



# Your Ever Expanding Rolodex

If you are counting on LinkedIn to open new frontiers of opportunity and knowledge for you as a professional, you have made a good start. But technology can only be an enabler at best; you still need to count on people to make things happen.

And that is why the Rolodex was invented — to help you manage all the contacts you make over the years, never knowing who might be useful at what stage of your life. But the conventional ones — whether analog or digital — came with the inherent disadvantages of being slow to expand and difficult to update.

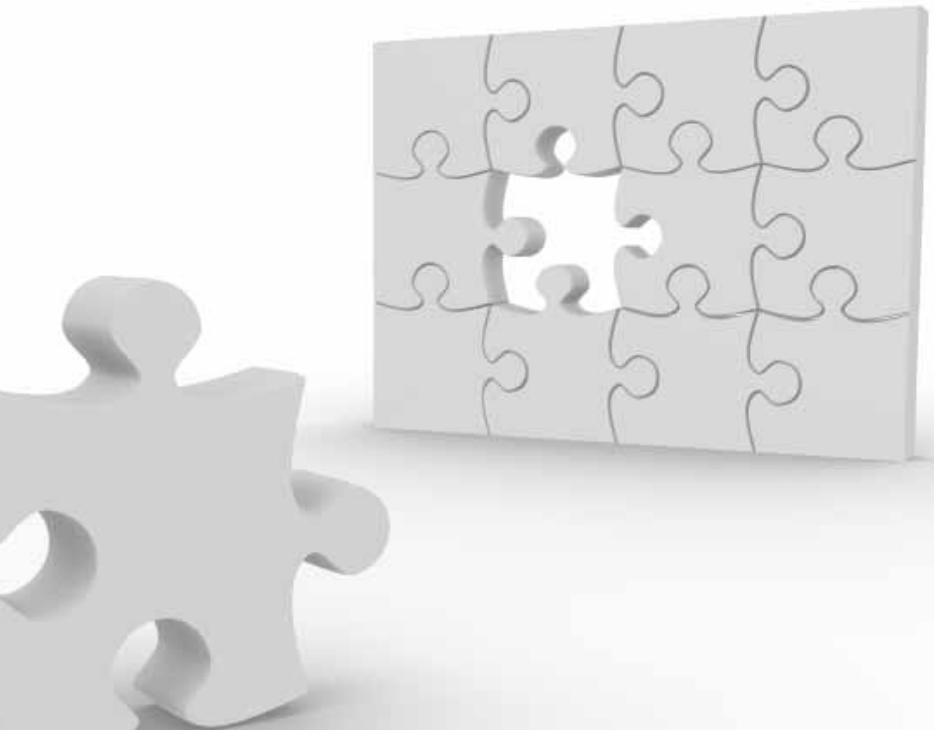
Enter Rolodex 2.0, or the world of social contact building. Designed to not only introduce you to people you never thought you would be able to get to know, but also enabling a win-win relationship with them. And just as the universe of LinkedIn users expands by the minute, so can your network.

The site offers many simple, yet smart, ways of connecting you with people. In theory, you can do so with anyone on LinkedIn. And it can be done without necessarily appearing to be intru-

sive provided, of course, you adhere to the written and unwritten codes of conduct on the site.

## CONNECT WITH ONLY THOSE WHO WANT TO

You can expand your network on LinkedIn, provided you understand one basic rule: You have to invite whoever you wish to connect to, and the other person has to accept the same before becoming a contact of yours. And likewise, you have to accept an invite before someone can add you to their network.



# Start Adding Connections

There are many ways to add people to your network, be it the ones you already know or those you did not even know existed. And every time someone agrees to connect to you, your network grows. All the way to three degrees. Sounds like fun? Let's get going.

## ◆ **CONNECT WITH LINKEDIN MEMBERS YOU ALREADY KNOW**

What better way to kick-start your network than with LinkedIn users already known to you? But how do you find them? Certainly not by running individual searches or sifting through the over 17 million LinkedIn members.

All you need to do is upload your address book from Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook or any other email client or database where your contacts' emails are stored. Within a matter of moments, LinkedIn tells you who of these are already on LinkedIn. In one click after this, you may invite some or all of them to be a part of your network.

## ◆ **INVITE THOSE WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF LINKEDIN**

There are still enough people we know who are not yet members of LinkedIn — after all, it's a big world out there. Why not invite them to set up accounts on LinkedIn, connect with you and other people they know? If they do, and actively expand their network, yours too will grow with

theirs. Again, LinkedIn sends them automatic invites to set up accounts and join your network when you upload their email addresses from your address books.

## WHY CONNECT WITH THOSE YOU ALREADY KNOW?

Isn't LinkedIn supposed to be about meeting new people? Yes, but having your existing contacts on your network is important too. This is why:

- You automatically get updates about them. Does your Rolodex do this for you?
- Their network becomes a part of your second degree and beyond network — and some of these could become your immediate contacts in the future.
- You don't need to contact them separately when you want your universe of contacts to know and participate in something you are doing.

### ◆ SEND INMAIL

You may come across interesting and useful people while searching or using LinkedIn and may want to connect to them. Unless they have chosen to openly display it, you cannot see their email and thus cannot send an invite or a message to them. You can contact them by sending an InMail — this allows you to send a mail to any LinkedIn user without revealing the recipient's email address and other contact details. This is a paid premium feature, and you are allowed to send only a limited number per month, depending on your membership level.

**INMAILS ARE THE ONE FEATURE ALLOWING YOU TO POTENTIALLY CONTACT ANY OF THE OVER 17 MILLION LINKEDIN USERS EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW THEM OR THEIR EMAIL ADDRESS. IT COMES AT A PRICE THOUGH, BEING A PREMIUM SERVICE.**

## MOTIVATING NEW PEOPLE TO JOIN

When a non-user of LinkedIn receives an invite to sign up, chances are the mail will tend to get ignored, or even junked. Reason? The recipient may not fully appreciate the value of a professional networking site, or there is fatigue setting in for those receiving a dozen invites daily to join new social and professional networking sites sprouting all around.

How do you convert these skeptics or non-believers? LinkedIn power user Sheila Etheridge, a US-based LinkedIn power user Sheila Etheridge, a US-based management and accounting consultant and owner of SME Management, has a take on this:

“ The following are the benefits of LinkedIn that I believe are most valuable. When I invite new people, in order to motivate them to join, I say that LinkedIn is an excellent way to:

- Attract publicity
- Market yourself and enhance your professional stature
- Give and receive endorsements and referrals
- Develop your career and find job opportunities
- Attract customers and draw clientele
- Establish mutually beneficial relationships with like-minded persons
- Maintain contacts, even if their contact information changes
- Interact with people you already know
- Win recognition for ‘Expertise’
- Learn from experts by asking questions on any topic
- Tap into public opinion worldwide, almost instantly
- Compare your experiences with those of others
- Test ideas and challenge your intellect
- Engage in debate
- Find reputable service providers

When sending an invitation, I insert the relevant bullets from above. When inviting in person, I hand the invitee a business card with the above items on the back and instructions on the front. I ask the person to email me, so that I can send the invitation. ”

### ◆ REQUEST AN INTRODUCTION

If you want to contact a LinkedIn user who is two or three degrees away from you, you can request an Introduction through one of your immediate connections. Your connection will, in turn, decide whether to forward it on to the desired recipient (if in your 2nd degree) or to a shared connection (if in your 3rd degree). Success in this is also dependent on gatekeepers being alert: passive members may just not be passing the messages along. Your free account allows you five such Introductions a month; you need to upgrade to a premium account to be eligible for more.

#### MAY I GO THROUGH YOUR ROLODEX?

“ I have made use of Introductions and that is very useful to me. In some ways, it is not different from what you do in the non-virtual world, but it's much more efficient. It's like walking into someone's office and saying: "Would you mind if I look through your entire Rolodex and see if there's anyone there I'd like to meet?" ”

— **DANIEL JATOVSKY, DISTRICT LEADER AT PRIMERICA FINANCIAL SERVICES AND OWNER, DAVID GORDON PRODUCTIONS, USA**

## DO YOU FORWARD ALL INTRODUCTIONS?

LinkedIn users cannot seem to decide about the way they should be handling Introduction requests: Forward all? Or only of those they feel they are in a position to recommend? Not many would risk being a nuisance to their contacts by forwarding all kinds of irrelevant requests. But then again, shouldn't the intended recipient be the best judge of what is relevant and what is not?

One good practice may be to forward an Introduction request with a message to the recipient asking if they would prefer not to receive these in the future. Make a mental note if the answer is in the negative. At the same time, be alert to those seeking Introductions repeatedly only to build a mailing list or a database of, say, human resources useful to the recruiting industry.

The final call may have to be taken by you though. Here are some more perspectives on the issue:

“ There was a discussion on LinkedIn on how to deal with introductory mails. Some members think they are supposed to forward these only if they are in a position to recommend the person who asks to be introduced to somebody else. I do not think so, and just forward as asked. It is up to the end recipient to decide upon accepting any introductions or not. It is after all only the Internet; I am not giving away somebody's home address. ”

— **OLGA KELLEN, RESEARCHER, TRANSLATOR,  
CITIZEN OF THE WORLD, USA**

“ There are two ways to build trust on LinkedIn. First, if someone is in the network of a good friend, I am able to check with that friend. Otherwise, I might not know that a friend of mine knows the person in question. Case in point: I received a request from someone I didn't know to make some Introductions. While I like to help out people, I am time pressed, and my colleague had mentioned that the person in

question had misrepresented herself on previous occasions. I was able to check with the person who referred her, and he admitted he did not personally know her, but was forwarding on a request from another source. ”

— **DIANE K. DANIELSON, USA, Co-Author,**  
***THE SAVVY GAL'S GUIDE TO ONLINE NETWORKING***  
***(OR WHAT WOULD JANE AUSTEN DO?)***

### ◆ RECONNECT WITH FORMER COLLEAGUES AND CLASSMATES

LinkedIn is supposed to work for you even as you sleep. Provided, of course, you have taken care of little things like completing your profile. You have heard that before, right? Here is one way how it does: LinkedIn matches you up with those who may have been your classmates or with those who may have worked in the same organizations around the same time as you did. The 'Reconnect' feature does this for you, and allows you to send a message to connect.

And you can do so even if you don't have their email addresses, usually needed to send an invite to connect on LinkedIn. And you don't need to use your InMail and Introductions quota for this either. But if you don't know the person — you cannot know all the people you worked with, especially in larger organizations — don't send the invite to connect. Your account might get restricted.

“I have linked up with two classmates that I have not seen in 30 years. It hasn't yet led to anything, but it's still a nice feeling.”

— **DANIEL JATOVSKY, USA**

“LinkedIn enabled me to connect with three persons I had worked with early in my career and who potentially can validate my work. I had no way of knowing where they were otherwise.”

— *CAROL WEBSTER, EXECUTIVE CONSULTANT,  
O SQUARED CONSULTING, ATLANTA, USA*

## LINKEDIN IDENTIFIES PEOPLE YOU MAY KNOW

A fascinating feature of LinkedIn seems to be ‘People you may know.’ The site throws up a list of names from time to time of people you may have been acquainted with at some stage of your life. And voila! Many of these may actually be known to you. And these are people you may have been out of touch for years — and even lost all contact details.

How does LinkedIn do it? There are a bunch of theories going around — none confirmed yet. But hey, whenever LinkedIn comes up with a name you actually know, don't lose the opportunity to connect and renew ties.

The best part? LinkedIn usually allows you to invite them to join your network even if you don't have their email address.

### ◆ **OPENLINK: ALLOWING ANYONE TO CONTACT YOU**

Why should you have to do all the hard work of finding people to connect to? What if someone likes your profile and wants to contact you with the intent of adding you to their network? How do you enable that without publicly displaying your email address?

You can activate the OpenLink feature, allowing any other user to send you a message, like an InMail, at no cost to the sender. Your privacy is also ensured till you choose to accept this message. The only catch: you have

to be a paying member of LinkedIn.

Likewise, if you come across someone with OpenLink activated, you can send them a message expressing your desire to connect — it won't cost you anything and you don't need to be a premium user either.

## FOR BEST RESULTS, PERSONALISE INVITES

To get best results, send a personalized message with all your invites — yes, you have this option too. There is a standard LinkedIn one-liner you can use; but using it is a sure way to show how indifferent you are towards inviting a person — it is perceived more as an attempt to ramp up your network size rather than an intent to network for mutual benefit.

Some of your contacts may not recall you, and you don't want them clicking on 'I Don't Know.' This can lead to restrictions on your account as explained later. A note reminding them who you are and why you want to connect can make a difference.

"When I invite someone to join my network, I always compose a personalized message rather than using the standard language provided by LinkedIn. I review each profile before sending an invitation and say something to indicate I have read the profile. After the person accepts, I send an email again to acknowledge our connection and thanking them — it is an unusual thing to do, but it's important to me."

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

### ◆ OPEN NETWORKERS — THE LIONS

There are many users of LinkedIn who are LIONS on the site — the acronym stands for 'LinkedIn Open Networkers.' Such members allow anyone to see their email address with the intent of receiving invites — and they usually accept all that come their way. There are 'LIONS' out there whose first degree contacts run into

thousands.

Send them an invite if you want to connect with them. But don't expand your network for the sake of doing so; do it only if there is value for you in doing so.

And likewise, if it is in your interests to be connected to as many people as possible, become a 'LION' yourself.

## ARE YOU A LION ON LINKEDIN?

“ If you are an open networker — meaning that you are open to connecting with people on LinkedIn you don't really 'know' — then it's a fantastic idea to put that on your profile. I have 'LION' on my profile headline. Others who have the same on their profiles usually have their email addresses listed on their profile making it easier for you to send them a direct connection invite. You connect with fellow 'LIONS' and your network grows — usually exponentially because most 'LIONS' are avid networkers. That's one of the most under-used and successful ways of growing your LinkedIn network.

I re-started proactive networking on LinkedIn after a long gap. I sent 42 direct connection invitations to fellow-LIONS in a single day; within four hours, 19 got accepted. That's a very good score. I expected all 42 to be accepted within a week.

And you can search for fellow LinkedIn 'LIONS' by using LinkedIn's very own in-built 'Search' feature — just search for the term LION. ”

— **NAINA REDHU, CREATIVE HEAD,  
ASIDE, INDIA**

## TOPS ON LINKEDIN

If you visit <http://TopLinkedIn.com>, you can see a list of users with the biggest networks on LinkedIn. As on December 3, 2007 the top seven in the list had more than 20,000 connections each — the honours for being on top going to Ron Bates with 37,440 connections.



# THE LINKEDIN-THON IN OFFICE

For those who came in late, and cannot find people to connect with, start with the office. Here's one way to put things on the fast track: On a Friday evening at 4 p.m. tell everyone to log on together, create an account and send an invite to everyone else in the office. Or to only those they wish to connect with. And start accepting as invites come in. By 6 pm, when you are ready to leave for the beer, you may have 500 direct contacts. And if each of you make 20 more over the weekend outside the office, your network will have grown along an exponential curve — with you having a joyride on it.