
|                   | The “And” Function  |            |
|                   | The “Or” Function   |            |
|                   | The “Not” Function  |            |
|                   | Using Parentheses   |            |
|                   | Keyword Optimizing Your Profile                                     |            |
| <b>Chapter 14</b> | <b>LinkedIn on the Go</b> . . . . .                                 | <b>119</b> |
|                   | Optimizing Your Mobile Experience                                   |            |
|                   | Mobile App Profile Best Practices                                   |            |
|                   | Best Activity Features on the Mobile App                            |            |
| <b>Chapter 15</b> | <b>How Do Companies Fit into the LinkedIn Landscape?</b> . . . . .  | <b>127</b> |
|                   | Researching Companies on LinkedIn and Other Company-Related Matters |            |
|                   | Social Media Policies and Procedures                                |            |

|                          |  |            |
|--------------------------|--|------------|
| <b>Chapter 16</b>        | <b>The Scoop on LinkedIn Groups . . . . .</b>                                      | <b>133</b> |
|                          | Simple Ways to Boost Your Business and Career                                      |            |
| <b>Chapter 17</b>        | <b>Show Me the Money! . . . . .</b>  | <b>139</b> |
|                          | What Are the Power Users Doing on LinkedIn?  |            |
| <b>Chapter 18</b>        | <b>Your Account, Your Settings—Your Way . . . . .</b>                              | <b>149</b> |
|                          | Setting Your Preferences and Using the<br>LinkedIn Help Center                     |            |
|                          | Paid vs. Free Accounts   |            |
|                          | Features Available to Premium Members  |            |
|                          | LinkedIn Help Center   |            |
| <b>Chapter 19</b>        | <b>A Job Seeker’s New Best Friend . . . . .</b>                                    | <b>157</b> |
|                          | LinkedIn—The World’s Largest Internet-Based<br>Resume Database                     |            |
| <b>Chapter 20</b>        | <b>Ready . . . Set . . . Go! . . . . .</b>   | <b>167</b> |
|                          | A Six-Week, Two-Hour-per-Week Road Map<br>to Results                               |            |
|                          | Weeks 1–6  |            |
|                          | Managing Your Time on LinkedIn   |            |
|                          | Daily LinkedIn To Do’s   |            |
|                          | Weekly LinkedIn To Do’s  |            |
|                          | Monthly LinkedIn To Do’s   |            |
|                          | Periodic To Do’s (Every Few Months)  |            |
| <b>Chapter 21</b>        | <b>Conclusion (Or Is It Just the Beginning?) . . . . .</b>                         | <b>177</b> |
|                          | Which Camp Are You In?   |            |
| <b>Bonus<br/>Chapter</b> | <b>My Kids Are Already on Facebook—<br/>Can’t They Find a Job There? . . . . .</b> | <b>181</b> |
|                          | Why College Students Need to Be on LinkedIn  |            |

## Resources

### **It's All About Character**

Take Full Advantage of Every Space. . . . . **193**

### **Profile Perfection**

A Checklist for LinkedIn Optimization . . . . . **197**

### **LinkedIn's Websites Section**

Your "Link" to Future Opportunities . . . . . **201**

### **LinkedIn People Searching**

Your Ticket to Improved ROI . . . . . **205**

### **Keywords**

The Key to Being Found on LinkedIn . . . . . **209**

**Acknowledgments** . . . . . **215**

**Index**. . . . . **219**

**About the Author** . . . . . **229**

## **Bonus Online Resources**

The Definitive Worksheet to Optimize Your

LinkedIn Profile Headline

[www.powerformula.net/free](http://www.powerformula.net/free)

The LinkedIn Connection Conundrum: Who Should  
Be in Your Network?

[www.powerformula.net/connections](http://www.powerformula.net/connections)

10 LinkedIn Mistakes Companies Make—and How to Fix  
Them Before They Damage Your Company's Reputation

[www.powerformula.net/mistakes](http://www.powerformula.net/mistakes)

Should You Hide Your LinkedIn Connections?

[www.powerformula.net/hideconnections](http://www.powerformula.net/hideconnections)



## CHAPTER 12



# There's Gold in Them Thar Hills

## Expanding Your Network

As you can tell from previous chapters, the winner of the searching aspect of the LinkedIn game is generally the person who has a lot of connections. However, please continue to keep in mind that when you first start using LinkedIn, I recommend you only add to your network people whom you know and trust, because when you add a new contact, you put your extremely valuable network in his or her hands. Remember, it is **your** network. It is a possession you have worked your entire career to build, and when you add a connection on LinkedIn, it is like handing your Outlook database to that individual and trusting him to treat it as professionally as you would treat his.

Once you start getting more comfortable with the way LinkedIn works, I typically recommend that you start selectively adding people you may not know but would like to get to know. Everyone's situation is unique, but here are some general suggestions that will help you understand what types of people you may

want to connect with to strengthen your network and help you enhance your brand, find a job, assist your favorite nonprofit, or grow your business.

**Who can help you enhance your personal brand?**

- People who have had similar career paths to yours
- Leaders in your industry associations
- Individuals who have large networks (LinkedIn or otherwise) concentrated in your region or industry
- People who work for some of the well-respected companies in your region and industry

**Who can help you find a new job or advance your career?**

- People who work in your industry and region
- People who work for companies you are interested in
- Recruiters who specialize in your industry
- Consultants and experts in your industry
- Human resources professionals who work at your target companies

**Who can help your favorite nonprofit thrive?**

- People who volunteer for or sit on boards of similar nonprofits
- Individuals who work at large corporations, foundations, etc., and tend to support nonprofits like yours
- People who are involved in groups that have large volunteer pools (e.g., religious organizations, schools, clubs)
- People who work for media outlets

## **Who can help you generate sales leads, market your company's products and services, and grow your business?**

- Individuals who are the direct decision-makers for the purchase of your products and services
- People who are indirectly involved in the decision to purchase your products and services (strategic influencers or people from the company who weigh in on the decision)
- High-ranking officers at the companies that purchase your products and services, even if they are not the direct decision-makers
- Individuals who hang around with the people listed in the first two bullets (and probably deliver similar services to the same purchasers)
- People who are recognized industry experts
- Leaders of your industry associations and/or people who manage industry events
- Individuals who are well-networked in your region or industry
- Experts who provide educational content for the industry

I recommend you have an ultimate goal of acquiring at least 200 to 250 connections (muskie size), as opposed to the 50 to 100 connections (minnow size) that many LinkedIn users acquire. If you want your searches to be useful, you really want to consistently add connections. This chapter will show you how to find new people to add, accept or decline the requests you'll get, and gather interesting information about your expanding base of contacts. Once you've built your muskie-size net, when you go fishing you'll be sure to come up with lots of potentially valuable connections.

The most common and preferable way to add a person to your network is to search for her by name and then go to her profile. If she is a second-degree connection, click the big blue Connect

button. If she is a third-degree connection, click the three dots just below her profile photo and select *Connect*. In either case, you should add a note, rather than simply sending LinkedIn's basic message. Explain in your short personal note why it would be beneficial for the person to allow you to be part of her network. In my opinion, it is very lame if you don't customize your invitation. Remember, you are adding this person to your group of trusted professionals. Therefore, you should add a personal touch to your invitation, and customizing the connection request will get you a much higher response rate.

Here are seven simple suggestions for creating what I like to refer to as a five-star connection request. There is a 300-character limit for your personal message, but that should be more than enough to get your relationship started on the right foot.

1. Use the person's name in your greeting.
2. Mention where you met him/her (in person, on the phone, online) and/or who you have in common.
3. Suggest a face-to-face or phone meeting if you want to develop a deeper relationship with the person.
4. Offer something of value based on your review of the person's profile or your personal knowledge of the individual.
5. Explain how you can help the person or how he/she could help you.
6. Help the person feel good about the connection. I usually say, "I would be honored to have you join my LinkedIn network."
7. Include a friendly closing statement. "Sincerely" is a little bit stiff in most circumstances. For instance, I might say "Go Pack Go" to a fellow Wisconsinite.

Of course, you won't be able to include all seven suggestions in every invitation, but choose the most relevant ones in each situation. If you follow these simple suggestions, more people will accept your invitations, and your new relationships will be off to a strong start.

Finding valuable people whom you can invite to join your network can be challenging, but LinkedIn has some great features to help you quickly grow your network. Not only is it easy to find former classmates and coworkers, but LinkedIn also shows you who has taken a look at your profile and thus might be interested in joining your network or doing business with you.

## Connecting with Classmates

You will quickly realize that you have access to a truly amazing database of fellow alumni, and connecting with your former classmates will be fun and, hopefully, profitable, too. To access the Alumni feature, start typing the name of your school in the search box on the top toolbar, and choose the correct entry when it appears in the drop-down list. This will take you to your school's University page. Click the Alumni tab to view a list of all the LinkedIn members who have said they attended this school. You can filter the list by where they live, where they work, what they do, what they studied, what skills they possess, and how you're connected to them. By clicking any of the composite results (city, company name, skill, etc.), you will narrow the search, and you'll then see the people who meet your search criteria. You can narrow your search even further with the "Search alumni by title, keyword or company" box or by using the *Start year* and *End year* filters, where you can enter whichever years you're interested in.

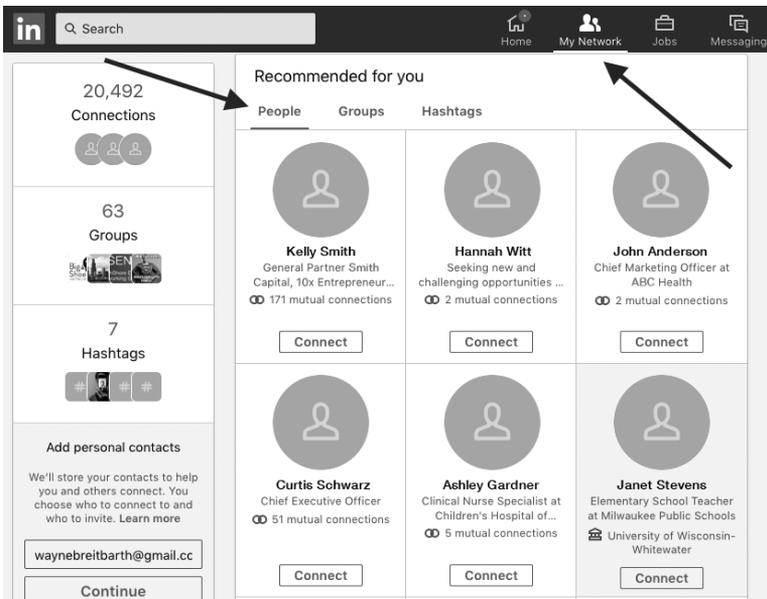
The exercise above will undoubtedly result in quite a large number of potential connections, but if you say to yourself, *Well, that's too many; that's going to take me too long to review*, then I guess you don't really understand why you are even on LinkedIn. Rather than viewing this process as a hassle, treat your search for valuable connections as if you were hunting treasure—tell yourself, *There's gold in them thar hills*. Your classmates present a tremendous opportunity to make some important connections. These are people who will remember you from your college days, and you will now be able to tell them what you are up to today. Reconnecting with old friends is fun, but it can also be very productive; some of your old drinking buddies may now be presidents of the companies with which you are trying to do business. Many others will likely have nice databases of first-level connections, which could lead to great connections at the second or third level for you. You just never know.

## “Recommended for you—People”

If you click *My Network* on the top toolbar and scroll down a bit, you will see the “Recommended for you—People” section (see Figure 12.1). LinkedIn has a special formula for putting people in this section, and although they have not revealed how it works, you will be amazed at the names you find here. From my observation, these people typically fall into one or more of the following categories:

- They are connected to someone in your network.
- They attended a school that you also attended.
- They are a member of a group to which you belong.
- They either work with you currently or have worked with you in the past.
- They have selected the same location that you have selected on your profile.

Figure 12.1: LinkedIn helps you find new connections.

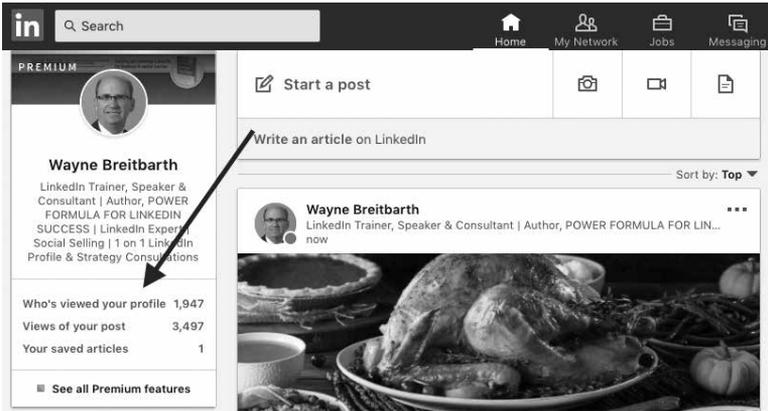


You will find these suggestions not only useful but also somewhat entertaining. LinkedIn has helped me find a number of guys I used to drink dime taps (10¢ beers) with during my college days! Do not overlook the usefulness of this feature in finding new connections.

## “Who’s Viewed Your Profile?”

LinkedIn also allows users to see how many people are looking at their profile with the “Who’s Viewed Your Profile?” feature, which you’ll find in the left-hand column of your LinkedIn home page (see Figure 12.2). This is an interesting box to click on from time to time, but don’t expect to always see the name of the person who looked at your profile. You may instead see a

Figure 12.2: More views of your profile should create more business opportunities.



of the following information about the person: job title, type of company or industry, company name, location, or simply “LinkedIn Member.” From this information, you can sometimes guess who viewed your profile and perhaps may be interested in meeting you. The person who is “checking you out” chooses whether you will be able to see his/her name or not. In Chapter 18, I will discuss this and other settings that are available for each individual LinkedIn user.

The “Who’s Viewed Your Profile?” section can also help you identify whether you are increasing your activity and presence on LinkedIn. It will display information like “Your profile has been viewed by 122 people in the last 90 days.” As with all networking, increasing your activity has the potential to increase relationships, which may lead to increased business.

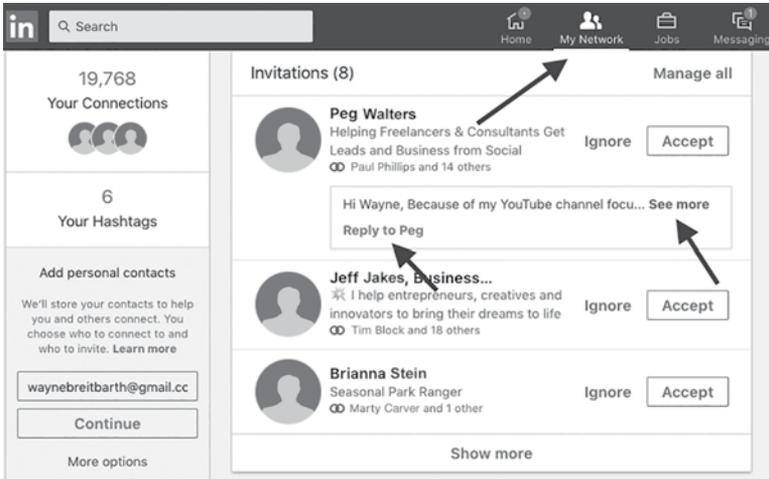
## Accepting or Declining Connection Requests

People frequently ask me what they should do when somebody they don't know invites them to connect on LinkedIn. This will begin to happen with greater frequency as you become more active on LinkedIn. Whether you accept or decline will be based on your overall LinkedIn strategy. For example, if you're a sales professional, you should consider connecting with people who work or have worked at your target companies and people who know current or past employees. This is an excellent strategy for job seekers as well.

To review your open invitations, click *My Network* on your top toolbar. You will see the screen in Figure 12.3. Here are the three ways you can respond to an invitation:

1. **Accept.** The person will immediately become a first-degree connection when you click the Accept button.
2. **Reply to [name].** People often overlook the option of using the Reply feature because it is not one of the obvious choices. If you click *See more*, you can review the message from the person who has invited you into her network. You can reply without accepting the invitation by clicking *Reply to [name]*. If I have had an interesting meeting with a person and we belong to the same group or club, I can send a message saying something like, "At the next meeting, let's make sure we connect and get to know each other better so we can join each other's LinkedIn network."
3. **Ignore.** If you click *Ignore*, the invitation will be deleted. Before deciding to ignore an invitation, I suggest you check out the person's profile to determine whether there might be a reason to meet him or her.

Figure 12.3: Consider all of your options when responding to an invitation.



After choosing *Ignore*, you can select *I don't know this person*. Then the person will not be allowed to send you any more invitations.

## Connecting with Competitors

I am frequently asked, “Should I connect on LinkedIn with competitors?” My quick answer is, “Are you nuts? Why would you want to hand over your database of prospects and customers to a competitor?” However, because not all relationships are simple and one-dimensional (competitor or not a competitor), here are some factors to consider when deciding whether to connect with a “competitor.”

- **Are the identities of your customers already public knowledge?** If they are public knowledge, then connecting with competitors is not as big of a deal.

- **Do you hide your list of connections from your network?** If you do, then they cannot see to whom you are connected anyway, so there is less risk.
- **Do you think you are better at LinkedIn than your competitors?** If so, then maybe you are going to gain more from looking through their connections than they will gain from looking at your connections.
- **Are you connected to only people you trust, or is your network more open?** If you choose to connect with people who are not your trusted friends, those people could potentially allow your competitor to come over to their office and scroll through your list of connections. This is certainly unlikely, but it is possible.

Also, keep in mind that relationships change over time. If a trusted coworker who is in your network goes to work for a competitor and becomes your number one nemesis, then you may want to consider disconnecting from that person.

As you can see, there is no simple answer to the question of whether you should connect with competitors. However, after you consider the points mentioned above, you can make the decision with your eyes wide open.

Taking advantage of the features explained in this chapter will enable you to quickly add a large number of connections. You'll be on your way to building that big muskie net, so that when you search for new contacts, you will have plenty of people to choose from.



## APPLYING THE POWER FORMULA

- Making connections using the steps outlined in this chapter may seem a bit time-consuming, but it's well worth the effort. Every one of your **unique relationships** gives you lots of second- and third-degree connections, and any of them could be the person you want to meet.
- These steps work more effectively when you have thoroughly outlined your **unique experience** in the Experience and Education sections. If you fail to list a job or an educational experience, you will miss out on potential credibility as well as the opportunity to make valuable connections with people you met while gaining that **unique experience**.

Identify the connection strategy that will help you grow your business and brand by downloading “The LinkedIn Connection Conundrum: Who Should Be in Your Network?” available at [www.powerformula.net/connections](http://www.powerformula.net/connections).





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What a wild ride it has been—writing a social media book at age fifty-three, watching it become the number-one-selling LinkedIn book on Amazon.com, and now publishing a fourth edition. I couldn't have done it without the help of the following people:

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# Index

## A

accomplishments, 49, 58, 60, 66, 75, 116, 122, 145, 171, 183, 186, 202

addresses, 40, 195

Advanced People Search function, 85–87

- job seekers, 163, 165
- keywords, 84–85, 91
- leveraging network to promote resume, 163–64
- reviewing first-degree connections of first-degree connections, 143–44
- saving searches, 90
- searching for your profile, 116

alumni

- college students, 185
- connecting with, 105–6, 171, 185–86
- educational descriptions, 51
- groups, 135, 169

articles, 121, 125, 134, 142, 145–46, 161, 172–74, 202

awards, 26, 49, 58, 161, 186, 195

## B

Bing, 42

Boolean logic

- exact phrases, 114
- AND function, 114
- NOT function, 114–15
- OR function, 114
- parentheses, 115

branding

- companies, 130–31
- personal brand, 9, 102, 182
- profile and, 74
- volunteer experience, 76
- websites, 42

## C

calls to action (CTAs), 79–81

- on author's profile, 81
- defined, 80
- types of, 80
- where to include, 80

certifications, 24, 26, 31, 40, 51, 53, 161

- classmates, connecting with, 105–6, 184. *See also* alumni
  - college students
    - career mentors, 185
    - connecting with alumni, 185–86
    - connecting with fellow students, 184
    - consistency between online presence and actual personality, 187–88
    - general discussion, 181
    - personal brand, 182
    - reviewing profile of interviewers, 183
    - searching for internships, 182, 184–85
    - special sections, 186–87
    - top reasons to use LinkedIn, 182–87
    - using LinkedIn as home page or personal website, 186
    - video resumes, 183–84
    - volunteer experience, 186
  - companies
    - branding, 131
    - searching for, 127–28
    - social media policies and procedures for, 130–31
  - company pages
    - About Us section, 128, 195
    - character limits, 195
    - creating, 129
    - information found on, 128–29
    - job seekers, 164
    - number of, 128
    - receiving notifications from, 129
  - competitors
    - connecting with, 110–11
    - following, 169–70
    - reviewing profiles of, 25–26, 60, 174
  - Connect button, 96, 104
  - connection requests. *See* invitations to connect
  - connections
    - with alumni, 105–6, 171, 185–86
    - with classmates, 105–6, 184
    - with competitors, 110–11
    - first-degree, 13–14, 16–20, 31, 41, 77, 89, 141–44, 151–52, 154, 173–74, 195
    - growth potential of, 16–17
    - ideal number of, 88–89, 103
    - quality vs. quantity, 12, 19–20
    - second-degree, 13–18, 93, 103–4, 184
    - third-degree, 13, 15–18, 89, 98, 104, 184
  - Contact Info section, 40–45
    - character limits, 195
    - choosing which info to make visible to public, 43–45
    - personalized profile URL, 43–44
    - privacy and visibility, 41
    - websites, 41–42
  - courses, 75, 120, 122, 161, 186. *See also* Education section
  - CTAs. *See* calls to action
  - current jobs, 40, 46, 159
- D**
- daily to-do list, 173
  - data archive, 174
  - degrees, 31, 40, 51, 160, 194
  - direct messages, 143, 145, 147
    - character limits, 195
    - InMail feature, 153–54
    - sending, 125

**E**

## Education section

- adding media, 72–74
- character limits, 52–53, 194
- criteria for info in, 47–48
- degrees, 40, 51, 194
- high school, 51
- job seekers, 161
- mobile app, 120–21
- most recent school, 40
- nontraditional educational experiences, 51–52
- e-mail addresses, 150
- e-mail notifications, 78, 90, 150
- endorsements, 77–79, 122, 161, 174, 195

## Experience section

- adding media, 72–74
- awards, 49
- character limits, 48, 52–53, 194
- comparing with competitors' profile, 60
- copying and pasting recommendations into, 65
- crafting job descriptions, 48–49
- criteria for info in, 47–48
- current company name, 39–40
- customer/client info, 49
- describing jobs in detail, 49
- keywords, 48–49
- promotions, 49
- reordering current jobs, 40
- volunteer experience, 49–50

**F**

## Facebook

- college students, 182
- consistent branding, 131, 186, 203
- Facebook generation vs. non-Facebook generations, 7–8, 131

- LinkedIn vs., 5–6, 11, 77, 182
- first-degree connections, 13–14, 16–19, 89
  - creating list of, 142–43
  - direct messaging, 143, 195
  - endorsements from, 77
  - InMail feature, 154
  - maximum number of, 195
  - meeting preparation, 141
  - reviewing, 174
  - reviewing first-degree connections of, 143–44, 174
  - visibility of profile info, 31, 41, 151–52, 195
  - work-in-progress, 20
- flat networks, 14, 20, 89
- “Follow company” option, 164
- former names, 31
- free accounts, 89–90, 152–54

**G**

## Google

- company pages and search results, 129
- keywords, 24, 115
- profile info and search results, 42, 44–45, 115
- groups
  - alumni, 135, 169
  - examples of, 135
  - general discussion, 133
  - job seekers, 162
  - keywords, 136
  - maximum number of, 195
  - number to join, 134–35
  - reasons for joining, 134
  - searching for, 136–137
  - types to join, 134–35

**H**

Harley-Davidson, 87–89, 93  
 headline, 30, 32–34  
     character limits, 193  
     job seekers, 159  
     keywords, 33–34  
     mobile app, 120  
 Help Center, 8, 98, 155  
 honors, 161, 186, 195  
 human resources professionals, 102,  
     152, 158, 160, 163

**I**

InMail feature, 153–54  
 Instagram, 182, 186, 203  
 internships, 51, 182, 184–85  
 interview preparation, 165–66, 183  
 introductions, 12, 15, 90, 94–95, 144  
 invitations to connect, 93–98, 103–11  
     accepting, 3–4, 13, 109–10,  
       168–71  
     character limits, 195  
     with classmates, 105–6  
     with competitors, 110–11  
     determining who to add, 101–3  
     ignoring/declining, 109–110  
     maximum number of, 196  
     with people found in searches,  
       93–98  
     personalized vs. default, 96–97,  
       103–4, 124  
     “Recommended for you—People”  
       section, 106–7, 169  
     replying to, 109–10  
     reviewing, 109, 124  
     sending, 13, 20, 169–71  
     suggestions for creating, 104–5  
     with third-degree connections, 98  
     “Who’s Viewed Your Profile?”  
       feature, 107–9, 170

**J**

job descriptions, 48–49, 57, 122. *See*  
     *also* Experience section  
 job seekers  
     Advanced People Search function,  
       163, 165  
     benefits of LinkedIn for, 157–58  
     career mentors, 185  
     checklist for, 159–66  
     company pages, 164  
     current company name, 159–60  
     educational descriptions, 161  
     groups, 162, 164–65  
     headline, 33, 159  
     interview preparation, 165–66, 183  
     Jobs section settings, 158–59  
     keywords, 160  
     “Let recruiters know you’re open”  
       option, 158–59  
     media, 161  
     profile as “resume on steroids,” 24,  
       43, 47, 157  
     projects, 161  
     recommendations, 160, 164  
     searching for internships, 184–85  
     searching for jobs, 162–63  
     searching for recruiters, 165  
     skills & endorsements, 161  
     special sections, 161  
     status updates, 164  
     summary intro, 160  
     video resumes, 74, 161, 183–84  
     volunteer experience, 186

**K**

keywords  
     Advanced People Search function,  
       84–85, 91  
     Boolean logic, 114–15  
     checking search ranking of your  
       own profile, 116

- classmates, 105
  - Experience section, 48–49
  - groups, 136
  - headline, 33–34
  - mobile app, 122–23
  - profile optimization, 24–25, 115–17
  - revising profile with top keywords, 116–17
  - search alerts, 90, 143, 162
  - Skills & Endorsements section, 77
  - Summary section, 59
  - where to include, 209
  - worksheet for, 210–13
- L**
- languages, 75, 161
  - LinkedIn
    - author's journey relating to, 4–5, 16–17, 20
    - demographics of users, 4
    - embracing, 179
    - Facebook generation vs. non-Facebook generations, 7–8, 131
    - Facebook vs., 5–6, 11, 77, 182
    - fears and suspicions regarding, 1–2, 7
    - Help Center, 8, 98, 155
    - joining, 3
    - mission statement, 11
    - number of users, 4
    - purpose of, 3
    - to-do lists, 173–74
    - as tool, 7, 10, 180
    - using only some features of, 178
    - viewing as good for others, 178
  - LinkedIn Power Formula
    - defined, 8
    - mobile app, 126
    - The Tool, 8–10, 178, 180
  - Your Unique Experience, 8–10, 21, 27, 34, 46, 53, 61, 70, 75, 82, 99, 112, 118, 166, 179, 188
  - Your Unique Relationships, 8–10, 21, 70, 91, 112, 118, 132, 137, 166, 179, 188
- LinkedIn six-week road map
- data archive, 175
  - delegating steps to others in company, 167–68
  - questions regarding, 172
  - saving and printing profile, 175
  - to-do lists, 173–74
  - week 1, 168
  - week 2, 169
  - week 3, 169–70
  - week 4, 170
  - week 5, 171
  - week 6, 171
- location, 38–39, 85, 162
- M**
- M&M Office Interiors, 32–33, 84–85, 117
  - maiden names, 31
  - Manage Active Status setting, 151
  - media
    - adding to profile, 60, 72–74, 142
    - author's profile, 73–74
    - job seekers, 161
    - types of media, 72
  - meeting preparation, 26, 141, 144, 183
  - mentors, 185
  - Microsoft Corp., 127
  - Microsoft Outlook, 10, 18
  - Microsoft Word, 60
  - mobile app, xiii
    - Advanced People Search function, 123–24

- customized connection requests, 96–97, 124
- profile optimization, 120–23
- reviewing connection requests, 124
- reviewing notifications, 124–25
- sending direct messages, 125
- sharing status updates, 125
- statistics on use of, 119
- monthly to-do list, 174

## N

- name, 31
- networks. *See also* connections;
  - invitations to connect
  - defining trusted professionals, 11–12, 17–19
  - extended networks, 12–17
  - flat networks, 14, 20, 89
  - old-fashioned method of networking, 17
  - quality vs. quantity of connections, 12, 19–20
  - size/quality of and search results, 88–90
  - ultimate size to reach for, 103
- nonprofits, 73, 88, 102, 135, 140

## O

- online resources
  - author's e-mail address, 189
  - author's profile, 81
  - author's Twitter account, 189
  - author's website, xiv, 189
  - author's YouTube presentations, 189
  - connection strategy, 112
  - hiding connections, 155
  - LinkedIn workshops, 178
  - mistakes made by companies on LinkedIn, 132

- newly released LinkedIn features, 127
- profile optimization worksheet, 35
- updates for book, 127
- organizations, 42, 50, 76, 122, 161, 186, 194–95

## P

- paid accounts
  - accessing subscription information, 149
  - cancelling, 154
  - features available to premium members, 153–54
  - reasons to consider, 152–53
- patents, 75, 161
- People Also Viewed section, 122–23
- periodic to-do list, 174
- personalized profile URL, 43–44, 183
- photos
  - background, 37–38
  - profile, 30–32, 34
- pipe symbol (`|`), 33
- power users
  - adding media, 142
  - creating groups, 142
  - creating list of first-degree connections, 142–43
  - creating search alerts, 143
  - defined, 139
  - documenting your LinkedIn strategy and goals, 140
  - meeting preparation, 141–42
  - reviewing first-degree connections of first-degree connections, 143–44
  - reviewing profiles before meeting people, 144–45
  - reviewing “Who’s Viewed Your Profile?” 142

status updates, 145–47  
 videos, 141

preferences management  
 accessing, 149  
 active status, 151  
 connection visibility, 151–52  
 e-mail addresses, 150  
 messages and notifications, 150  
 profile views, 151  
 public information, 150  
 “Viewers of this profile also viewed”  
 setting, 150

privacy and visibility, 31, 41, 43–45,  
 150–52, 195

profile  
 benefits of, 23  
 calls to action, 79–81  
 comparing with competitors’  
 profile, 25–26  
 keywords, 24–25, 33–34, 197  
 media, adding to, 60, 72–74, 142,  
 161  
 optimization, 24–25, 35, 115–17,  
 120–23, 197–200  
 reasons to create “beefy” profile,  
 23–26  
 showing that you are not a  
 dinosaur, 25  
 special sections, 74–75, 161,  
 186–87, 199  
 “10-second bumper sticker”  
 (personal identification  
 box), 29–30, 34  
 “top box,” 29–34, 37–45  
 understandability, 27  
 what to include, 24

Profile Views setting, 151

projects, 26, 58, 161, 184, 186

promotions, 49

publications, 122, 161

## R

recommendations  
 asking for, 68–69  
 character limits, 194  
 copying and pasting into  
 Experience section, 65  
 giving, 68–69  
 helping people write, 66–67  
 hesitancy to include, 64  
 hiding showcased to show most  
 recent, 65  
 importance of, 63, 67–68  
 job seekers, 63, 164  
 mobile app, 122  
 number to include, 64–65  
 reviewing and requesting  
 corrections, 69  
 showcasing most impressive, 64  
 “Recommended for you—People”  
 section, 106–7, 169

recruiters, 19, 102, 152, 158, 160, 165

resumes. *See also* Education section;  
 Experience section; job seekers  
 attaching to status update, 146  
 leveraging network to promote,  
 163–64  
 personalized profile URL, 43, 183  
 profile as “resume on steroids,” 24,  
 43, 47, 157  
 video resumes, 74, 161, 183–84

## S

sales professionals, 19–20, 109, 121,  
 152

search alerts, 90, 143, 153, 162

search engine optimization (SEO),  
 115. *See also* keywords;  
 keyword searching

searches. *See also* Advanced People  
 Search function

- categories of people that can be found through, 83–84
  - contacting people found through, 93–98
  - criteria for trusted professionals and, 87–89
  - keywords, 84–85, 91
  - monthly search limit, 90
  - network size/quality and, 88–90
  - paid accounts and, 153–54
  - saving searches, 90, 175
  - search alerts, 90, 143, 153
  - worksheet for, 205–7
  - second-degree connections, 13–18, 93, 103–4, 184
  - settings management. *See* preferences management
  - skills, 77–79, 116, 122, 157, 159, 161, 164, 171, 195
  - specialties, 48, 128, 160
  - spell-checking, 60–61, 170
  - Statista, 119
  - status updates
    - attaching documents, 146, 173
    - author's use of, 146–47
    - character limits, 195
    - job seekers, 146, 164
    - maximum number of per day, 195
    - mentioning people or situations helpful to connections, 146
    - mobile app, 121, 125
    - regularly updating status, 145
    - reviewing connections' updates, 146
    - sharing, 125, 147
    - sharing links, 146
    - talking about events, 146
  - Summary section
    - adding media, 60, 72–74
    - author's summary, 58–59
    - bulleted format, 56
    - character limits, 56, 60, 193–94
    - comparing with competitors' profile, 60
    - as cover letter, 55
    - including misspelled terms, 61
    - job seekers, 57
    - keywords, 59
    - mobile app, 121
    - narrative format, 56–57
    - spell-checking, 60
    - summary intro, 39
    - topics to include, 57–58
    - understandability, 59
    - willingness to brag, 60
- T**
- Tagging feature, 125
  - tagline, 32–33, 201
  - test scores, 75, 161, 186
  - third-degree connections, 13, 15–18, 89, 98, 104, 184
  - thought leaders, 142, 200
  - time management
    - daily to-do list, 173
    - monthly to-do list, 174
    - periodic to-do list, 174
    - questions regarding, 172
    - weekly to-do list, 173–74
  - “top box,” 29–34, 37–45
  - Top Updates section, 145
  - trusted professionals, 11–12, 17–19, 21, 87–89
  - Twitter, 40–41, 131, 145, 186, 196, 203
- U**
- unique experiences, 180
    - additional profile sections, 82
    - calls to action, 82
    - college students, 188

- company pages, 132
- current company's website, 46
- defined, 9
- educational descriptions, 53
- headline, 34
- job descriptions, 53
- job seekers, 166
- keywords, 118
- making connections, 99, 112
- media, 82
- profile, 27
- profile photo, 34
- recommendations, 70
- summary info, 61
- trusted professionals, 21
- unique relationships, 180
  - college students, 188
  - company pages, 132
  - defined, 9
  - extended network, 21
  - groups, 137
  - job seekers, 166
  - keywords, 118
  - making connections, 112
  - recommendations, 70
  - search functionality, 91
- upgrading to paid account, 152–54

## V

- “Viewers of this profile also viewed”
  - setting, 123, 150
- volunteer experience, 49–50, 76, 170, 186

## W

- websites
  - character limits, 42, 194
  - of current company, 41, 46
  - describing, 42
  - personalized profile URL, 43–44, 183
  - posting video resumes, 161
  - search rankings and, 42
  - types of links to include, 201–3
  - using LinkedIn as personal website, 186
    - which to include, 41–42
- weekly to-do list, 173–74
- “Who’s Viewed Your Profile?” feature
  - overview of, 107–9
  - paid accounts and, 153
  - reviewing, 142, 170–71
  - settings for, 151
- Wikipedia, 80

## Y

- YouTube, 41, 161, 202

## About the Author



Wayne Breitbarth, one of the world's foremost LinkedIn experts, is an industry leader in LinkedIn training and marketing. The first edition of his book *The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success* was the bestselling LinkedIn book on Amazon for more than a year and a half. Wayne has helped more than 100,000 people access the full power of LinkedIn for their companies and careers. He has inspired audiences around the globe, at conventions, industry association events, and corporate training sessions. Wayne's diverse business experience, pragmatic teaching style, and infectious sense of humor have earned him the praise of the press and the distinction of being referred to as the "LinkedIn Guru."

When he began using LinkedIn in 2008, he was an owner and president of M&M Office Interiors in Pewaukee, Wisconsin. He currently devotes himself full time to helping companies develop a comprehensive strategy for using LinkedIn to increase sales, raise brand awareness, recruit employees and reduce recruiting fees, and discover new markets for products/services. In addition, he helps individuals maximize their use of LinkedIn to meet and exceed their professional goals and advance their careers.

Prior to his involvement in the office furniture business, he spent nearly twenty years in the automotive industry. He received his BBA from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and his MBA from Marquette University. Wayne is also a Certified Public Accountant and spent the early years of his career as an auditor and small business consultant with Arthur Andersen & Co.

Throughout his career, Wayne has been involved with a number of philanthropic organizations. His financial background

has enabled him to assist SecureFutures (formerly Make A Difference-Wisconsin) in its mission to enrich the community by empowering high school students to make sound financial decisions. His work with this organization includes serving on its board of directors as well as teaching financial literacy classes to students in Milwaukee Public Schools. He is also the founder of Urban Promise, an urban youth mentoring program that brings together business professionals and high school students in Milwaukee Public Schools. Wayne has also served on the board of directors of the Community Warehouse, a nonprofit organization that serves the Milwaukee community by providing affordable home-improvement materials, and Milwaukee Working, a nonprofit in the Central City that creates jobs for men and women who are either underemployed, never employed, or background challenged. He has also served as a youth leader and teacher at Eastbrook Church in Milwaukee.

Wayne's work with urban youth has been applauded by the Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and he is a past recipient of the WICPA Public Service Award.

Wayne resides in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with his wife of 38 years. They have three daughters and two granddaughters.