The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success

Kick-start Your Business, Brand, and Job Search

Wayne Breitbarth
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Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 1
I Never Even Wanted to Be on LinkedIn!

Chapter 1  A New Way to
Look at Social Media .............................................. 7
The LinkedIn Power Formula
Your Unique Experience
Your Unique Relationships
The Tool

Chapter 2  The Million-Workstation Project................. 11
LinkedIn—Making the Invisible Visible

Chapter 3  Where’s the Beef? ................................. 23
The LinkedIn Profile: Basics

Chapter 4  Your 10-Second Bumper Sticker ............. 29
The LinkedIn Profile: Personal Identification Box
Your Name
Your Photograph
Your Headline
Chapter 5  **Put Your Best Foot Forward**  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 37
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

Chapter 6  **Resume on Steroids**  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 47
The LinkedIn Profile: Experience and Education Sections
- Experience
- Education

Chapter 7  **That’s My Boy!**  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 55
The LinkedIn Profile: Summary Section

Chapter 8  **Aren’t You Any Good?**  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 63
The LinkedIn Profile: Recommendations
- How Many Recommendations Should I Have?
- What Should My Recommendations Say?
- Why Are Recommendations So Important?
- Tips for Getting Recommendations

Chapter 9  **Not Your Average Joe**  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 71
The LinkedIn Profile: Adding Media, Special Sections, and Calls to Action
- Adding Media
- Additional Profile Sections
  - Volunteer Experience
  - Skills & Endorsements
- Calls to Action
Chapter 10  **Who Do You Want to Find?** .......................... 83
Searching on LinkedIn
Saved Searches
Monthly Search Limit

Chapter 11  **I Found You—Now What Do I Do with You?** .......................... 93
Contacting the Person You Just Found

Chapter 12  **There’s Gold in Them Thar Hills** .......................... 101
Expanding Your Network
Connecting with Classmates
“Recommended for You—People”
“Who’s Viewed Your Profile?”
Accepting or Declining Connection Requests
Connecting with Competitors

Chapter 13  **Keywords Are King** .......................... 113
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

Chapter 14  **LinkedIn on the Go** .......................... 119
Optimizing Your Mobile Experience
Mobile App Profile Best Practices
Best Activity Features on the Mobile App

Chapter 15  **How Do Companies Fit into the LinkedIn Landscape?** .......................... 127
Researching Companies on LinkedIn and Other Company-Related Matters
Social Media Policies and Procedures
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

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

Should You Hide Your LinkedIn Connections?
www.powerformula.net/hideconnections
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.
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 any
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.
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.
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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

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

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
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
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

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, 109–11
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
relying 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

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
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

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

P
paid accounts
accessing subscription information, 149
canceling, 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, 142–43
reviewing profiles before meeting
people, 144–45
reviewing “Who’s Viewed Your
Profile?,” 142

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

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

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

W
websites
character limits, 42, 194
doing 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

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