Networking with LinkedIn

What is LinkedIn?
LinkedIn helps you exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with your trusted contacts. Often called “Facebook for Grownups/Professionals,” it’s a place to build your professional identity on the web, connection with professional groups of peers, and even conduct job search networking.

Why should I use LinkedIn?
One word. Connections. There are already over 35 MILLION professional across the world on LinkedIn. Use it to show the world who you are. To help the world find you. You can connect with professional associations and groups based on your interest. You can look up alumni. You can find professionals and peers doing what you want to do.

How do I get started?

THE PROFILE

Signing up is free. We recommend starting with the Setup Guide at http://learn.linkedin.com/students/step-1/ This will get you started on your profile, uploading your information, and creating your best online presence.

Help! I don’t know what I’m doing. What should a professional profile look like?
We’re currently finishing a document to help you with using LinkedIn at the Career Center. You can also look up profiles of other people to see how they set theirs up (Check out Associate Director Amber Graham’s if you like, http://www.linkedin.com/in/ambergraham).

Recommendations:

1.) As soon as you have your account and start creating your profile, make sure to nail down your private URL. It’s an option on your “edit profile” screen, underneath the snapshot screen with information in it. This is a quick URL you can add to business cards, email signatures, and even your resume.

2.) Use the resume import tool on the right hand side. It will allow you to import information from your already existing resume, versus typing it all in. JUST MAKE SURE TO CHECK THE INFO ONCE IT'S IMPORTED. You WILL have some editing to do, including employer names if they linked to the right employer.

3.) Get your profile as complete as possible, which should be up to 85%. This includes putting in information in your work history and education fields, writing a professional summary (see next week's Digest for tips), and editing your contact settings.

Setting your “Professional Headline”
If you are a current underclassman, it is appropriate to say something like “University of Rochester student majoring in ...” If you are a graduating senior, you should including something about your career field, such as “Aspiring Graphic Designer.”

Picking your Picture
KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL! LinkedIn is not the place to share all of your photos, just one will suffice.
WRITING YOUR SUMMARY

One of the most important, yet most difficult, parts of your profile is your professional summary. This should include information about your interests, skills, and key words that would allow someone to search for you.

*Bad Professional Summary* – Senior Art major looking for a job.

*Good Professional Summary* – Graduating senior art major at the University of Rochester, with internship experience in Arts Management. Interested in locating a position that would utilize my skills in gallery and event management, public relations, artist relations, marketing and office administration. Strong time management, interpersonal and communication skills, as well as Fluency in French and Russian. Active leader on campus, including involvement in campus art gallery, Grassroots, and Alpha Phi sorority.

SPECIALTIES

This is a good place to list software programs you may know, knowledge areas, and really show what you’re interested in doing. It is not however a place to list the various functions you’re interested in unless you have experience in them. For example, listing off various types of consulting is only appropriate if you’d already done some work in those areas.

WHAT SHOULD I PUT AS MY UPDATE? HOW OFTEN?

THIS IS NOT FACEBOOK! Your updates on your LinkedIn profile show up to your contacts in a variety of different places, and they don’t really want to know what you had for breakfast. Keep it to things that you would want your professional contacts to know, including awards, significant academic accomplishments, publications, internships or jobs you’ve taken, etc. Keep it relevant to your contacts.

WHAT ABOUT APPS?

Just like the iPhone, there are a lot of apps you can add to your profile. I recommend considering Box.net Files if you want to upload your resume, presentations, publications, etc. You do not need to add apps for a complete profile, and should only use them if you plan on utilizing them.

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS - HOW DOES LINKEDIN WORK?

LinkedIn is like playing “the Six Degrees of Separation.” Basically you meet people. They have connections that you can now see and also connect with. And then those people also have people they know who you can be in touch with.

The basics are that your first level connections you get updates on, can see more information for etc. Second and third level connections you can connect to through your first-level contacts.

HOW DO I MAKE CONNECTIONS? JOIN A GROUP!

The first and most time efficient way to start connecting is to look for groups. Joining appropriate groups can give you access to professionals in the job fields you are looking at, and the opportunity to see what other groups they are part of.

For example, if you’re interested in graphic design, start big by searching for “graphic design” as a group search. This might yield some high-level professional organizations, and smaller local groups. **Don’t join groups indiscriminately**, as many will want to take a look at your profile before accepting you. Only join groups that you really are interested in talking to people through. City specific groups are another option,
such as searching for “graphic design Philadelphia.” This puts you in direct contact with professionals in your geographic area, doing jobs you’re interested in, who you can ask for advice, consideration or information. Also, many groups have active job posting boards!

**ONCE YOU’RE ACCEPTED TO A GROUP…**

You’ll be able to connect with other group members more easily, and add them to your own network if appropriate. You can also participate in job boards, discussion forums, and post forum messages.

**CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE**

So maybe now you’ve found some people through different groups. But what about connecting with ACTUAL People?

**Search**

You can look people you know up by name, employer, location, University, etc. At the top of your screen, select “Search People” and enter a name. You can also click the “advanced” link to the right of the search button to pull up a more intense search screen. Make sure the person you find is actually the one you were looking for. In the advanced search you can also enter “University of Rochester” as the college, and find even more alumni that might not be part of the group.

**Ok, I found someone I want to talk to, should I add them to my network?**

Once you click on someone’s profile, you should be able to see different information about them. You then have a couple of different options.

**Send a Message:** The first go-to option, if you are linked closely enough to someone (1st degree or group) you can probably send them a message. There is a 3000 character limit, so you can fit your entire networking note into the field. It is recommended you send someone a message if possible, BEFORE adding them to your network.

**Being Introduced:** For second degree contacts, you can ask the person you’re connected through to introduce you. You write a message to the person you know (your introducer) and a note that they will pass along to the new contact if they’re comfortable with that, all in the same screen! This is a great way to connect via someone referring you.

**Adding someone to your network:** MAKE SURE YOU PUT SOME DETAIL IN YOUR 300 character MESSAGE. NEVER NEVER NEVER send the default message. Nothing gets you turned away like the default “I’d like to add you to my professional network” that LinkedIn puts in the message screen. Be sure to include a bit of information about yourself, and why you’re reaching out to them. For example “I’m a senior at the Univ. of Rochester, and am currently pursing consulting positions in the Boston area. I was wondering if we could connect and if I could ask you some questions about the field and your company.”

**What’s InMail?** For some accounts, you might also be able to send InMail, which is like sending a private message to the person. This may or may not be a feature of your account, and you may have a limit on how many you can send. Save these for worst case scenarios where it’s the only way to connect.

**Pro Tip!** If you find someone you want to connect with but can’t find a way to connect, try Google searching their full name and title or company. If you can only see their First Name/Last Initial, try Googling that as well as their Company or position to see if you can find their full name, and then run a search on the full name. One of the first results may be their public LinkedIn page, which may have other connection options! You might also find their personal website with an email address!
**Maintaining your account**

So now that you're all set up, and have adding some connections, now what? LinkedIn is a powerful tool, but it's only as good as the effort you put into it. If you've selected to get information from your groups in a digest, read through these when you get them! They'll have information about trends in your career field, may even include job postings, and also sometimes requests for help from network members (see below).

As you add experience, qualifications, and interests, make sure to update your account. Posting professionally related updates also keeps your network aware of what you're doing, and you may even be able to make in person connections if someone sees you'll be in their area.

**Growing your Network**

Continuing to grow your network IS NOT A COMPETITION! This is not about how many contacts you have, but the quality and relationship you have with those connections. If you have a 2nd level connection with someone you either know in person, or who has an interesting job you'd like to ask them about, that's a great time to request a connection with a professionally written note. However, adding people just for the sake of growing your number will just get you ignored by people you really do want to connect with.

**Contributing and being a good network member**

You may get some great information of your network, so make sure to put some effort in for the sake of others. If someone posts a question on a message board that you have some knowledge of, post a well-worded thought out response. Each time you interact with someone on LinkedIn, they're reminded of you, may visit your profile, and take an interest in your own goals. Also if someone scopes your profile, they'll be able to see your posts, input and connections. The more engaged you are the better this looks, as long as you keep it professional!

**Check out our new and improved Networking Page online at**
http://www.rochester.edu/careercenter/students/networking.html

This page includes information on both in-person and online networking, questions to ask networking contacts, sample emails and letters, and answers to questions about etiquette (keeping you out of networking trouble!)

**Beyond LinkedIn - Think about joining professional associations!**

Many professional associations have student membership rates that are way below the professional member rates. Joining associations appropriate for your field of interest will get you access to their membership directories, notice of upcoming conferences and other networking options, and professional development opportunities like webinars and featured speakers. You may also get a subscription to their journal or other publications, which can keep you on top of trends in the field.

Google searching for various associations is one way to start. You can also use your LinkedIn contacts to see what associations they belong to, and look into joining as a full member (which may be required before approval to join their LinkedIn group).

Also, many associations (such as the NY Women in Communications (NYWICI) and the Direct Marketing Education Foundation (DMEF) hold student career conferences aimed at educating you about the field and offering in person networking opportunities. The best way to find out about these are through joining associations and/or talking to a counselor to brainstorm ideas.