



Branding and Marketing Yourself

LinkedIn gives you a chance to brand yourself, and become more visible to the world that matters. Grab the opportunity!

People never had it so good at the workplace. Living as we are in a knowledge economy, human capital has become the most cherished asset for a company. A good professional can be spoilt for choice of career opportunities in most economies of the world today.

And yet, even the most capable of professionals may find it difficult to break away from the pack and run with the leaders. We have all experienced it at different stages of our careers — the best man does not always win. And why is that? The cause is often our inability to enhance our personal brand equity.

No matter what your track record is, no Genie will pop out of a bottle to work as your brand ambassador; you have to be your own. You need to tell the world all about yourself. And the way you are perceived as a professional by others will decide what opportunities — jobs, assignments, investments — come your way.

There are many ways you can achieve the desired objectives, but what better way than in the company of professionals at LinkedIn? A small effort invested here can give disproportionately high returns.

SEEK RECOMMENDATIONS

Why should someone have to call your references to get to know you better? LinkedIn allows users to leave recommendations on the profiles of their contacts for others to see anytime. This is a powerful enhancement to one's profile, giving a kind of a at-a-glance reference check.

And it is perfectly normal to request contacts who know your work to write a recommendation for you. And should they agree to, you always have the option to accept or reject the same.

One piece of advice: don't get friends to plant an underserving one; others will be able to see through it, sending your brand into a professional abyss you may never be able to get out of.

PUTTING YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

With every passing day, employers and other business associates routinely check out social media profiles of people they would be working with. The starting points usually are LinkedIn, MySpace and Facebook.

You may not realise who is showing interest in you and when. If the world is looking at you, you might as well put your best face forward.

ANSWER QUESTIONS, WIN RECOGNITION FOR EXPERTISE

After fitting out your profile well, the best thing you can do for yourself is be active on LinkedIn Q&As. When you answer questions related to what you do, or on subjects you have a strong command or experience of, you stand to benefit in more ways than one.

It immediately catches the attention of those who may have something to do with what you do. They could be from the same industry, or looking for skills you possess, or seeking to invest in ideas you may be pursuing.

In the process, you can also earn endorsements as an expert. The questioner has the option to rate answers

received; every time yours is rated 'Best' you get what can be called a point in the category the question was asked in. And it reflects not only on your profile, but gets mentioned along with your name every time you answer further questions. In other words, LinkedIn continually draws attention of others to your expertise levels. And it can mean more people wanting to interact with you.

Even if your answer is not rated the best, but is still good, you may earn the respect of others who may approach you with some attractive opportunities. And it need not be about only giving good answers; people may also like you for the kind of questions you ask. Even this reflects on the kind of person you are, and how you think.

However, don't expect things to happen overnight like magic. You may have to be at it for weeks or months before any tangible benefits come your way. But you must realize you are being observed by those who matter at all times, and dividends are bound to come your way from those you appeal to.

EXPERTISE IS NOT JUST ABOUT POINTS

“ I don't equate true expertise with the points given for best answers. In some cases, the questioner has awarded the best answer to someone who is in agreement — the answer may not really be the best. Not all questions are created equal nor do they all require 'expertise.'

When I see an extremely high number of expertise points associated with an individual, I assume the person has a lot of time to answer questions; he or she may also be wanting to post an answer quickly, discouraging others from providing essentially the same information. Of course, when I received my first 'Best Answer' I was delighted.

I love the Q&As feature, but don't consider the numeric rating system as a valid indicator of expertise. ”

— **JEANIE MARSHALL, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT,
MARSHALL HOUSE, USA**

ATTRACTING ATTENTION

“ Want to attract attention as a subject matter expert? Answer questions in your specialty on LinkedIn. And people will find you. ”

— **JOHN HUNTER, ENTREPRENEUR, USA (NAME CHANGED)**

WORK ON YOUR NETWORK

The nature of your network becomes important here. On the one hand, the bigger your network, the more the number of people who are likely to see your profile. On the other hand, the quality and relevance of these contacts will determine if you are being seen by the right people. And if people like your LinkedIn 'Rolodex', they may be more inclined to trust you and want to connect with you.

Again, it is about striking the right balance when deciding what kind of a network you want.

INCREASE YOUR VISIBILITY

“ By adding connections, you increase the likelihood that people will see your profile first when they are searching for someone to hire or do business with. In addition to appearing at the top of search results (which is a major plus if you are one of the 52,000 product managers on LinkedIn), people would much rather work with people who their friends know and trust. ”

— **GUY KAWASAKI, SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR, GLOBAL INVESTOR, BEST-SELLING AUTHOR AND COLUMNIST, USA**

GET FOUND ON THE WEB

LinkedIn profiles tend to get indexed on all major search engines, so why not use this to your advantage?

To improve your chances of being found on the Internet, go in for a vanity URL like linkedin.com/in/johnsmith for

your public profile page. In case the one with your name is already gone, you may need to add some prefixes or suffixes or permitted special characters.

And are you well prepared to receive those who visit your profile when they come across links to your profile on the Web? Make sure you are presenting them an up-to-date, complete and accurate profile.

SET YOUR PUBLIC PROFILE TO FULL

This is an option on LinkedIn — you can choose to display publicly as much as you want. Let people know as much about you as you can share. This will also boost your search engine rankings. And you will come up in search results more often as more keywords from your profile get indexed.

PROMOTE YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

Any publicity is good publicity, so why not advertise your public profile URL where you can? Carry it as a part of your signature in mails, put it on your blog or website (you can even add an eye-catching icon reading 'My LinkedIn Profile' hyperlinked to your profile page) and on your business cards, faxes and letterheads too. If you comment on any blogs, leave this link at the end. Let everyone, not just LinkedIn members, read about you in a click. And when you meet people, this link will tell them you are a LinkedIn member too, opening the possibility of you connecting with one another.

LinkedIn tells a lot about a person

“ A person's CV says very little. By seeing the profile of a person on LinkedIn, one can get more details about work history, education, summaries, etc. More importantly, the recommendations help as do their contact list. A person's contact list is of vital importance and you can easily make out how well connected he or she is. It also shows:

- The kinds of professionals on the list the member knows and the industries they represent.
- The range of industries where he or she has a foothold because of the contacts.
- How good the user is at meeting/ knowing/ networking with people of different ages and capacities.

Furthermore, the type of questions one asks and the type of answers one gives speak a lot about the person in terms of depth of knowledge, hunger for growth, farsightedness, risk taking ability, etc. ”

— **RAHUL CHOPRA, GLOBE HI-FABS, INDIA**

NO ONE MISSES UPDATES IN YOUR LIFE

People who have an interest in you may be visiting your profile from time to time — make sure it is always up to date. You don't want it to have some vital recent developments missing just when it may have been important to have those up.

Your profile is like a dynamic CV, and beats any of those static, outdated ones posted on job sites or left with recruiters. People have expectations of knowing you as a professional better through your profile. Make sure they are not disappointed.

Guess who's viewed your profile?

“ LinkedIn users can both know how many people have viewed their profile in the past week as well as reveal some interesting characteristics about them.

This was an interesting product for us to design: as the profile owner, we understand you would like to see exactly who has viewed your profile but, as a profile viewer, you would want your privacy protected. We figured out an elegant solution that works for everyone: instead of showing you exactly who has viewed your profile, we will show you some interesting information about the users' industry or company back-

ground without revealing their identity.

When you log in, you may notice on the right hand side of your homepage a box with the number of users who have viewed your profile recently. Once you click on it, you will see relevant industry and job background details of the users who have viewed your profile. Of course, you have control over what is displayed when you view someone's profile, ranging from not showing any details, to allowing simple anonymous characteristics like title and industry and to revealing your full name and headline.

So if you are wondering who has viewed your LinkedIn profile, go ahead and check it out. ”

— *STEVEN STEGMAN, MANAGER, CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT,
LINKEDIN*

LINK TO YOUR BLOG AND OTHER WEB RESOURCES

While LinkedIn goes a long way in building your personal brand, it cannot do a 100 per cent job of it. And may never be able to. There are always complementary things you may need to do to add to it. One of these is publishing your own blog. If you do, make sure you link to it from your profile. Likewise, if you have a Flickr account, a website, or any other online resource that adds to your personal brand equity, link those here.

THE LAST WORD...

Your network may be critical to you if you depend on it for business development or career opportunities. While you can easily change the companies you work for, it is important you remain the same reliable and trusted person for your network if you have to progress.

...AND ONE MORE

Make it easy for people to find you!!

STRENGTHENING YOUR PROFESSIONAL BRAND THROUGH LINKEDIN

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I have used LinkedIn for years as an invaluable tool to build and manage my professional network, find and recruit talented people, and grow my customer base. I have also used it to stay on top of the current voice of the marketing community by taking a daily look at the types of questions and answers being posted in the Answers section. And now I can say that I have used it to land an exciting new career opportunity (as Director of Advertising Sales at LinkedIn) even though I wasn't actively seeking one out; this is something that would have been almost impossible years ago but is now a common occurrence thanks to LinkedIn's ability to help you manage your professional brand.

Branding is something that we as professionals need to take very seriously on an individual level. Ten years ago, Tom Peters penned an article for Fast Company called 'The Brand Called You.' which stressed that it is absolutely imperative for all professionals to develop a unique and personal 'professional brand' that communicates the value they have to offer to prospective employers, employees, clients and business partners.

That idea was true then and it's even more true today. The major search engines and social networks have made all of us far more accessible and visible than ever before, making it so much more critical that we actively manage our own professional brands. And that's where LinkedIn really shines, allowing you to take control of the major elements of your professional brand: the people you associate with, the questions you ask and the answers you provide, the recommendations you give and receive, and the way in which you express your experiences and skills.

If you haven't done so, I suggest reading over Tom's article, then looking over your LinkedIn profile and make sure you are doing all you can to help your professional brand stand out.

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— **STEVE PATRIZI, DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING SALES,
LINKEDIN**