

Networking tips for LinkedIn

By Dawn Stanyon, Professional Image Consultant, © 2012 The Emily Post Institute

Unless you're living under a rock (which does sound appealing on certain busy days), you know that LinkedIn is a social networking site where professionals connect. Whether you are on a solid career path, looking for a position change or are just interested in building a virtual community for sharing ideas and opinions, LinkedIn might be the place for you. Here at Emily Post, we believe that face-to-face connections are the most powerful; however, there is no denying that social networking is here to stay, and we all need to learn how to use it to build relationships.

Here are a few tips for growing your social network on LinkedIn.

1. Make your profile an extension of your personal brand. What are your three top attributes? Determined, hard working and professional? Is that truly reflected in your profile picture, the language you use in describing your current and former jobs, and your connections?
2. Customize your URL. A tailored web address always looks more professional.
3. Use a professional – or at least good looking – head shot. Cartoon characters, tropical vacation shots and pictures of your baby are for Facebook. If you want to be seen as an expert in your field, you have to look like an expert on your profile page.
4. The more information, the better. Don't be stingy with your resume information – you want people to be able to see how amazing you are. Make sure your attributes, skills and experience are fleshed out on your profile.
5. Join or create "Groups." Relationships don't just happen – they take effort and nurturing, and groups are a way to interact with other LinkedIn users with similar interests. You don't have to respond to every topic or question – pick and choose and answer thoughtfully. Actually create conversations to engage members.
6. If you pay for a "Personal Plus" account, you receive more information on those individuals who "check out" your profile. Consider this a warm lead and reach out to them to link in with you.
7. Be part of the community. If you find a professional development article that you think would be of interest to many of your profile followers, share the link.