

The Linked Advantage



Discover the secrets to using
LinkedIn like a pro

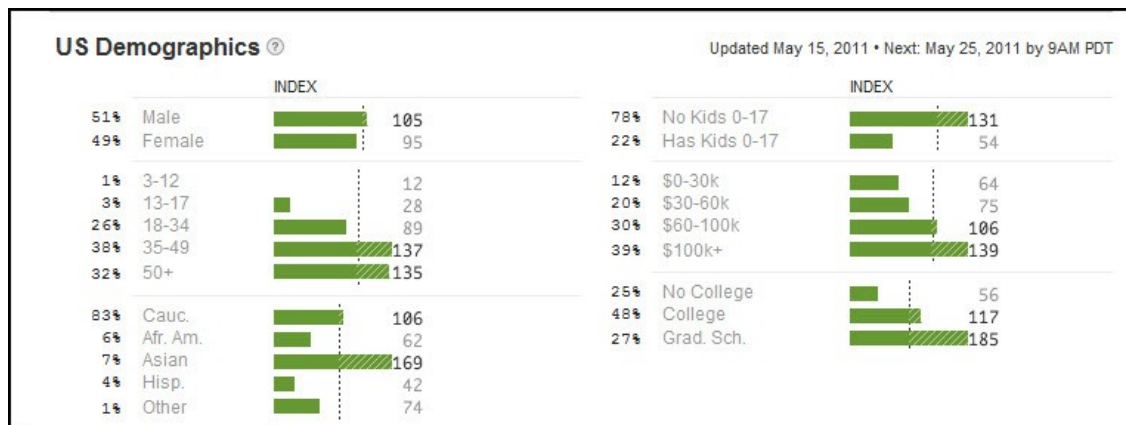
This year has been all about the power of social networking -- specifically the "Big Three": Facebook, Twitter... and LinkedIn. Today we're going to focus on LinkedIn, dispelling common myths and taking a look at some of the unique ways it can help you build your business.

What Is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a social network, just like Facebook or Twitter. However, the emphasis with LinkedIn is on the "network" rather than the "social".

It used to be thought of as a place where professional, post-graduate males between 28-40 posted résumés or CV's on the net, but with social networks realizing they're at the crest of power, with the phenomenon of social search posing a serious threat to Google and its algorithms, that has changed.

Here's a look at the new, broad demographic for LinkedIn, courtesy of Quantcast.com:



The areas to concentrate on here are those parts of the green bars extending beyond the dotted, vertical lines: This represents the segment of

population visiting the site that is "over indexed", meaning that as a percentage per hundred visitors, it's higher than the norm.

So today's strongest LinkedIn demographic looks as follows:

- Male
- 35-50 years old
- Asian and Caucasian
- Childless
- Earning between \$60-100k
- Earning over 100k
- College or Grad School

On the surface, scanning the list above seems to say that not much has changed: But when you see how closely the female segment is gaining on the male (49% female-51% male), there seems to be a definite shift (which is only going to increase). College graduates (a minority before) are also now well-represented and over indexed.

If you are a 28 year old Hispanic female with two children, does this mean you should ignore this broad demographic? Definitely not! It means that you'll keep the focus professional and, well, focused. LinkedIn is still your business card, résumé or CV on the net... only now it is so much more, with the most vocal and visible group not fitting Quantcast's broad demographic but often forming the strongest presence you'll connect with, depending on your contact list.

Here's the beauty of LinkedIn: ***You set your own demographic*** by importing contacts from or linking:

- Your email address book
- Twitter
- Your blog

In addition, LinkedIn now has some exceptionally powerful features it never had before -- one of them unique. This particular feature allows you to:

- Post "recommendations" (i.e. testimonials) for your network contacts
- Allow them to post recommendations about you

LinkedIn Groups also provides a decided advantage in building and refining your own personal demographic. You can join or even start a group very easily, connecting with like-minded industry professionals who are not yet in your address book. By doing this, you are connecting with your target niche.

This is especially advantageous if you have a B2B (business-to-business) service business: You can pick up permanent jobs or land projects with astonishing ease.

How to Use It

LinkedIn is best used for networking. Not only can you find clients if you're a B2B service, you can also make yourself known to potential JV partners -- as well as help yourself to a host of high-end insider tips and leads.

LinkedIn operates by allowing you to post the following:

- Your Profile
- Your Profile Photo
- Your Résumé or CV
- A Summary (the equivalent of a "Resource Box" in article marketing)

You can also:

- Join groups
- Ask for recommendations
- SEO-optimize your LinkedIn URL
- SEO-optimize your keywords in your Summary section
- Add your own, custom anchor text to your links
- Connect your Twitter and Facebook account
- Searching by Companies you may have worked for or currently do business with

You can also add up to three URLs to your websites or blogs.

Take time to set up your profile. It is the best source of free professional advertising and promotion you could ever hope to get.

Four LinkedIn Do's and Don'ts

Nevertheless, there is an accepted etiquette to LinkedIn. And **Rule # 1** is... never indiscriminately invite people to join your network or group because you think it will be advantageous. This group is far less tolerant of "hit and miss" random requests than is, say, Facebook. Here's a typical reaction, quoted on BNET: *"I get **LinkedIn** requests from people I've never met, but they've seen my name along with my company, so they send a request. I'm tired of it. Tell people to stop. I feel guilty not helping these people, but I also refuse to recommend someone if I don't know what kind of worker they are."*

Rule # 2: Update your status. Regularly. Not only will you miss amazing freelance or job opportunities if you don't, but LinkedIn only works if you remember to use it! (All too many people make the mistake of saying: "There. I've got my profile posted on LinkedIn -- that's all I need.")

It's not a static "business card" -- it's more of a living gallery of who you are and what you can offer.

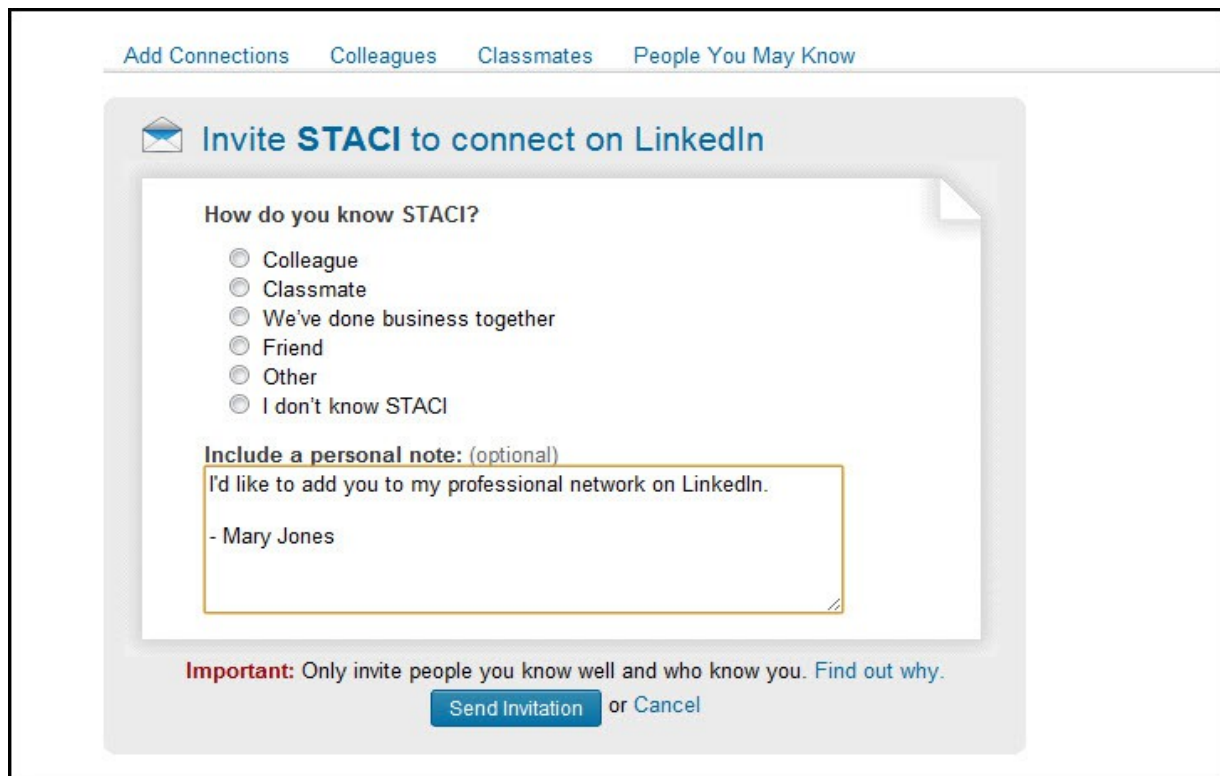
Rule # 3: Use recommendations wisely -- both giving and requesting.

Be choosy about who you ask. Always ask those who know you well. Asking people who are peripheral is more likely to result in a "no" (or in having your request ignored). After all, you wouldn't walk up to the Vice President of a large corporation and ask him to write you a letter of recommendation if the closest you'd ever come to getting to know him consisted of watching him onstage at the annual meeting.

Be sparing also in giving recommendations: Resist the temptation to please your friends and curry favor, if that's something you've gotten into the habit

of doing on other networks such as Facebook or Twitter. Make sure that your word carries weight; and that a recommendation from you is "pure gold".

Rule # 4: It's a very simple one: Never send people network requests ("friend" requests) without changing the default message to something more personal. This is the default message, below...



The screenshot shows a LinkedIn interface for sending an invitation to a user named STACI. At the top, there are navigation tabs: "Add Connections", "Colleagues", "Classmates", and "People You May Know". The main heading is "Invite STACI to connect on LinkedIn". Below this, there is a section titled "How do you know STACI?" with five radio button options: "Colleague", "Classmate", "We've done business together", "Friend", "Other", and "I don't know STACI". Underneath is a text box for a personal note, which contains the text "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn." followed by "- Mary Jones". At the bottom, there is an "Important" warning: "Only invite people you know well and who know you. Find out why." and two buttons: "Send Invitation" and "Cancel".

Testing has proved to many internet entrepreneurs that a better response rate is garnered when that message is personalized and a reason added.

LinkedIn encourages you to round up as many contacts as you can -- but that's more to their advantage than yours. Choosing your contacts is very much like defining and targeting your ideal customer: It's better to have a smaller "list" that is highly responsive and appreciative -- one that connects

and engages naturally, with enthusiasm, tied by common interests -- than a huge, generic one.

Take some time to browse through all the tutorials and sections. Join two or three groups, seek out contacts from three or four companies and add business friends and contacts you know well from your address book.

See Who You Already Know on LinkedIn

Searching your email contacts (hotmail.com, gmail.com, yahoo.com, aol.com) is the easiest way to find people you already know on LinkedIn. [Learn More](#)

Your email:

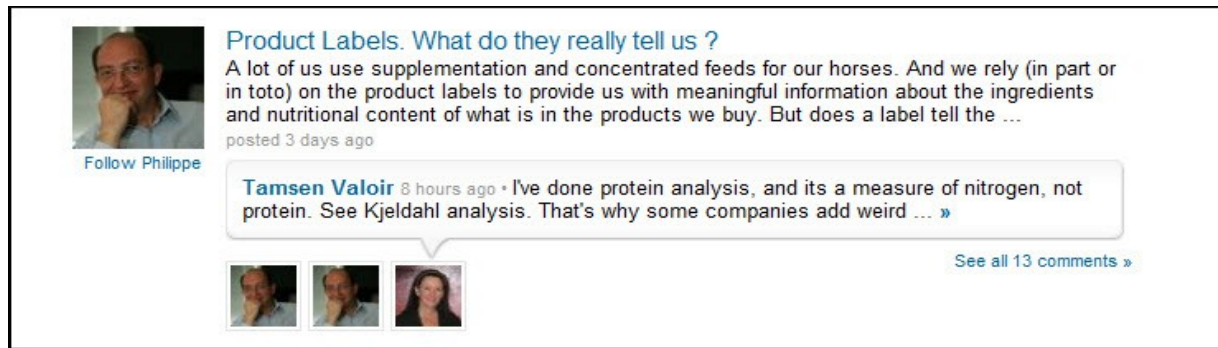
Email password:

We will not store your password or email anyone without your permission.

Then study your new contacts' profiles and summaries. See how they network and model yourself after the style that feels most comfortable and fits in with your business image, branding and "voice."

Using LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn Groups provide a place for professionals in the same industry or with similar interests to share content, find answers, post and view jobs, make business contacts, and establish themselves as industry experts.



You can find groups to join in the Groups Directory or view suggestions of groups you may like. You can also create a new group focused on a particular topic or industry.

The Groups functionality aspect of LinkedIn is an important and often overlooked part of the LinkedIn platform. For new users Groups allow you to start or join a conversation with other LinkedIn users. It's worth joining a few groups of interest to you (LinkedIn allows up to 50 Groups to be joined) and reviewing the existing discussions before diving in. This will help you understand the best way to engage with the existing community there.

Before you start your own conversation, see if the topic has already been raised. If it has, you may have valuable input to provide in relation to that topic and by commenting there, immediately position yourself as a thought leader to the group!

The business benefits may not be immediately apparent, however over time they will materialise as the LinkedIn Group members learn more about you

and your expertise. You will find that LinkedIn and in particular LinkedIn Groups will provide the ability for you to:

- Listen for sales opportunities
- Nurture sales leads
- Close more business

Joining a group is a great way to make your voice heard (and your face seen) in the LinkedIn community. You'll be notified of new threads and posts, and you can simply click and comment.

Just make sure your comments add value to the discussion. You should never make do with comments such as: "Great point, Sarah!"

Addressing a specific point from an expert or involved stance goes a long way towards adding value.

And if you can conclude your comment with a call to action (or at least make it an "open" statement, inviting further opinion or questioning, as opposed to a "closed" one) you'll be welcomed as someone who livens up the group and keeps the ball rolling and in play.

LinkedIn has a "groups you may like" function that suggests groups based on your current profile and connections.

Ironically, the best groups for lead generation are those that don't tolerate blatant self-promotion.

27 Killer Tips For LinkedIn Success

1. Complete your profile as thoroughly as possible, and include interests, a professional picture, and business information. Your profile is the heart and soul of your online business brand on LinkedIn. It usually ranks in the top 5 of Google search results for "Your First and Last Name". When others do a search for your name to learn about your product, service, company, or previous work experience, then you'd better have a rock solid profile or that first impression could drastically tarnish your value. Make sure you fill out your profile 100% for starters, then go on from there to make it even better.
2. Connect with as many business associates as you can, since they will help you to network with like minded individuals and companies.
3. Learn from others and gain new knowledge, so you can become an expert in other subjects and topics.
4. Check your home page on LinkedIn fairly often. It contains industry updates, news, and postings from associates.
5. Be sure to explain your work experience in as much detail as possible. Don't just list employers or experience, but instead expand upon it by showing others' what you've done in detail.
6. Comment in the discussion forums as much as you can so your profile gets noticed.
7. Update your status with useful content and information as much as possible.

8. Feel free to implement keywords in both your profile and your content, so that your information comes up in search engine results.

9. Do not forget to include your LinkedIn profile link in other places like Twitter, Digg, your website and other social media websites.

10. LinkedIn is also a useful employment tool, so if you're hiring, use it to find good employees.

11. Customize your buttons. This will make your profile look more professional and give you more control.

12. Include your skills and specialties and be sure to expand upon your current business.

13. Include past education and past companies/experience, not just your current business or company.

14. Customize your public profile's URL so it's easier to link this to other pages and people will remember it much better. It also makes your profile look more professional and easier to share by claiming your LinkedIn vanity URL. The generic URL LinkedIn given to you when you create an account has a long string of confusing numbers at the end, it will look nice and clean like this: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/janebloggs>. Do so by going [Here](#) and clicking "customize your public profile URL" down on the right-hand side.

15. You can use the LinkedIn site to help get a much clearer picture of your competition. So it is a great tool to do competitive research with.

16. If you have success stories from your job or from work you have done with clients. Make sure you display it and use numbers, and show people percentages and actual, real numbers that back up the claims of your success.

17. The top of your summary is what visitors see first so be certain you're including the most vital information here to make your headline really pop. The headline is possibly the most important part on your LinkedIn profile. It is your 120 character attention grabber to people finding you in a LinkedIn search, it should be about what you do as opposed to what you are. It should be memorable and enticing enough for someone to click on your profile and not your competitors.

18. Try to become a recommended service or company by establishing a good reputation. People will flock more towards ones that have the "recommended" status.

19. Instead of using the default "My Website"-type anchor text links in your LinkedIn profile, you can change the anchor text to make those links more appealing to people who view your profile. So if you want to increase clicks on the website links you can display on your profile, change the link's anchor text to something more attention-grabbing than the standard options LinkedIn provides. For example, if you want to include a link to your blog, rather than choosing LinkedIn's standard "Blog" anchor text, customize it to include keywords that indicate what your blog is about, like "Internet Marketing Blog." Each profile can display up to 3 website links like this, and they can be customized by editing your profile, clicking edit on your

website links, and selecting "Other" in the drop-down menu to customize the anchor text.

20. Be willing to work at building your network; it takes time to get a lot of solid connections.

21. Make use of the option to be indexed so your information appears on Google and other search engines' results. It is possible for you to optimize your profile to get found by people searching with LinkedIn for key terms with which you want to be associated. But not alone that, your profile can also potentially appear on the popular search engines for your associated keywords. Add these keywords to various sections of your profile such as your headline, current experience, past experience, summary and specialties.

22. Ask others to recommend you if they have had experience with you. Recommendations are a powerful word-of-mouth marketing tool. And you might already be aware of the LinkedIn recommendation feature that lets users leave recommendations for other users (a plus for professional networking, of course). But did you know you could also collect recommendations for your Company Page's products and services, too? That's right! Encourage your prospects and customers to use LinkedIn as a recommendation platform, and once you've collected some awesome recommendations, use them as testimonials on your website.

23. Edit your profile often and rearrange things as needed, so you are always up to date and new content is there as well. LinkedIn enables users to reorder the sections of their profile in any way they prefer. When in edit

mode on your profile, simply hover your mouse over the title of each section.

Your mouse will turn into a four-arrowed icon, at which point you can click then drag and drop to another position on your profile.

24. Use the groups feature to meet others, post feedback, and get a feel for what other companies are up to. Did you know that if you're a member of the same group as another user, you can bypass the need to be a first-degree connection in order to message them? In addition, group members are also able to view the profiles of other members of the same group without being connected. Join more groups to enable more messaging and profile viewership capabilities.

25. **Get LinkedIn Endorsements** - Back in September 2012, LinkedIn launched a new feature called Endorsements, which enables users to endorse their connections for skills they've listed in the Skill & Expertise section of their profile -- or recommend one they haven't yet listed. These endorsements then show up on your profile within that same Skills & Expertise section. Okay, so you can't guarantee your connections will endorse you for those skills, but because it's so easy for LinkedIn users to do (all they have to do is click on the + sign next to a particular skill on a user's profile), you'll find that many of them will do it anyway. Just make sure your profile is complete and you've listed the skills you want people to endorse you for. It will definitely give your profile a bit of a credibility boost.

26. Start your network base with people you know and trust, and build from there.

27. Finally be as professional as possible at all times. When **Sending Invitations** – Connect with people you Know that will Enhance your Brand. Personalize Every Invitation with how they will know you or why you want to connect. Thank everyone who accepts your invitation. Connecting with people you don't know, have nothing in common with, and don't have your values, doesn't help you. When **Receiving Invitations** - Look at the senders profile for things in common, as well as their values and ethics. Read their Summary, Recommendations, and Groups. If you accept, be sure to thank them for inviting you to connect. **Asking for Recommendations** – Best Strategy: Send 2-3 recommendations to your connections every week. When they receive unsolicited recommendations they will be pleased and when LinkedIn asks them if they want to recommend you they will usually do so.

Recommendations from your most influential connections are the most powerful. Don't be afraid to ask for changes, they want to help you.

Conclusion

The most important point to remember about LinkedIn is that it is primarily professional in focus. Various discussions can often be informal or friendly, but even so, "fluff" is cut out and people are there to make points, as well as provide or receive quick, focused expertise.

It is also multi-layered, with many other flexible options for boosting your credibility there -- or losing it.

Use it wisely. And well.

For Further Information

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