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The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success

THE LINKEDIN CONNECTION CONUNDRUM WHO SHOULD BE IN YOUR NETWORK?

In my book The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success: Kick-start Your Business, Brand, and Job Search, I consistently encourage people to connect with people they know and trust. This is the premise on which LinkedIn was designed. At one point the words "Your Network of Trusted Professionals" was prominently displayed on the LinkedIn site.

I promote this strategy because I think it is important to understand LinkedIn's original intent and use the site accordingly before venturing into areas outside of its design. Also, it's easy to get discouraged by some of the negative things that can happen when connecting with strangers. Since many of my readers are either beginners or simply investigating the site, I want them to experience some early success before running into things they may not understand.

On the other hand, LinkedIn can be one heck of a tool to meet people you don't know but would like to know. To help you better understand this quality versus quantity debate (whether it's better to have an enormous LinkedIn network that includes hordes of strangers or a smaller but tight-knit network of people you know and trust), I have developed the LinkedIn Connections Continuum chart. The chart shows you what happens if you choose to increase your connections beyond the far left of the continuum ("I know everyone well") and across the continuum toward the far right ("I know only a small %"). As you expand your network, some positive things will happen (you will have a larger marketing audience), but some negative things can also happen (you could be less effective when introducing your connections to each other).



This chart is definitely a work in process, but I think it will help you develop a connections strategy that is right for you. Because your professional circumstances may change, keep in mind that it may be helpful to tweak your strategy from time to time.

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Spam/Viruses

Remember—once someone becomes a first-level connection, he/she automatically gets your email address. Now, that is no big deal if you are only connecting with people you know and trust, but it may become a big deal when someone's goal is to spread viruses or spam you with all kinds of offers and promotions.

Another form of spamming is unwanted sales calls. Once people have access to your list of connections, it's easy for them to call your connections and drop your name as a way to gain credibility.

Marketing Audience

Of course, when you send out a status update with a marketing message, you want to reach as many current and potential customers/clients as possible. This is when many of us would like to have 30,000 people in our network! However, if you do business in a defined geographic market (for instance, a large city or part of a state), having lots of strangers from across the country or even the globe in your network may not be worth the potential risks.

Introduction Effectiveness

People love to introduce their friends to each other, and LinkedIn makes it easy for your friends to see your entire professional network. If you decide to connect with lots of strangers, you may disappoint your friends when they request an introduction to someone in your network and you have no real relationship with that person.

Time Commitment

The more first-level connections you have, the busier your home page feed will be and the more time you will need to spend if you want to take full advantage of this wealth of information. This overcrowding may discourage you from regularly reviewing the status updates in your feed, and then you might miss something you should know or act upon.

Here are some ways you can tidy up your home page:

- Review your settings. Under the *Me* tab in the top toolbar, click *Settings & Privacy*, and then choose the *Account* tab. Next, click *Feed Preferences*, and customize your home feed to include only the information you are interested in seeing.
- If you are tired of seeing the status updates of some of your connections (perhaps they're just not relevant to you or they're too much like tweets in your opinion), feel free to hide their status updates. In the top right of the box that contains their latest status update, simply click the three dots and select *Unfollow <name>*. From that point forward you will not see their updates. However, you will still be connected to them and have all the other benefits of being connected to them at the first level. You can reverse this decision anytime you choose to do so.

Search Ranking

We all want to come up high on the list when someone is searching on LinkedIn for the kinds of things we do, sell, or want to be searched for. One of the ways to improve your ranking significantly is to have lots of connections. Connections are the gas in the LinkedIn tank. Fill up your tank a bit more, and you'll have a much better chance of being found.

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What Should Your Strategy Be?

As I shared in my book, my personal connections strategy has evolved over time. When I joined LinkedIn, I owned an office furniture dealership in southeastern Wisconsin, and I knew all 400 or so first-level connections in my LinkedIn network. Now that my book is being sold around the world and I spend the majority of my time helping people maximize LinkedIn for their companies and careers, I have become more of a strategic open networker and have expanded my network considerably. This approach has worked well for me. However, I do not consider myself to be a LION (LinkedIn Open Networker). LIONS accept all connection requests. Many LIONS have run out of invitations and are asking people to invite them into their network.

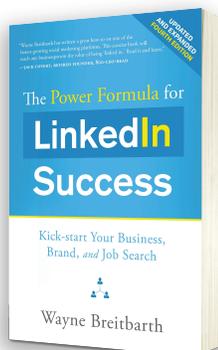
The action step for you now is to think about where you are currently on the LinkedIn Connections Continuum and whether that spot is getting you what you want to get out of your efforts on LinkedIn. If not, you may benefit from strategically expanding your network—but keep in mind that moving farther to the right has its benefits but some issues you may have to manage through as well.

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