Building an Effective LinkedIn Profile In 10 Steps

STARTING TIP: Avoid “Add Personal Contacts”
This unfortunate feature scours your address book on your computer or device and sends LinkedIn connection invitations to everyone in your address book. Such invitations are impersonal and not received favorably. Choose who you want to invite to your professional network and always do so with a personalized note.

1. Professional Looking Photo
First impressions matter. Dress as you would for an interview or an important day at work. Have someone else take the picture. No Selfies! Be the only one in the picture. Show only your head and shoulders. Avoid using your high school yearbook picture; as that was the “old” you. Think about being professional, likable, and smart. Eye contact and a smile will have positive effects on how viewers will perceive you.

2. Custom Headline
Change this to market your skills as they apply to your future field. Use 10-15 industry-specific key words so that you appear in any search results of those terms, e.g. “Psychology and Brain Science Major; Research Assistant for Sleep Cognition Lab.”

3. Geographic Location & Industry
Browse the full list of industries provided and select your closest future industry. Use popular search terms to describe the industry to which you aspire. These are key filters for recruiters seeking candidates. By zip code, list your present location or the area to which you hope to move and work.

4. Summary
A paragraph or two describing your personal brand – what distinguishes you from others in your major. Your summary must be dynamic and make recruiters want to read more. Confidently introduce yourself, your skills, your achievements, and your goals, using compelling language and industry key words. Use first person tense here (“I am…”). If you are seeking a job, say so and name the industry. On your page, only the first 2 lines are visible to others, so revise them to contain enough interesting key words that someone will click “See More…” to reveal your full summary.

5. Experience — Both Paid and Unpaid
Include jobs, internships, research with faculty, teaching assistantships, volunteer work, and freelance work. But don’t just paste a resume entry into this space. Instead, think about the future job you want to have. Re-describe your past experience to highlight transferable skills that could apply to a job in your future field. So, if you are aiming to work as a lab assistant, re-describe your summer camp counselor job to emphasize skills such as teamwork, communication and adherence to safety regulations, rather than just arts & crafts, swimming, and soccer.
6. Detail, Tone, and Phrasing on LinkedIn
Unlike your resume, LinkedIn gives you room to elaborate with details. How much? Imagine you need your secret twin to cover your job the next day. Explain what you do/did with that much detail. Your reader knows only what you tell them! Writing in your own professional voice can help readers see you as a human being, not just a resume or list of skills. Communicate the passion you have for what you do. Express what is rewarding, exciting, or challenging about your past and present experience entries. State your on-the-job accomplishments. Use full sentences and first person tense. Short paragraphs are best. Use past tense when describing an experience that has ended. Use current tense when describing an ongoing position.

7. Add Media
Don’t just say it, display it! Upload samples of your writing and research, your PowerPoints, links to your lab or internship website, images, videos, and output from data analysis software you’ve used. Most file formats are accepted. Be sure NOT to post confidential or proprietary research data. Do NOT post your resume here as your reader likely came to your page after reading your resume. They want to see more and get a better feel for who you are. See good examples here: http://goo.gl/eTYZZ9 Items are added to your specific experience entries, so consider which items best illustrate which entries. Get your reader interested in you.

8. Add Student-Friendly Profile Sections
Click the blue bar “Add New Profile Section” at the top right of your profile page. Click Accomplishments and add sections as they apply to you. Use these to highlight advanced coursework, projects, honors, awards, language ability, organizational membership (think campus clubs and RSO’s), publications, or industry test scores. Showing specific courses can really help if you have limited experience in your future field. In the drop-down menu, under Work Experience, you can add Volunteerism, which 1 in 5 hiring managers cite as highly desirable. However, if your volunteer experience showcases your best skills for future jobs, you may want to simply include it as an Experience entry to give it proper attention. Unpaid experience absolutely counts.

9. Add Skills & Endorsements
First, Google the name of your desired industry and “core competencies.” Then add a Skills section and use the phrases you find to add (truthfully) about 10-12 items. If seeking a research position, you may want to include some lab skills such as PCR. For some majors, it makes sense to list field skills such as GIS, or project estimating. Use the most popular terms, already used on LinkedIn that someone recruiting for your industry might search. Choose no more than 20 skills. Only your top 3 skills will show unless someone clicks to “See More,” so decide which 3 should be your most visible skills. By going directly to your Skills section and clicking the pencil, you can drag skills up or down in your list, grouping them as makes sense. Your connections can click their agreement to support (endorse) individual skills you list, which adds to your credibility when you claim to have these skills. Endorse your connections and they will likely return the favor, or simply ask your connections to get you started with some skill endorsements. Click on a skill to see both people who have it and some jobs it is used in.

10. Get your Custom URL and Make Your Profile Public
At the top right of your page, just under the blue bar, click “Edit Your Public Profile”. This text-only version of your profile, with no added media, is what the public can see without logging in. On the right side, determine what parts of your profile will be visible to the public. Since the point is to promote yourself and become visible, we strongly suggest making your public profile visible to everyone. At the top right of your public profile page, click “Edit Public Profile URL” and select a custom URL (most people use a version of their name) that is short, easy to remember, and can be added to your resumes, cover letters, email signature, and business cards.
Advanced LinkedIn Tips

Visibility and the LinkedIn-Google Algorithm
Without a professional looking photo, your profile is unlikely to appear in searches. A robust or “All-Star Profile” with most sections completed is 40 times more likely to be seen on LinkedIn. Google now owns LinkedIn, so a strong LinkedIn profile should appear near the top of search results if you Google your full name with quotation marks.

Proofread Mercilessly
*Presentation matters.* Do not rely on spellcheck. Print and proofread for absolute perfection! Avoid slang or casual language. You are communicating your professional self.

Recommendations
Ask only people who know your work and your skills to write you short recommendations for your profile page. You can ask your boss, internship supervisor, or professors who you have worked with closely.
This gives extra credibility to your strengths and skills. You then get to review the recommendation before either posting it on your page, or requesting a slight change from the writer first. You don’t need many, so choose wisely to highlight your strengths.

Join Groups and Follow Companies
At the top, search for groups built around your field (e.g Biology), or sub-field specialty (e.g. Conservation). Then click “Groups” at the top of your search results. Click on a group name (e.g. Conservation Jobs Talent Network) and “Ask to Join” a group related to your future field. Once admitted to a group, you’ll see posts, discussions, and job opportunities — all related to that group. This is much better than searching Indeed.com. Now, back at the top, click “Companies,” and then click “Follow” on some companies of interest to you for future work. When you log on to LinkedIn, your homepage will show a personalized newsfeed of content posted by the groups and companies you chose to follow.

Participate with Purpose
Don’t connect to everyone you know. Build your professional network with a focus on quality over quantity. Look up those who have contributed to your professional success thus far: students, teachers, employers, internship supervisors, etc. Connect with this core group and build outward. Profiles with 50 or more connections become more visible in search results. Tactfully comment on an article posted in a Group you follow. Others in your field will read it, and may click to see your profile as well. Be a good citizen of your group and participate in ways that encourage people to learn more about you.

Get Introduced to Someone New
Go to the page of someone with whom you want to network. Under the box with their name and photo, LinkedIn will tell you if you and that someone know any people in common. You could then ask a mutual connection to introduce you to that someone. This someone might be a recruiter, a co-worker, a supervisor, or UMass alumnus.

Privacy
Adjust your privacy settings to how you want to be viewed on LinkedIn. Go to Me> Account> Settings & Privacy>Privacy. There are numerous settings here that affect how you are viewed on LinkedIn. Pay attention to this. Once your profile is complete and you want people to see you, turn on Sharing Profile Edits. If you are making minor changes to your profile, you may want to turn this setting off, so your entire network doesn’t get a notice that you updated your profile. Profile Viewing Options is another important setting about who can see your profile. Decide what is best for you, or come in to the CNS Career & Professional Development Center and ask for help.

Don’t Bother with Premium
LinkedIn will offer you free trials of their premium subscription level. Most UMass students will *not* need a premium subscription, so don’t bother with these. Your free account is enough.