

My Media Labs eBook

# LinkedIn for Pros: Unlocking the Key Elements to Your LinkedIn Profile

# JOIN THE TOP 1% ON LINKEDIN: UNLOCK 3-KEY PROFILE areas

Your LinkedIn profile has a problem: it looks exactly like 99% of the other 175 million profiles on the network. What if you could change the game by enhancing three key areas of your profile?

People hiring through LinkedIn are going to be moved by three key areas on your profile:

1. **Profile Summary** - think of this like your Executive Summary. It needs to hit hard and fast to make an impact. Too many members waste this space with a list of their areas worked in (newsflash: that's what your Experience section is for!). Rather use this area to draw in prospective opportunities and get them at "hello."
2. **Recommendations** - ratings matter. Most people today will not buy an app or product that has no ratings or feedback, well hiring is very similar. A member with well written and trustworthy Recommendations will get further than one without.
3. **Your Showcase** - did you know that your blog can be posted on LinkedIn? What about using Events to generate leads or adding a video to your profile? There are a ton of opportunities to showcase your work that can be added to your profile with the Applications page.

This workbook will cover all three areas in depth.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Mike Mintz has been blogging and using social media to promote businesses since 2005. In law school, he started writing the blog “[Jurisgamer: Video Game Law Explained](#),” and quickly gained the attention of lawyers for being one of the first law students to write about these issues. As a result, he landed a job at a law firm that specialized in video games. He marketed the firm through social channels and helped them win new business.

Mike’s has had long-standing relationship with [LexisNexis](#), “a leading global provider of content-enabled workflow solutions designed specifically for professionals in the legal, risk management, corporate, government, law enforcement, accounting, and academic markets.” As an advisor for this industry leader, Mike helps plan and oversee the execution of their social media strategy, policy, and tactics.

With the creation of [My Media Labs](#) in 2009, Mike expanded his consulting services to small businesses and institutions. His customers span a range of industries and continents, and he has made use of virtual platforms, documentation, and streamlined processes to serve their needs.



# HOW TO DRAFT THE PERFECT LINKEDIN PROFILE summary

With [93% of recruiters using LinkedIn to discover new talent](#) and 89% saying they have hired an applicant through LinkedIn, you cannot afford having a profile that does not deliver results. A few changes can mean the difference between being “in the stack” of profiles searched and at the “top of the pile.” Your LinkedIn profile Summary is just the place to start.

## **Human Psychology Demands a Digestible Summary: What Do You Do?**

The first thing most people ask you at a party is “what do you do?”

They are not looking for your elevator pitch, executive summary and certainly not your life story. Rather they are submitting to a basic psychological need to process and understand information as a whole before delving into it's detailed parts

The Gestalt school of psychology, developed in Germany in the early 20th Century, says that “the brain is holistic, parallel, and analog, with self-organizing tendencies,” and that “the human eye sees objects in their entirety before perceiving their individual parts.”

This means that people need to quickly categorize you. By understanding quickly “what you do” people then remember you as Mike the lawyer/blogger, rather than trying to hang onto all the other details you gave them.

You need to do this and more on LinkedIn.



You've heard the expression, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression"? Well, your LinkedIn profile Summary is your chance to make a first impression to anyone viewing your profile.

You don't just want them to "get" what you do. You want to make a connection and get the lead to a new opportunity.

## Think Simple: A 3-Step Approach to Get Results From Your LinkedIn Profile Summary

You get 200 to 300 words to make a recruiter on LinkedIn put you to the top of the stack.

A simple list of your qualifications, positions held or accomplishments are not what makes a summary effective. Rather you need to [make an impact](#) on the person viewing your profile, something that makes them to want to learn more.

Until very recently, [many people picked careers based on circumstance](#). They worked in a job for a number of years, climbed the attainable rungs on the ladder and retired with a comfortable pension and savings to live out their "Golden Years" with grace.

All that has changed.

There are two reasons people are no longer trudging such a traditional trajectory: (1) the economy and (2) the Internet. The economy has swallowed up savings, extended working life well past 65 and forced many to reconsider their career choices. The Internet has opened up vast amounts of knowledge and opportunity, obliterating many of the traditional gate keepers in both information and commerce, giving many people a flexible option to get creative.

Whether you are a digital pioneer, lifelong corporate man or something entirely different, taking the time to inventory your marketable experience, map out the



paths in front of you, and clearly articulate what you want out of your career is well worth the investment. This is life changing stuff so we'll go slow, okay.

## Step 1 : Inventory Your Marketable Experience

The first step to writing a great summary and feeling good about it is to take an honest look at where you have been and why that matters.

Answer the following questions to highlight the best points from your work experience (I'll do it with you after each **bolded question**):

- 1 Forget about the money – what was the best job you ever had and what skills and key lessons did you take away from it?** I loved working as a waiter at Mexicali Rose in college. Sure, the freedom of youth and the job being one big party gives it a warm place in my heart, but I developed important skills serving others: *creating a culture of raving customers, how to improvise and make things work while keeping people happy, and how to sell.* I took away a couple of key lessons: (a) a *customers' experience* is worth more than any item on your menu, (b) the customer is not always right, but *you should care about their satisfaction* anyway (this creates loyalty) and (c) customers never have the right to abuse your staff – if they do you reserve the right to kick that customer to the curb. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]



- 2 Forget about impressing people – what is one professional accomplishment that are proud of and how did you make it happen?** When I worked as the Community Manager for Martindale.com Connected we started producing a monthly theme for the community. By working directly with members, we would *develop subject matter content* on the topic of the month,*producing guest blog posts, webinar, podcasts, videos and even eBooks*. It took a lot of coordination between marketing, the social media team and featured members to make it happen, but we produced over 20 of these events attracting thousands of views per month and *providing some really unique content* to our customers.  
[WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

- 3 It's your 100th birthday – you made it (mazel tov). The guests are asking you to tell an inspiring story from your former career – what do you say?** Nothing will open doors like *helping others with no expectation* of getting something in return. When I was planning to move from the US to Israel, I contacted someone at an organization that helps new immigrants make the move by arranging a flight, paperwork and job opportunities. At the time, the online professional network LinkedIn was starting to catch on, but the organisation had no LinkedIn presence. I offered to help her *take this innovative step forward and start the group for her* and *discuss ideas of how to use it* with her team. Within a few years, the group grew to thousands of members with hundreds of posts daily. That woman I helped became one of my strongest advocates in



Israel, helping me land many opportunities. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

These questions are designed to make you think of specific instances where your unique talents came out to play. Rather than asking you to focus on the “greatest thing you ever did” or “what you love to do most” these questions seek to bring out some of your best qualities that you can then highlight in your summary.

For example, if you go back to my answers above, you will notice I have italicised certain words and phrases. These key things about me can be translated into my “marketable qualities” by making them active (add a verb) and present tense:

- 1 Builds fun customer cultures
- 2 Solves problems with creative solutions and improvisation
- 3 Converts customer satisfaction into new sales
- 4 Creates unique, original content that attracts customer attention
- 5 Helps organisations take innovative steps forward

These words and phrases best describe some of my strengths that I will want to highlight later in my Summary (you should do the same to your answers).





## Step 2: Choose Your Path (Future Opportunities)

At this point you have a good idea about where you have been and how that can be communicated to a prospective employer or customer. Now it's time to think about where you would like all this to end up.

Whether you are currently on a career path you love or hate, these considerations should help you make the right adjustments to get you where you want to go quicker:

- 1 If you didn't need a degree or prior experience, what job would you like to land right now?** Often we defeat ourselves in making a career move because we think we are unqualified. You should discover some qualities above that can be applied to a range of jobs, and here is where you can identify what else is needed. You may be surprised that it wouldn't take much for you to make a move now that puts you in the position you want a year from now. In my own experience, I didn't know marketing and social media until I started blogging back in 2005. Then I landed a job in 2009 primarily doing social media – now I teach it at the college level. I majored in theater in college, not business or marketing, but found my way to this path by just doing relevant activities that would teach me as I did them. Sometimes just jumping right in and doing what you can at the moment sets you up for bigger things later. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]



**2 How are you going to carve out extra time to try on your new career hat and experiment while making this transition?** I get a lot of students that tell me they hate what they are doing, want to quit and just develop their online business now. I tell them to slow down. It's hard to pay the bills with passion. Unless you are in a situation where you work 18-hours per day, six days per week, you can find time to make the dream happen. Most people get home at 7pm and turn on their relevant distraction (TV, video game, iPad, etc.) by 8:30pm. Chances are you can carve out a significant and consistent schedule from 9pm to 12pm to make your new career take shape. Do you need to network, learn or do more? What things will get you to the next level? Create a schedule with milestones for yourself and stick to it. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

**3 What does success look like for you (tell me about your "Quest")?** This is a tough one, I admit. The amazing thing is that most people do not know what this is! They are just working because that's what people do. Not to worry: I also find myself here from time to time, because in my opinion our picture of success changes as we go along. Not all of us are as lucky as Gary Vaynerchuk who is driven by his quest to buy the New York Jets (it fuels all of his other activities). At the heart of it, this question really asks you to consider what you want out of all of this. List the achievements, (professional, personal, material, spiritual, etc.) that would



mean the most to you to reach as a result of your potential path. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

Once you have these three considerations written out you will know the direction you want to move in. This can be gold in the LinkedIn profile Summary because it will show drive, direction and clarity. You likely will not include any of the text from these points, but the personality of what you are aiming for will come through.

Now that we've done a bunch of deep exploration, looking at all the individual trees in the forrest of you (man that sounds granola!), let's take a look at how you can package this.

### **Step 3: Pick a LinkedIn Profile Summary Template**

There are countless forms that can work for a LinkedIn profile Summary, but we are going to hone in on five potential templates to help you write yours.

#### **LinkedIn Profile Summary Template: The Executive Summary**

Entrepreneurs pitching an investor are quite familiar with the Executive Summary. Traditionally this is a short document entrepreneurs use to get investors interested in their product. It can be done in various ways, but rarely



exceeds two pages. The key feature of an executive summary style template is the focus on problem/solution.

- 1 **Problem** – what key problem do you solve with your talents?
- 2 **Solution** – how do you solve the problem?
- 3 **Performance History** – what highlights from your career prove that?
- 4 **Super Power** – what makes you special and magical?
- 5 **Trajectory** – where are you going to be in 12 months?

The summary should be preceded by a compelling subject line (not something cheesy) that both explains about you while fascinating the reader.

## LinkedIn Profile Summary Template: The Elevator Pitch

Here is a perfect description of the Elevator Pitch from the [Harvard Business Review Elevator Pitch Builder](#):

*You have one minute to explain yourself, your business, your goals, and your passions. Your audience knows none of these. Are you prepared? Can you present your vision smoothly, enticing them to want to know more?*

There are four considerations that HBR offers for building the perfect elevator pitch:

1. **Describe who you are.** "What would you want the listener to most remember about you?" Take the list you generated in Step 1, whittle it down to the most intriguing and accurate points, and create a sentence or two communicating that information. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]



2. **What do you do?** "Here is where you state your value," what you can offer to prospective employers or customers, "phrased as key results or impact." HBR suggests you think of this as your tag line. Here the reader wants to know "what's in it for me if I hire you?" Articulate the benefits they will get by working with you. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

3. **Why are you unique?** "Show what you do that is different or better than others." This calls for the same techniques you would use in marketing to [craft a unique sales proposition \(USP\)](#): (a) list benefits, (b) list differentiators, (c) list pain points and performance gaps, (d) narrow down and develop unique qualities, and (e) seek feedback from employers or customers. Once you have all this information try to get it down to a sentence or two focusing on the most compelling points. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]



4. **Describe your goal.** What are your immediate goals? They should be “concrete, defined, and realistic. Include a timeframe.” The reader should know exactly what you want from them. Refer to the “Future Opportunities” section of Step 1 and [this post about how to define goals](#) to guide you in describing your goals. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

By using this approach you can craft an elevator pitch style summary that gets your point across fast.

**Bonus Tip:** imagine someone approaches you on a secluded street, puts a gun to your head, and orders you to tell them what you do in 60-seconds or they will blow your brains out. What do you say?

### **LinkedIn Profile Summary Template: The Infomercial**

Infomercials are those late night TV ads that can run for over 1-hour for some products. They are peppered with unforgettable spokesmen and promises of “but wait! There’s more ...”

While you may not think an infomercial is the right template for a LinkedIn profile Summary, think again. Infomercials sell over \$4-billion in products every year. They achieve this by grabbing the audiences’ attention and then winning them over with key marketing techniques.



- 1. Questions, Suggestion, Reveal the Solution** - often infomercials start with a question like “don’t you hate it when you cut your pets nails too close and they bleed on the carpet?” These questions are designed to set the stage for the suggested solution. It usually goes something like, “wouldn’t it be great if you never cut their nails too close again?” This gets the audience thinking “yes – that would be great.” Then the announcer reveals the solution: “Introducing the Pet Trimmer – an electronic nail file that will never cut to close!” The audience now wants more information and is ready to receive it. While you don’t have to be as bombastic as an infomercial, the idea about setting up your solution should be implemented in your summary.
- 2. Backstory** - whether it’s the story about Amish craftsmanship or how the Shamwow was engineered in Germany, backstories sell products. They also help get you hired. That’s why we looked at your past above. You want to have a good backstory so that your reader can emotionally connect and feel invested in you.
- 3. Product in Action** – whether it’s cutting through coke cans with a knife, blending an iPad (will it blend?) or mopping up two liters of coke with a single rag, the demonstration of the products powers in an infomercial is key. With a LinkedIn profile Summary you can demonstrate your product by discussing the most exciting and relevant things you are doing now to excel in the area you want to land a job in. In drafting this you may realize that you need to take some new action to qualify for potential opportunities. For example, I am a gamer and have developed numerous gamification elements in my community management work. One of my current projects involves a deeper dive into gamification. In order to better prepare for my upcoming duties I have enrolled in an online gamification course at University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School. If I were looking for a new role in this area I would highlight my current educational pursuits and past experience together.



4. **Testimonials** - infomercials build consumer trust by showing “real testimonials” from “real people.” On LinkedIn your Recommendation section is the place to gather these testimonials, but you may want to highlight any stellar feedback in your summary. You can say something like, “Publishing industry leaders like LexisNexis and Hachette Filipacchi Media have benefitted from working with me to develop their social media strategies.” Your recommendations section should then have something echoing those sentiments.
5. **Act Now** – infomercials always give customers a reason to buy the product right now. Sometimes they offer 2 for the price of 1 for a “limited time” or some other incentive with an expiration date. The key take away for you is to leave a sense of urgency in your reader. Give them a reason to call you now rather than later.

## Now Write Your LinkedIn Profile Summary

At this point you have plenty of information to work with. Pick a template and start plugging things in.

Here are few tips to aid your writing process:

- 1 Ezra Pound once said “fundamental accuracy of statement is the one true morality of writing.” This means that choosing the perfect way to say something is as important as what you say. Find the right words using a Thesaurus or an [iPad app like WordFlex](#). Steven King and I are both fans of Strunk and White’s Rule 17: Omit Needless Words. ‘Nuff said.
- 2 [Think in terms of keywords](#) that employers or customers will search on LinkedIn. Where appropriate weave these into your summary.
- 3 [Tell a compelling story that will influence the reader](#) to take an action. The devil is in the details, so even though you are doing a summary, find the one or two carefully crafted points that will help them decide to hire you.





# THE BEST AND WORST LINKEDIN PROFILE PHOTOS

If a picture speaks a thousand words the last thing you want is to be mute on LinkedIn.

Your profile photo and summary are the first things that other members see when they visit your profile. Choosing the right photo can mean getting a gig, connecting with a key contact and making the right impression on other members.

The photo represents who you are. Don't make a mistake in which one you choose.

## People Will Judge Your Face: Facial Perception and Social Cognition

Some professionals refuse to post a profile photo on LinkedIn. This puts them at a huge disadvantage to build an effective network. Since the LinkedIn profile consists mostly of text, the photograph serves as a stamp of authenticity, a way to build trust. This is not my opinion: science tells us that facial images have a huge impact on human behavior.

“Face perception is the process by which the brain and mind understand and interpret the face.” (Source [Wikipedia](#)).

When someone sees your LinkedIn photo, their brain immediately begins to create associations and categorize the image into a social schema. At this point social cognition brings to mind other information linked to the image by association. As a result judgements are formed which go beyond the image



presented, pulling in outside information and influencing social behavior, such as whether to accept your connection request or email you for an interview.

This process happens almost instantly and unconsciously. You cannot afford to create a negative judgement either by lack of photo or a bad photo. If you want to know how to take advantage of psychology and post a LinkedIn profile photo that will get results then read on.

## 6 Ways to Look Your Best for a LinkedIn Photo

**Look Slightly Above the Camera.** When you are about to take your photo, look directly at the lens and then move your point of focus a few inches above it. This will cause your chin to tilt slightly upwards, your chest to open and your entire face to relax somewhat. It also gives you a look of purpose. Think of the paintings of famous leaders like George Washington or Napoleon after a victory. Their faces tilt up in much the same fashion. Also, angle your face about 45 degrees to the right or left. This will avoid the photo looking too much like mug shot.

**Smile.** On a B2B (“business to business”) network like LinkedIn a lot of members make the mistake of assuming they have to be ALL business. Being too serious, even on a professional network, can really hurt your ability to connect with other members. Smiling in your profile picture is one way around this trap. But did you know there is a whole body of science behind smiling that proves this even more (hat tip to [blogger Emo Hannink](#) for pointing this out)? In the article [\*The Psychological Study of Smiling\*](#), Eric Jaffe talks about the process that happens right before we smile:

1. “Emotional data funnels to the brain e emotional data funnels to the brain, exciting the left anterior temporal region in particular”
2. It then hits the face with messages that activate two muscles:



1. The “zygomatic major, which resides in the cheek, tugs the lips upward” and
2. The “orbicularis oculi, which encircles the eye socket, squeezes the outside corners into the shape of a crow’s foot.”
3. Generally the zygomatic major can be willed into action but the orbicularis oculi will only contract from genuine emotion

These two muscles working together produce a “Duchenne smile”, named after the 19th Century, French anatomist Guillaume Duchenne, “who studied emotional expression by stimulating various facial muscles with electrical currents”. How important is this? A 2010 study in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, showed that people in exclusive groups (such as executives and hiring managers) “showed a greater preference to work with individuals displaying genuine Duchenne smiles than those bearing cheap grins.”

**Kung Fu the Camera.** As a longtime practitioner of Kung Fu, I picked up a trick that can make it look like your face is completely engaged even when it is not (works great in corporate meetings). Put the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth.

[According to Chinese medicine](#), the energy in your body flows through 12-major channels called “meridians”. Two of these meridians govern all of the others:

1. The Conception Vessel (“[Ren Mai](#)“): travels up the front of the body, through soft tissue, ending at the tip of the tongue
2. The Governing Vessel (“[Du Mai](#)“): travels up the back, through hard tissue of the vertebrae and skull, ending at the roof of the mouth

When you connect these two meridians your eyes light up and your ears literally perk up. You appear alert and focused. Internally, the energy flows better through your body as you are physically causing the hard to connect to the soft.



The result for your LinkedIn photo? You look alive.

**Dress for Reasonable Success.** Dress in a way that is appropriate to your role and industry. This can change dramatically for each member so make sure that you know what is expected.

A suit and tie may be too much for the software industry (even for the CEO) or in a certain cultures. I learned this listen well when I first moved to Israel. Having worked in the legal industry in the US, I believed that suit and ties were the norm for client meetings. Then I gave a talk at a top firm in Tel Aviv to their key clients including C-level executives from Fortune 500 companies. Everyone could tell the immigrant in the room because the “dressed up” meant you tucked in the button down shirt to your jeans.

Also, while you want to dress well, you also want to represent who you really are, so use common sense in choosing your wardrobe for the photo.

**Think positive.** Often we can read what someone is thinking on their face. If your thinking about your unemployment when you snap that LinkedIn profile photo you will not look like the winner you are.

As the photo snaps think about the awesomeness you bring to the table, especially in whatever role you are seeking. Focus on being in the moment, and let the good thoughts flow through your brain (using your trick from Kung Fu the camera here will help!).

You have a lot to offer. [Understand and be clear on your marketable experience](#) and what you can give that prospective employer or client. This will help you look confident and hopeful for new opportunities.



## 6 of the Worst Choices for Your LinkedIn Photo

Now that you have some concrete advice on how to take an awesome LinkedIn photo, let's just review a few of the things to avoid. For each of these I will try to provide you with a photo of myself that illustrates the point.

**An old photo.** Sure you probably looked awesome at 25 (and still do at 35), but don't use a 10-year old photo on your LinkedIn profile. The photo to the right shows me playing Eugene in a stage production of stage production of Brighton Beach Memoirs almost 20-years ago. Remember the purpose of LinkedIn: to land new professional opportunities and build an effective network. If you do not look like the guy or gal in the photo then you may be hurting your credibility with a potential employer or client who then meets "the real you".

**Distracting backgrounds and objects.** People will use profile pictures on LinkedIn that include all kinds of interesting things like shots at famous locations, on boats or holding the bouquet they caught at their best friends wedding.

Distracting photos like this are usually remembered for the wrong reason like "what about that shot of the computer programmer with his boa constrictor? Weirdo!"

The photo to the right of me with a rainbow: okay for Facebook; terrible LinkedIn profile photo. Avoid distracting the employer or client with your photo. Be memorable for the sum of what your profile conveys: a confident, capable professional who is right for the job.

**Photos with other people.** No matter how cool you think having a photo with your baby may be (and it is!), LinkedIn isn't the place to put it up as your profile shot. The same goes for you with the boys, the co-workers and even famous people (cool stuff to share through an Application or status update on LinkedIn, but not as your profile pic).



Take this shot of me holding my daughter Shoshana. Awesome photo. She was my first born, I had just completed the NJ Bar Exam 2-hours before (yes, I left my wife in labor at the hospital to take the exam ... yes I passed), and Shabbat had just started. One of the most incredible days of my life, and a good story to tell in networking. Not the photo to represent me on LinkedIn.

**Pixelated.** The last thing you want is for your LinkedIn profile photo to look like a [Georges Seurat painting](#).

Pixelated photos happen when we play around with the size of a photo file without knowing what we are doing. Often you see a picture get pixelated through cropping or zooming.

Perhaps there was that amazing shot of you from the company party, but you are standing with three other co-workers that you want to crop out. When you do so and try to enlarge the cropped image you get pixelated.

There are ways to fix pixelated pictures using blur and sharpen filters on programs like Preview for Mac. Your best bet in the end may be to get some shots done by a friend or professional that are specifically for use in social media profiles.

**Company Logos.** These are fine for company pages on Facebook and LinkedIn. Some companies even do this for Twitter, although I have found a person's face MUCH more effective. On LinkedIn however, you are representing yourself, even if you are an entrepreneur. Your face should fill the profile photo space.

**Related Side Point.** Do NOT start a member profile for your company on LinkedIn or Facebook for the purpose of "connecting" to people and having greater access to their feeds. These are blatant violations of the Terms of Service on most networks. It is the reason they offer company pages, and I will never accept a member invitation from a business posing as a member.



**No photo at all.** This is perhaps the WORST thing for your LinkedIn profile. One of the easiest “wins” on LinkedIn is uploading a profile photo. It takes under 20-seconds, increases the likelihood of results and really allows people to get a good sense of who you are. Whether you follow the tips in this post or not, find yourself a half decent photo, put it up, and then work towards getting a better one.



# TRUST ME: FOOL PROOF FORMULAS TO GET LINKEDIN RECOMMENDATIONS ON YOUR PROFILE

Can you trust anything online these days?

According to Bing Liu, a data mining and “opinion spam” expert from the University of Chicago, “about [one-third of all consumer reviews on the Internet are fake](#)”. The New York Times revealed that [book reviewers-for-hire](#) will write favorable reviews of your work on Amazon.com for a fee *without even reading it*. And don’t get me started on fake Twitter followers (about 34% of Lady Gaga’s 28-million followers are fake).

If it is so easy to fool people with fake endorsements, then why do LinkedIn Recommendations even matter?

## Employers Will Not Hire Applicants With Less Than 10 LinkedIn Recommendations

Despite all we know about the credibility of online reviews they still matter.

According to The Undercover Recruiter blog, many employers will not even consider you for a job unless you have more than [10 LinkedIn Recommendations](#) on your profile. Some members are so desperate to beef up their recommendation count that they ask friends and family to write them or “trade” recommendations with other members whom they have not done business with (“I’ll write one for you if you write one for me”).

These practices are not recommended (pardon the pun).





So what drives the need for recommendations even though statically online endorsements are not trustworthy?

## The Psychology Behind Online Reviews: Cognitive Biases

Cognitive biases are like subconscious shortcuts the brain takes to help a person act more effectively in given situations or make faster decisions when necessary. Influenced by evolution and experience, cognitive biases are beneficial when they result in good choices.

Whether or not a persons' biases are leading them to "good choices" can be determined by objective standards of comparison, usually from people outside the situation suspected of causing poor judgement or verifiable facts.

Decision making through the use of reviews, ratings and recommendations is an example of cognitive biases applied. For example, I will not purchase any app on the Apple App Store unless it has at least 20 reviews averaging above 3.5 stars. Something in my brain tells me this should be the standard for evaluating my potential purchase, despite the fact that I have bought 5-star apps that sucked (Batman Dark Knight Returns, I'm talking to you).

Just like my bias for 5-star reviews on the App Store determines my purchase motivation, a collection of LinkedIn Recommendations on an applicants' profile are likely to affect an employers' hiring decisions. There are two characteristics of cognitive bias at play here: the Bandwagon Effect and the Illusion of Validity.

## The Bandwagon Effect: LinkedIn Recommendations

The Bandwagon Effect is a general rule that says "if other people believe something to be true then it is more likely to be true."

According to online entrepreneur [Jesper Amstrom](#):

- 1 70% of online users trust consumer opinions posted online ([Nielsen Report](#))



- 2 97% of customers believe online reviews to be accurate ([comScore, The Kelsey Group](#))
- 3 79% of UK retailers see a positive effect on conversion rates as a result of adding ratings and reviews (eMarketer)

People are influenced by the Bandwagon Effect when they see online reviews and recommendations. Their brain tells them that since others have voiced their preference for the object of the review, it is good for them too.

When you receive Recommendations on your LinkedIn profile it increases the probability of being seen as a viable candidate. This increases as the number of reviews increase, and more people are likely to “jump on the bandwagon” in believing you are a viable candidate.

For some reason, per the Undercover Recruiter, 10 Recommendations validates your profile as trustworthy (note: his post did not link to any data or studies proving this conclusion so I am assuming this is based on anecdotal and experiential evidence). It also helps you in getting Recommendations in the future as people are more likely to give you an endorsement if they see others have done so as well.

## **The Illusion of Validity: LinkedIn Recommendations**

The [Illusion of Validity is a term coined by Daniel Kahneman](#), which says that when presented with consistent evidence people will continue making similar predictions even after the predictive value of the this evidence has been discredited.

It happens all the time. Look at horoscopes, draft picks in professional sports and even medical treatment. How many times have we heard the story about the patient written off because of their condition only to live many years beyond that prediction?



When it comes to hiring from LinkedIn, an employer will likely believe in the validity of your Recommendations and use them to predict your potential future performance, even though statistically those reviews may not be good indicators of it. In doing so, the Recommendation becomes a prime vehicle to moving you forward in the hiring process.

## 6-Steps to Get LinkedIn Recommendations

Getting LinkedIn Recommendations is an important part of your LinkedIn experience, but you don't want to just pepper your profile with any old piece of praise.

Remember, LinkedIn is an online network: the employer evaluating your Recommendation is likely to click on the person who gave it to you, so make sure that you avoid the following:

- 1 Do not ask for Recommendations from family, friends or strangers
- 2 Do not buy Recommendations from sites like Fivrr (yes, you can actually do this; for a measly \$5 a stranger will write glowing praise about you)
- 3 Do not solicit praise that is untrue, inaccurate, or inappropriate b/c the person being asked has no knowledge or experience working with you in that context (ex/ don't ask them to praise your SEO skills if you never did SEO work for them)

There are six basic steps to getting good LinkedIn Recommendations that will truly reflect who you are.

### Step 1: List Your Potential Recommendation Sources

One of the biggest mistakes people make in seeking Recommendations is to think too narrowly.



The inclination most LinkedIn members have is to approach all of their old bosses and ask them to endorse their work. But not all Recommendations will be directly tied to jobs you have held. You may have been a volunteer for an organization or worked on an independent project for someone who can sing sincerely your praises.

Here are some areas to consider when listing your Recommendation Potential:

- 1 Positions Held.** These are jobs that you have worked in and the likely person to contact will be your old boss or supervisor. Do not rule out the possibility of also asking the hiring partner, HR contact or recruiter who helped put you in the position – they may be willing to do this if you have kept up any kind of relationship with them. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]
  
- 2 Projects Worked On.** You may have a pet project, work related or not, that you helped bring to fruition. The people involved may not be your boss, but they can speak to your abilities and work ethic. Think about asking co-workers, project leads or the beneficiary of the project for an endorsement. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]



- 3 Customer Relationships Built.** Customers can be a huge source of support. You may have given someone special attention while working in a job (I hope you do this for ALL of your customers!) or made an impression on a key client. In many cases it will be appropriate for you to reach out and ask that customer for a Recommendation. As a best practice you should be using LinkedIn to connect to your customers and expand your network. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]
- 4 Classes Taken.** Whether this refers to university, professional courses or even just workshops consider going back to the instructor and asking for a recommendation of your work. You can also ask classmates that have seen you in action, but be careful here because it can come off as a thumbs up from a friend rather than a trustworthy endorsement. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]
- 5 Volunteer Work Performed.** Volunteering can be a great source of experience and a perfect vehicle to Recommendations. Consider asking the head of the organization (if they know you) or your direct supervisor



on the volunteer project. [WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

This list is not exclusive, and I'm sure there are other sources that you can come up with. The point is to not limit yourself to seeking out Recommendations only from former bosses.

## **Step 2: Identify Warm Leads**

The list of potential sources of Recommendations in Step 1 casts a WIDE NET to capture ALL of the potential places you can go to get praise for your abilities. Step 2 then narrows that list down to “the low hanging fruit”.

Who are the people likely to remember you well and speak highly of your work?

You may already know off the top of your head the top ten people to contact. That's good. Write them down on the Warm Leads List and be happy you've got a head start.



Then you want to consider anyone else who falls into the following criteria:

[WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

1 Ongoing relationship with contact in the last 2-years

2 Older relationship that parted cleanly (no burning bridges!)



- 3 Anyone whose a\*\* your really saved in the past (this may be anyone you “did a solid” for which they will remember)

After you get your warm lead list, you should put a line across it and write down all of the other people from Step 1. These are your “Under the Line Leads” and can be approached later once you’ve gotten some Recommendations under your belt. Doing it this way takes full advantage of the Band Wagon Effect discussed above and will yield better results.

Also, for Under the Line Leads, list conversation starters next to each name that would help them remember you to create a more effective approach. I strongly suggest sending an initial message with this tidbit to “prime the pump” before asking them for something. This will provide you with a context for the request and likely produce a better result.

### **Step 3: Recommendation Request Templates**

LinkedIn provides a template when you hit the “Request Recommendation” button.

You should NEVER send this cookie cutter template. It shows a lack of care and an impersonal approach that you do not want to use when asking someone





for something. Rather a better approach is to create your own contextual templates.

For example, people from your work history are Template 1, customers Template 2, volunteer organizations Template 3, etc.

The number of templates you develop will depend on your list, but the key here is to give you a relevant starting point for each request that can be tailored to each individual person you are asking. When doing 25 or more Recommendation requests, having the templates will make your life easier and help you avoid resistance in sitting down to do the requests.

Here is an example of a template I have used for asking people from my work history for a Recommendation:

Hi [NAME],

It has been a while since we last spoke and I trust you are well. When we worked together at [COMPANY] it always impressed me how you [INSERT SINCERE COMPLIMENT ABOUT THEM]. Our work together made a real impression on me and I hope that you feel the same way about my work. Can you possibly write a LinkedIn Recommendation talking about some of the things you remember best? I am grateful for anything you can do here, and I look forward to reading your feedback.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

This template may or may not be right for you, but one thing it does is follow a timeless three-fold approach to making requests:

1. Praise the recipient of your request
2. Make the request



3. Thank the recipient for whatever they can do

Religiously minded people may recognize this formula as the structure of the Jewish prayer Shemona Esrai (The 18 Blessings), which is made three times each day by Torah observant Jews. If it works with G-d then it will likely work with your LinkedIn network.

The most important thing about using ANY template for LinkedIn is that it must be PERSONALIZED.

[CREATE A LINKEDIN TEMPLATE IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]



## Step 4. Gentle Reminders

As someone who purposely checks email at set periods each day (once in the morning, once in the afternoon and once before bed) it is easy for me to miss a notification from LinkedIn. I'm sure this is true for other people as well: work piles up, you've got things to finish, an important email from the boss, etc. and priority projects take precedence.

That's where "the Gentle Reminder" comes in.

I've got to credit one of my students with this one. She had written an eBook for a class project and asked me to review it. As one of the first to complete the assignment I put it off for about a week.

Then I received an email with this subject line: "A Gentle Reminder: Please Give Me Feedback on the eBook". I don't know what it was about those words "Gentle Reminder" but I opened her eBook and started writing feedback.

About 2 to 3-weeks after you send your initial Recommendation request, if you still have not heard back from the person, try sending them a "Gentle Reminder". You can do this through LinkedIn itself or directly to their email address if you have it.

Note, the direct email approach may be better because some people do not check their LinkedIn Inbox and they may or may not have on email notifications that send a notice to their email address of new activity.

## Step 5. Display the LinkedIn Recommendation

Once you have received a recommendation, read it over to see if it needs revision. Usually you want to revise for inaccurate information, misspellings or praise that is too over the top.



At that point you can either hit “Display Recommendation on My Profile” or “Request a Revision”. LinkedIn will not show the Recommendation until you tell it to put it on your profile.

If you are going to ask for revisions be specific, kind and grateful. Tell the person what needs fixing and thank them so much for taking the time to help you out.

### **Step 6: Thank You**

This one is simple yet overlooked.

When someone endorses your work on LinkedIn say “thank you”.

## **Return the Favor: Writing LinkedIn Recommendations**

Chances are that when you start requesting LinkedIn recommendations you are going to be asked for them as well. You should not feel obligated to return the favor, but it is good manners to do so if you can give honest feedback on what they are asking you to recommend them for.

Just note, that if you a writing glowing, non-specific feedback about every person who gives you a Recommendation, it may look like opinion spam. Recruiters and employers can see when you have recommended people and they will check to see if this is what you are doing. Needless to say this will not have a good effect.

The credibility of the Recommendations on your profile and the ones you make for others will depend on being specific, sincere and selective about what you say.

Follow these formulas and you are sure to avoid Recommendation Pitfalls.



# HOW TO ADD VIDEO AND OTHER CONTENT TO YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

The Latin phrase *Res Ipsa Loquiter* means “the thing speaks for itself”. When something speaks for itself no explanations are needed. Anyone can make a decision based on the information presented. That’s exactly what LinkedIn applications do for your profile: by showcasing your work to prospective employers and customers your content will say volumes about you and why you are the best choice for the job.

## The Science of Influencing Hiring Decisions

Neuroeconomics helps to explain [how people make decisions](#). It combines tools from neuroscience, economics, cognitive and social psychology, mathematics and computer science as an integrated approach to better understand the economic behavior and neural mechanisms behind making decisions. Every potential employer presented with your LinkedIn profile will go through the following biological process in deciding whether to consider you as a candidate.

Hiring decisions require the potential employer to make a prediction on whether you will be a viable candidate for the job they have available. There is a degree of uncertainty about the outcome: are you qualified for the job, will you be able to succeed in the position and are you the right fit?

All of these questions attempt to fill in the blanks that uncertainty create, contributes to a general increase of activity in the prefrontal cortex of the brain, the seat of all reasoning and understanding.

As the brain begins to comprehend the larger picture, an increase of activity hits the [Brodman area 8 \(“BA8”\)](#) of the fronto-median cortex. This part of the



brain manages uncertainty, and some theories say this area positively correlates uncertainty to higher-order expectations like hope.

Here's where your application showcase comes in.

At this point in their neural experience, an employer is looking for something to answer their "higher-order expectations". They want proof that you, the candidate, are something special that can answer their hope of filling the position. Employers want the best possible fit for the job, and using applications lets you fill in the blanks for them.

## Use LinkedIn Applications: Land Your Dream Job

When I left professional theater for law school I never thought I would end up a blogger.

My dream changed from being on stage to putting away bad guys as a US Attorney. But by my second year of school I discovered a passion for Intellectual Property. Being new to this subject, I wanted to find a way to learn it better and demonstrate my ability to work in the field.

So I started a blog.

I combined my love of video games with my new found passion for IP, writing about how these issues affected the gaming industry. Being 2005 there were only a handful of lawyers writing about this subject and, to the best of my knowledge, no law students doing it. The blog showed potential employers that I could analyze these issues, think ahead of the pack and clearly communicate solutions.

The blog opened doors because it spoke for itself (remember "res ipsa loquiter"?). Whenever I wanted to demonstrate my expertise on the subject of video games and the law, I would send them to my blog. Eventually, the blog



helped me land an internship in a law office that focused on the video game industry.

The biggest take away for me, though, was the power of blogging and social media to produce real results. And how having a [soap box to showcase your work](#) is essential in today's world.

LinkedIn Applications let you put that killer content right onto your profile.

If you already have a blog or some Power Point presentations that don't suck, you can get started right away (skip down to the section about adding applications). Some of you reading this, however, may not have anything ready-made to put on your profile. The next section will help you decide what to develop to best showcase your work.

## Create Content to Put on Your LinkedIn Profile

We use the word "Content" as a general term to describe three ways to communicate:

1. Written: blog posts, presentations, white papers, ebooks
2. Multimedia: YouTube videos, podcasts, infographics
3. Interactive: apps, quizzes and polls, games

Content allows you to influence people. You provide something valuable they can take away as "consumers" and your ideas are spread. The content speaks for itself, providing insight into how you think, allowing others to form opinions about you.

A content-based networking approach, however, lets you shape those opinions by what you produce. You will need to consider a few things before getting started.

**How do you best communicate?** Some people are great in front of a camera. Others like the planned nature of written text. Still other people express



themselves best by talking, visual arts or presentations combining words and pictures. Find the medium you are most comfortable with and then list some ways that you might deliver that content (ex/ a podcast on iTunes interviewing scientists to provide a foundation for new ideas about science and marketing).

[WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

**What should be your content focus?** Here is where an expertise map can help you decide. I learned this method of focusing my content from The Launch Coach, Dave Navarro, and it has been a real lifesaver.

How to create an Expertise Map:

1. Put your name in the middle of a piece of paper
2. Draw a branch from your name and write down anything you are good at, have experience in or love doing (don't censor yourself – put down anything – these are your “areas of expertise”)
3. For each area of expertise, see if there are sub-topics you can branch out to make the subject manageable (ex/ “social marketing” gets branches like blogging, community management, etc.)
4. Think of all the things you can teach someone else about these sub-topics by putting the words “how to” in front of each item (ex/ how to write an expertise map, how to decide what content to write, etc.)

Once you get a bunch of “how to” solutions together you now have a good plan for creating content. Remember, great content should be “valuable” to your





“consumers” and nothing is more valuable than sharing your expertise when someone else needs to know something.

[CREATE YOUR EXPERTISE MAP IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]



**Where will you make your home base or “soap box”?** A LinkedIn content strategy needs a hub, a place where you base the content and continue to produce it so that you can syndicate it on LinkedIn. Even if your content strategy involves something like podcasts on iTunes, which cannot be directly put in LinkedIn, you can use a tool like WordPress to create a blog feed into LinkedIn, which has posts about each podcast. You can give a short blurb about the audio content with a link to the iTunes file. You put the work right in front of your prospective employer and entice them to click. This is more effective than having just single link to iTunes on your profile because it will bubble up each individual podcast. If you pay attention to creating good headlines and blurb copy this kind of strategy can really pay off.

[WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED]

## How to Install LinkedIn Applications to Showcase Your Work

### What LinkedIn Applications Are Available?

There are currently 15-applications you can add to your LinkedIn profile, but only five of them matter for showcasing your content. The other 10-are either profession specific or for entertainment value. Here are the applications you will want to install:

- 1 **WordPress or Bloglink** – lets you syndicate posts from your blog to your LinkedIn profile. The posts will display as summaries with a title,



blurb and link to the post (no pictures). Depending on how often you update your blog this can create a very powerful tool for your profile and a way to show employers what you are currently thinking and working on.

- 2 **Slideshare** – lets you embed Power Point presentations to your profile. There is also a way to use the Slideshare application to embed a video to your profile (I'll give you the steps below as a bonus).
- 3 **Events** – lets you track professional events from your network and industry, indicate which ones you will be attending, and lets you create your own events which people can follow.
- 4 **Polls** – lets you publish a quick poll on your profile to gauge the opinion of your network on various issues. There are some creative uses for this tool which I will hopefully get to in another post.
- 5 **Box.net** – while I wish there were a direct DropBox application on LinkedIn, Box.net makes a pretty good stand in. Use this to share PDFs, Word documents, and spreadsheets that show what you can do.

These 5-applications provide you with plenty of ways to display each type of content (written, multimedia and interactive). The key will be to have some engaging content to share.

## How Do I Get the LinkedIn Application on My Profile?

Follow these simple steps to install the applications you want:

1. From the LinkedIn homepage, put your mouse over the word “More”, all the way to the right on the top menu bar
2. On the drop down menu, go to the bottom and click “Get More Applications...”



3. The next page shows you the 15 applications, click on one you want to install
4. This will bring you to the Application information page, where you can choose to display the application on your home page, profile or both
5. Click “Add Application”

It's really that simple to add an application. The hard part is knowing what to do with it.

## How to Use Slide Share to Add a Video to Your LinkedIn Profile

Let's finish up by taking a look at one way to use applications by adding a video to your LinkedIn Profile. Since LinkedIn does not currently support video uploads or embedding of YouTube videos, this little work around is needed.

Credit for this process goes to Lewis Howes for his

**Step 1: Create an account at [SlideShare.net](http://SlideShare.net).** This is a free service for most users and certainly if you are using it for this purpose. Credit for these steps go to Lewis Howes and his tutorial on the subject.

**Step 2: Upload a video to YouTube.** YouTube is going to provide you with a place to store the video you want on your LinkedIn profile. Make sure the visibility is set to “Public”.

**Step 3: Upload a presentation to your SlideShare Account.** This is basically a placeholder and can even be a blank, 1-slide presentation. Give it snappy title based on what the video shows (remember: great headlines!).

**Step 4: Insert the YouTube link “before” your first slide.** Once uploaded to Slideshare, go to My Uploads and click “Edit” on the presentation. The next screen gives you an option to “Edit YouTube Video”. Click on this, go to the field



“Enter YouTube video URL” and paste in the link from YouTube. Next to where you pasted the link it says, “Insert this video ...” with a drop down menu: choose “Before Slide 1”. This will then autoplay the video once it is embedded on your LinkedIn.

**Step 5: Publish the SlideShare Presentation on your profile.** Use the process in the previous section to put the SlideShare application on your LinkedIn profile (make sure you check the box to display on your profile). Link your SlideShare account to LinkedIn, and then change the settings for your SlideShare application: on the application page, click on SlideShare, then where it says “You have installed this application” (highlighted in orange), click “Settings”. In the next screen, on the left navigation, click on “App Settings”. Then change your settings to “Show Complete Player” (this will show your most recent presentation only, which should be your video).



## Let's Keep Talking ...



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