

Give Your LinkedIn Profile A Complete Makeover In Under An Hour

LinkedIn can be a powerful and convenient hub for your job search. The company says that more than 20,000 companies in the U.S. use the platform to recruit, posting more than 3 million jobs every month. A good profile can potentially put you in front of those companies and give them a sense of whether you might be a good fit.

“It is your professional profile of record. You want to make sure it’s a reflection of you and it really speaks to whatever you’re in it for,” says Blair Decembrele, LinkedIn career expert and director of editorial marketing.

And while a cottage industry has sprung up around helping people and companies craft the perfect profile of record, sometimes you only have time for a quick fix. Maybe you spotted an opening for your dream job. Or you may have met a potential mentor you want to impress. Whatever the reason, if you need to spruce up your profile and don’t have a lot of time, here are the areas on which to focus.

Contact information

This one is simple: Fill out your contact information, including company, phone number, email address, website, and other relevant contact information. If the person looking at your profile doesn’t have InMail capabilities or simply wants to reach out to you by phone or email, make it easy for them, says LinkedIn expert Donna Serdula, creator of LinkedIn-Makeover.com and author of LinkedIn Makeover: Professional Secrets to a Powerful LinkedIn Profile.

“Success on LinkedIn is getting off LinkedIn. I don’t mean permanently, I just mean you want to get off LinkedIn and forge real world relationships,” she adds.

Time: approximately two to three minutes.

Background graphic

Perhaps the most overlooked element of a LinkedIn profile is the background graphic, Serdula says. If you don’t have a background graphic, the image behind your photo will be blue with graphics that look like a constellation map. Because so few people take advantage of that opportunity, you can stand out and make your profile more memorable when you do, she says.

What type of graphic or photo should you use? “It’s not the place for a vacation photo or one of your kids,” she says. Find an image that expresses a message that supports your brand. You might show a good, clear image of you speaking at an event. Or, if you want to go for a more scenic image, think about something that’s symbolic of your work or industry. If you don’t have a good photo, check out free stock photography sites like Pixabay or Unrestricted Stock. Be sure to read and follow the conditions of use for any stock photography provider.

Time: Less than five minutes if you have an image

If your photo is missing or just so-so and you don’t have time for a professional head shot, grab your smartphone and a friend to take some snaps. Decembrele says that profiles with a photo get up to 21 times the profile views that those without one.

What makes a good photo? Decembrele advises:

- Avoid complex patterns and busy backdrops (plain white backgrounds are her favorite)
- Make sure your face fills at least 60% of the photo
- Ensure the image is representative of who you are as a professional

Time: Roughly 20 minutes to take a few photos.

LinkedIn profiles that list the dates of all positions receive eight times more views than those where previous jobs aren't up-to-date, Decembrele says. So, take some time to review your chronological job history and ensure it's accurate and aligned with your resume.

Time: roughly 10 minutes

Add keywords

You may not have time to rewrite your summary, but adding the right keywords is important to help people find you. If you don't use the specific industry terminology that hiring managers use to search for specific skills, like "investigative reporter" versus "writer," Serdula says. But avoid overused buzzwords.

Serdula had one client who thought LinkedIn was "useless." She referred to herself as a CPA [certified public accountant] throughout her profile. But Serdula helped her realize that most people search for "accountant," "bookkeeper," or "tax helper" when looking for someone with her skills. She added those words throughout her profile, as well as "Quickbooks adviser," and her profile started generating leads, Serdula says.

Think about how people refer to you and include those keywords in your summary and job descriptions.

Time: 10 to 15 minutes to brainstorm and add keywords

Perfect your headline

Your headline is the 120-word line that appears immediately under your name. Be sure you're using that space wisely, says Sandra Long, LinkedIn consultant and author of LinkedIn for Personal Branding: The Ultimate Guide. Use important keywords here and be clear about what you do, she adds.

You can take a couple of approaches to your headline, Serdula says. You may choose to include a list of keywords separated by commas or vertical bars or you may use a tagline that states what you do and who your target audience is. Both can work, so choose one now, but experiment over time to see what works best for you.

"The one thing you want to remember about the LinkedIn headline is that it follows you around LinkedIn," Serdula adds. Whenever you post, LinkedIn displays your photo, name and headline. So, it's short piece of digital branding that deserves attention. Serdula also has a headline generator on her website.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes

Update your skills section

Long says the skills section of your profile is important, but people often don't keep it up-to-date. "I worked with a Princeton grad who majored in Chinese and her top skill [listed] was Microsoft Word," she says. "I see it all the time."

You can add up to 50 skills to your profile, but the platform will highlight your top three, Long says. Choose those that truly set you apart in the marketplace. But add all that are relevant, Decembrele says. Members with five or more skills receive up to 17 times more profile views, according to LinkedIn research.

Time: Approximately 10 minutes

Clearly, you could spend much more time on each of these tasks—and you should plan to do so once your crunch time is over, Long says. These are quick fixes, but a good LinkedIn profile takes time to develop, she says.

"Normally, it's about the best ways to optimize, how to have the best profile," she says. The quick fixes will help you strengthen your profile in a pinch, but they're not a substitute for completing your profile; crafting a well-written summary; filling out previous job descriptions with relevant skills; and other elements of a good profile, she says.

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