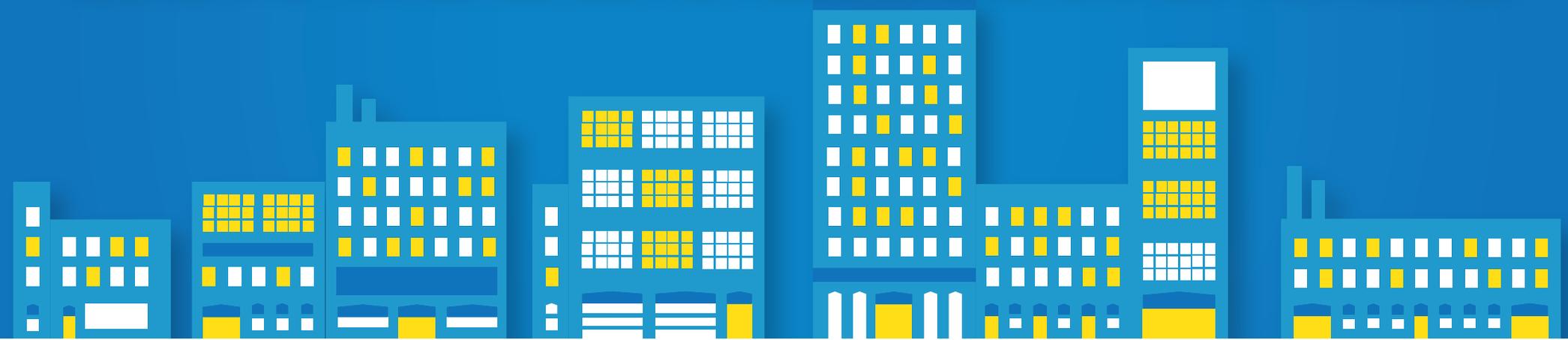


10 LinkedIn Mistakes Companies Make

AND HOW TO FIX THEM BEFORE THEY DAMAGE YOUR COMPANY'S REPUTATION



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

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“THERE IS IMMENSE EXPONENTIAL VALUE WHEN THE EMPLOYEES AND COMPANY WORK TOGETHER. ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS MUCH MORE THAN TWO.”

ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS TWO, RIGHT? WELL, NOT IN THE LINKEDIN WORLD.

For the most part, LinkedIn members have been using the site to pursue their individual goals and objectives. It's now time for the company to gather up the troops and bring all these individuals together—with their connections and their voices—and put forth a consistent company message. There is immense exponential value when the employees and company work together.

One plus one equals much more than two.

BUT WHEN YOUR COMPANY AND YOUR EMPLOYEES GET ON THE LINKEDIN BANDWAGON, BE SURE TO AVOID THESE COMMON MISTAKES.

MISTAKE 1

Having unprofessional or poor quality employee profile photos—or, worse yet, no photo at all!

LinkedIn's research suggests you are 21 times more likely to be viewed if you have a photo on your LinkedIn profile. Also, people are nine times more likely to invite you to connect with them if your profile includes a photo—but not just any photo. An employee's 20-year-old photo of himself next to his Harley in front of a tavern is probably not the first impression a company prefers—unless they sell Harleys or own the tavern. And even then, it's better to save those types of photos for Facebook.

Photos that are grainy, dark, or have too much background are not only annoying but may also send the wrong message. And if there's no photo at all—well, that's a red flag. People may ask *Is this person real? Is he hiding something? Is he not tech savvy enough to load a photo?*

Encourage your employees to put their best foot forward and include a photo that completely fills the space and says *I'm a professional, and I'm ready, willing, and able to do business with you.* Millions of people will have access to your employees' profiles, and you know the old saying—*a picture is worth a thousand words.* They will definitely get more inquiries if they have a photo.

POWER FORMULA TIP

Hire a photographer to take professional, high-resolution headshots of your employees. This will ensure consistency and a professional image for your employees and your company.

MISTAKE 2

Sharing incorrect or inconsistent information about the company

Employees occasionally share material that is inconsistent with the company's branding message. Sometimes they put forth incorrect information regarding company history, locations, markets served, products, etc. Oftentimes employees fail to include any information about the company. Inconsistencies sometimes appear on the company's LinkedIn company page.

Prepare standard language about your company, and encourage all employees to include it in the Job Experience and Summary sections on their individual profiles. Also, include the standard verbiage in the About (Overview) section of your LinkedIn company page.

POWER FORMULA TIP

Items to incorporate in your standard company description include company history, awards you've received, career information, general product categories, your website address, phone number, general email address, etc.

MISTAKE 3

Poor participation—all company employees are not on LinkedIn

Lack of participation may be a direct result of the company's failure to encourage and train its employees. Once employees understand how LinkedIn can lead to greater success for themselves and the company, most will be anxious to learn how to use it.

Encourage all employees to have LinkedIn profiles and include prescribed language about the company. Explain the benefit of being on LinkedIn and having a large network, and train them how to effectively use LinkedIn. This will not only help the company but will improve the individual's personal brand as well.

POWER FORMULA TIP

If you're worried that your employees will use all this LinkedIn knowledge to find new employment, let me assure you that the knife cuts both ways. Your new knowledge of LinkedIn will help you replace any disgruntled employees within your ranks—and the new employees will undoubtedly be more eminently qualified.

MISTAKE 4 Failing to keyword optimize employee profiles and company page

Because most employees and companies do not strategically include their most important keywords on their personal profiles and company pages, they are not appearing on the first page when people are searching for their products and services. And trust me—most people who do a Google search never make it past page 1.

Identify your company's most important keywords, and tell your employees where the words can be placed in their personal profile to achieve the best search result when your target audience is looking for your company, its employees, or your products and services. These keywords should also be included on the company's LinkedIn company page.

POWER FORMULA TIP

Use LinkedIn's Advanced People Search or Company Search function to search for your company's products and services. If your employees and company page are not showing up on page 1, it's time to start keyword optimizing. Look at your website, the profiles of people in your industry, and your competitors' company pages to identify potential keywords—or ask your friends and business associates what words they would use to search for a company like yours.

MISTAKE 5

Sharing poor status updates—or failing to use this powerful tool

Status updates—sent out by both individuals and the company—are a great way to share relevant industry trends and information about the company’s products and services, successes, and expertise. Used correctly, they are a strategic marketing weapon. However, poorly written status updates and updates that are inconsistent with the company’s strategic branding message can be detrimental to the company’s image and business success.

Coordinating and preplanning status updates will ensure the company’s best stuff gets in front of the most important people with a frequency that is appropriate for the audience.

You are probably already spending a significant amount of time reading, researching, and learning about not only what is going on in your own company but in your industry. The key here is to take that investment of time and multiply it by sharing it with your audience (connections and followers). They will appreciate receiving timely information about your company, your products, and the latest trends in your industry. When they’re ready to make a purchase, you might get their business, because they now know you as an industry expert who takes the time to share important information with them.

POWER FORMULA TIP

Your company status updates can be targeted to a very specific group of your followers based on company size, industry, job function, seniority, language, university, and geographic location—in other words, laser-focused messages to just the right audience.

MISTAKE 6

Not using LinkedIn to search for customers, employees, suppliers, strategic partners, etc.

Many people think LinkedIn is only for job seekers. Sure, you can find a job on LinkedIn, but it is the world's largest database of business professionals, and its uses for companies are unlimited. And I'm not just talking about simply finding customers. Companies are missing the boat if they're not using LinkedIn to find and get introduced to new vendors, potential business partners, great job candidates—virtually anyone you can think of who might help grow their business. And the LinkedIn community is growing by more than one million professionals each week, so it's impossible to run out of opportunities.

Implement a LinkedIn training program for all employees whose job function includes finding and meeting the right people. Think beyond the sales department and include human resources, marketing, purchasing, and, of course, everyone in the C-suite. Many of my clients who have mastered the art of searching on LinkedIn consider it to be the number one tool in their business development arsenal.

POWER FORMULA TIP

You may want to consider an upgraded LinkedIn account for a few employees in your organization. This will enable them to uncover more in-depth information about the targets they discover.

MISTAKE 7

Failing to monitor employees' profiles and activity as well as what's being said about the company through LinkedIn

Employees may be putting forth an incorrect or inconsistent branding message. If employees are not exercising good judgment and using common sense, company management will want to know about it as soon as possible.

Because negative comments can go viral very quickly, failure to monitor what's being said about a company's products and services can cause damage to the company's reputation.

Designate a management employee(s) to initially review all employee profiles and then do periodic spot checks. In addition, corporate monitoring of discussions and status updates will help you uncover inconsistent or inappropriate activity.

I am not suggesting that employees shouldn't be encouraged to be themselves on LinkedIn—after all, these are their individual accounts—but they do represent the company, and people will judge the organization by the actions and behaviors of its employees.

It's also important to monitor what others are saying about your company, your products, and your services. If any negative comments about the company or its employees are discovered, address these immediately and fully. To minimize any negative effect, offer a sincere apology when necessary, and propose the best possible solution.

POWER FORMULA TIP

If people are talking about your company in a positive manner, acknowledge their comments and share the good publicity with your network. Good publicity is the best defense against bad publicity. In addition, encourage employees to “share” and “like” each other's status updates. This spreads great information exponentially. Sharing news of a job opening might help you discover a great candidate and reduce your recruiting expense.

Not joining or participating in LinkedIn groups—particularly significant industry groups and customers' industry groups

A company misses a lot of marketing opportunity if it doesn't have the right employees in the best industry-related groups and doesn't share information in those groups or become involved in group discussions.

Groups is a popular feature on LinkedIn. Groups are a great place to share your thought knowledge and engage with potential customers. Join a good cross section of groups, and don't forget to look for groups in which your customers are actively involved. Employees can keep the company top of mind with group members by consistently sharing information and expertise with the group.

The Search feature can help you find the best groups to join. Put keywords related to industry, geographic region, school name, etc. in the search box. In addition, use similar keywords in the Discover tab of the Groups feature. And don't forget to check out what groups your customers and competitors have listed on their profiles.



POWER FORMULA TIP

Start your own group to educate your target market and address relevant issues. This is a terrific way to build credibility and set yourself apart from your competitors.

MISTAKE 9

Underutilizing the features and tools available on the company page—or not even having a company page

LinkedIn has been focusing quite a bit of effort on the company page, and they have added a significant amount of functionality to it. You are leaving a lot of money on the table if you don't include information about your products, services, and employment opportunities on your company page. You can also post company status updates and encourage people to become followers of your company page. Of course, none of this is possible if you don't even have a company page!

Make creating a company page and keeping it up to date a priority. Include a keyword-rich company description and an overview of your products and services. Don't forget to include links to your website. Develop a procedure to consistently update the page, encourage followers, share status updates, and review analytics. When you search for a company on the Internet, their LinkedIn company page will typically appear on the first page of the search results. That should be reason enough to get busy creating and optimizing your LinkedIn company page.

POWER FORMULA TIP

You only have a few seconds to catch a viewer's attention. Include an eye-catching banner on your main page. Also consider creating Showcase Pages for your most significant product and service categories.

MISTAKE 10 Having a woefully inadequate corporate social media policy—or none at all

This may result in inconsistent company branding across social networking platforms, ineffective or potentially dangerous comments or information being shared by company employees, and reduced employee productivity. Sure, the social media landscape is constantly evolving and revisions may be necessary, but it's important to have a company policy in place.

Your company's social media policy should be developed under the direction of your human resources management and legal counsel. In addition to legal and compliance issues, be sure the policies address the need for a consistent branding message and include what the employees can do, not just what they can't do.

POWER FORMULA TIP

When developing your corporate social media policy, include your company's most active social media users in the process. You will then have advocates for the policy among the workforce.

ARE YOU MAKING THESE COSTLY MISTAKES? IF YOU ARE, IT'S TIME TO GET YOUR LINKEDIN HOUSE IN ORDER.

Over 600 million people and more than 20 million companies are finding new customers, generating inbound leads, discovering great new employees—making money with LinkedIn! Why not join them and leave your competitors in the dust.

MEET WAYNE BREITBARTH

Wayne Breitbarth is a globally recognized industry leader in LinkedIn training and marketing. He has shared his expertise with more than 100,000 professionals through private business consulting, dynamic presentations to worldwide audiences, and his critically acclaimed book *The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success: Kick-start Your Business, Brand, and Job Search* (now in its fourth edition).

Wayne works with companies and individuals to develop a comprehensive strategy for using LinkedIn to increase sales, raise brand awareness, and discover new markets for products and services. He also shows companies simple ways to recruit employees and reduce recruiting fees by using LinkedIn.

Connect with Wayne

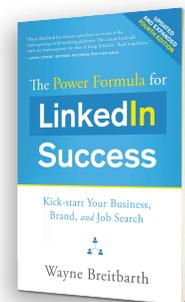
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