Utilizing LinkedIn Guide

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LinkedIn Profile Basics

LinkedIn is a powerful tool for career networking and job search. The purpose of this guide is to help you build your LinkedIn profile, network, and provide strategies to leverage LinkedIn for your job search. The best way to navigate this guide is to start with *LinkedIn Profile Basics* and then continue to *LinkedIn for Job Search*. If you are short on time, the *Profile Quick Tip*s can be helpful. No matter where you begin, it is recommended to review the profiles of 2-3 peers and professionals who are in your desired career for ideas.

Keep in mind, your LinkedIn profile will evolve as you make new connections, clarify your career goals, and gain experience. Like a resume, you should revisit your LinkedIn profile at the end of each semester to make sure it reflects your current experience, education, skills, and goals.

Custom URL

Claim your personalized LinkedIn URL by visiting your profile page and selecting "**Edit public profile & URL**" on the right hand side.

The recommended format for customized URLs is **"linkedin.com/in/YourFirstandLastName."** You may need to add a middle initial or number if your name is already taken. It is recommended to include your custom URL on your resume, to allow employers easy access to your profile.

Profile Photo

Images convey meaning and your Profile Photo is no exception. It is important to reflect on what your professional image is saying to your audience.

Select three words that best describe the impression you want your headshot to convey.

trustworthy	fun	knowledgeable	creative	friendly
dependable	relatable	experienced	energetic	leader
approachable	driven	organized	confident	enthusiatic
calm	trendy	polished	warm	add your own!

Consider how you can use the elements of a photo to create this impression. Use the space below to plan the background (e.g., colors, location), your pose and presence, and your attire and appearance.

Tips for Profile Photos:

- Profile photos should be from the *s*houlders and up, with your face directed towards the camera, and a warm, authentic smile that reflects in your eyes.

- *Dress appropriately* for your field or industry. You can look at current working professionals' profiles to get an idea of what's appropriate.

- Consider taking a profile selfie. Current SJSU students can also utilize the Career Center's Professional Headshot service by contacting careerhelp@sjsu.edu to schedule.

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Background Image

A customized LinkedIn Background image can help elevate your profile photo. Background images can reflect your career interests, personal brand, or showcase a personal hobby (*e.g., hiking, skiing, reading, etc.*)

If you aren't sure what to include, you can always select a background that represents your career interest or goals.

e.g. An aspiring Electrical Engineer professional might have a circuit board as their background.

e.g. An aspiring journalist might instead select an image of books or newspaper.

Adobe Express and Canva are both free tools accessible to students that you can use to create a customized background image. You can use your SJSU email (or a personal email) to create a free account.

Headline

A well-developed LinkedIn Headline should quickly identify your current career or networking goal.

See examples below.

Goal	Headline
Find job or internship opportunities	*Seeking Summer 20XX internship in Marketing Analytics*
Keep current role and connect with peers	*Electrical Engineer at Company X, Specializing in RF and Circuit Design*
Grow professional network	*Aspiring Supply Chain and Logistics Professional*

If you aren't sure what your LinkedIn goal is, you can always use this formula to create a headline.

Your "**major/concentration/minor**" + "**aspiring role/career**"

E.g. Economics Major, Aspiring Financial Analyst

Use the space below to draft your own headline:

Location

Your City/State/Country designation on LinkedIn should state where you want to find an opportunity.

If you only apply for fully-remote roles, location is not as important. When in doubt, it's recommended that you put your primary residence (e.g. where you currently reside for the majority of the year.)

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Summary / About

Your LinkedIn Summary, also called an "About" Section, should highlight your *past, present, and future* experiences as they connect to your career goals. Make sure to align your LinkedIn Headline as well.

If you aren't sure what to write, your answers to the following questions could be a good place to start. Write a one-sentence answer to each question.

Past: What sparked your interest in a specific career or industry?

Present: What is your major and why did you choose this major?

Present: If seeking a specific job/internship, what are your relevant skills and qualifications? If you don't have a specific role in mind, you can use NACE for Transferable Skills for ideas.

Future: What are your career goals? (e.g., finding a part-time job or internship, networking with peers, etc.)

Future: What are your future professional goals and aspirations?

After answering the questions above, use the space below to assemble your answers (*with connecting sentences*) into a short paragraph that clearly states your *past, present, and future.*

Summary Example:

"I've always been intrigued by forecasting the future. In my spare time, I love reviewing stocks and future market predictions. When I learned there are jobs that combine numbers, data, and forecasting, I knew that would be the perfect fit for me. Currently, I am a sophomore at San Jose State University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Business Finance. I'm also part of the SJSU Spartan Fund, an undergraduate micro-investment fund where I am gaining hands on experience in equity, risk, and reward. My current goal is to pursue a Summer '23 Internship in Investment Banking or Corporate Finance."

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Skills and Keywords

Your LinkedIn Skills, (*e.g. keywords you use to describe yourself*) will attract recruiters and peers. Recruiters use LinkedIn to find candidates by filtering for specific **skills/keywords**. It is important to know which skills/keywords are valued in your field and include the ones you've developed on your profile. You can also attach skills to specific **Experiences** (e.g., job, internship, project, etc.), which can help demonstrate your level of knowledge and proficiency to recruiters.

Skills are often divided into *job-specific skills* and *transferable skills*. Job-specific skills are related to specific knowledge required for a role *(e.g. MS Excel in accounting)*, while transferable skills may be tied to interpersonal abilities (*e.g., leadership, teamwork, etc.*). If you aren't sure which skills/keywords to use, you can look at LinkedIn profiles of other professionals, use O*net Online to search for skills by occupation, or read current job postings.

To help identify your skills, **list 1-3 jobs that interest you below** and the corresponding job specific and transferable skills. Highlight skills you have and identify a plan to build the ones you are missing (gaps)*.

Job Title	Job Specific Skills	Transferable Skills	My Current Skills	My Skill Gaps*
e.g. Technical Writer	*Adobe InDesign, Publisher, SQL*	*Communication Calendar Mangement*	*Adobe InDesign, SQL, Communication*	*Adobe Publisher, Calendar Management*

Tip: If you aren't sure which job(s) you are interested in yet, you can use the general top transferable skills that employers seek in new grads in NACE.

*See the SJSU Career Center's Build Experience Guide for examples activities to close skills gaps

Experience

Not everyone who views your LinkedIn profile will have seen your resume, so it is strongly recommended to include your experience from your resume on your LinkedIn profile.

Consider LinkedIn as a space to enhance your resume by demonstrating your skills and experience. Add links on your profile to work samples, photos, personal websites, blog feeds, and/or relevant social media.

If you don't have a lot of relevant work experience, consider highlighting partcipation in student club/organizations, volunteer activities, and/or class projects in your Experience section.

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Network

The power of LinkedIn lies in the opportunity to utilize 2nd and 3rd level connections (*e.g. people who know people that you know.*) Research on LinkedIn has shown that 2nd and 3rd level connections are the *most effective* in supporting your job mobility.

LinkedIn allows you to upload email and phone contacts; however, there may be connections that you don't have direct contact information for (*e.g., classmates, teachers, etc.*) Complete the *Identifying Your Network* activity on the next page to help establish your current connections.

After completing the actvity there may be some areas in your network that you'd like to expand. Consider growing your LinkedIn network by connecting with SJSU alumni.

To find SJSU Alumni
- Search "**San Jose State University**" and select "view page"
- Click on the "**Alumni**" tab.
- **Use filters** to search alumni by *Where they work, What they do,* and *What they studied.*
- Once you've identified an alum of interest, **request to connect from a desktop or laptop***
    - **Connecting on a mobile device may not allow you to add a short introduction message.*

Use the template below to help draft a network connection request.

"Hi, _____[Alum's name]

I'm currently a _ _____ [class level and major] at SJSU and noticed you're an alum of the program. As a fellow Spartan, I would love to connect with you for a short ___ [no less than 10, no more than 30 minutes conversation via phone/video] to learn more about your career. Looking forward to hearing from you soon!"

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Identifying Your Network

Who do you know?

Think about all the people that you interact with in different areas of your life. You never know where that next piece of career information or possible job lead might come from. This worksheet is designed to help you identify who you know, so don't edit out people at this initial stage. If you get stuck, feel free to walk away and come back to it, but the goal should be *at least 20 people,* and you can always add to it.

Contact Name	Contact Info (Email/LinkedIn/Phone)	Occupation	Work Location
Family			
e.g. Aunt Sarah	*sarah@me.com, LinkedIn profile link*	*Marketing Manager*	*Cisco Systems*
Friends			
Neighbors			

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Identifying Your Network

College Friend/ Alumni			
Interest Group/ Hobbies			
Teachers/Professors			
Sport/ Recreation Group			

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Follows

If you are applying to a certain company or industry, you can *Follow* relevant people and companies on LinkedIn. *Following* is different from Network Connections in that you don't have to send a connection request to see their content in your newsfeed. You can follow people who are known influencers or thought leaders related to your field. You can follow up to 1000+ companies, so don't be shy about adding follows to your profile.

Recommendations

LinkedIn Recommendations can give potential hiring managers or new connections a more well-rounded perspective of who you are. *Did you do really well at an internship? Did you excel in a specific course? Are you a stellar supervisor or colleague?* Consider asking *1st level connections* (*e.g. people you know directly*) to write you a LinkedIn recommendation.

Use the template below to help draft a recommendation request.

> *"Hi, _____[connection name]*
>
> *I'm building my LinkedIn profile, and I hope you can write a recommendation for me based on our experience working together at _____[company name]. I am currently interested in highlighting _____ [1-2 skills/experience] which is relevant for my career goal of _____ [job title]. P.S. If you send me a recommendation request for your profile, I am happy to return the favor. Thank you in advance for your support!"*

Education

LinkedIn allows you to add your Education to your profile. Including your Education can help you connect to your alumni network and inform potential employers of your credentials. It is strongly encouraged to include your San Jose State University studies on your profile. You can also include any community college studies or professional certifications that you have completed. Keep in mind that everything included under Education should be completed at a collegiate or professional level. Your High School Diploma or General Education Development (GED) credentials should not be listed on your Profile. Make sure to review regularly and keep your education section up-to-date.

Profile Quick Tips

If you are short on time for your LinkedIn Profile updates, here are some quick tips to get your started.

- Your **Profile Photo, Headline, Summary, and Experience** are the most critical sections of your profile, so focus on those first.

- Keep your LinkedIn Profile aligned to a specific goal. It is challenging for recruiters to find candidates that list multiple career goals. For example, you don't want to state you are "*Interested in Marketing, Operations, or Maybe Engineering jobs*" or "*Any job in literature or writing*". **Pick one job goal and give it 100% of your focus.** If your career goal changes, you can always make edits to your profile.

- Best practice is to **complete 100% of your profile** and be active on the platform by creating your own posts, commenting on posts, and liking posts in your network. Platform engagement increases your chances of being seen by a recruiter.

- **Utilize the Profile Rubric for Self Review** to analyze your profile and/or follow up to **schedule a 1:1 meeting with a career counselor for an Online Profile Review**

Anatomy of a LinkedIn Profile

1. **Profile Photo -** snapshot your shoulders and up with a warm smile

2. **Background Image** - represent your career interests, personal brand, or hobby

3. **Custom URL** - tailor with linkedin.com/firstandlastname

4. **Headline** - align to career goal

5. **Network/Follows** - identify who you know and who you are interested in

6. **Summary/About** - connect your past, present, and future to your career goals

7. **Experience** - demonstrate skills with prior experience

8. **Education** - showcase college-level education

9. **Skills** - highlight relevant transferable and job skills

10. **Recommendations** - illuminate what others think about you

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Profile Rubric for Self-Review

Use the following rubric to review a LinkedIn Profile. For each profile section, start at "incomplete" and work your way to the left. Mark the statement that is most accurate to the profile with an "X."

Section	Professional	Proficient	Developing	Incomplete	Notes
Custom URL	URL is customized and professional	URL is customized but not professional	URL is standard/ auto-generated from LinkedIn	Profile has not been created	
Profile Photo	Has none of these concerns: • Inappropriate clothing/attire, background/setting • Poor lighting • Not cropped (shoulders up) or other people in photo • Blurry or low quality	Has only 1 of these concerns: • Inappropriate clothing/attire, background/setting • Poor lighting • Not cropped (shoulders up) or other people in photo • Blurry or low quality	Has 2 or more of these concerns: • Inappropriate clothing/attire, background/setting • Poor lighting • Not cropped (shoulders up) or other people in photo • Blurry or low quality	No profile photo	
Background Photo	Has none of these concerns: • Not customized • Not related to career goal or industry • Blurry or low quality	Has only 1 of these concerns: • Not customized • Not related to career goal or industry • Blurry or low quality	Has 2 or more of these concerns: • Not customized • Not related to career goal or industry • Blurry or low quality	No background photo	
Headline	Highlights current career, professional, or networking goals	Not relevant to current career, professional, or networking goals	Has default headline of current job or education status	No headline	
Summary/ About	Highlights all core areas - past, present, and future connected to career goals	Highlights 2/3 core areas - past, present, and future connected to career goals	Highlights only 1/3 core areas - past, present, or future connected to career goals	No summary/ about section	
Skills/ Keywords	Includes 3+ relevant transferable and job skills	Includes 2-3 relevant transferable and job skills	Includes 1 relevant transferable or job skill	No skills or keywords	
Experience	Includes all of the following for accomplishment statements: • Strong action verb at the start • Skills/Keywords relevant to career goal • Achievements that are quantified	Missing 1-2 content pieces for accomplishment statements: • Strong action verb at the start • Skills/Keywords relevant to career goal • Achievements that are quantified	Missing 3+ content pieces for accomplishment statements: • Strong action verb at the start • Skills/Keywords relevant to career goal • Achievements that are quantified	No experience section	
Network/ Follows	Has at least 50 connections and ALL of the following: companies, professionals, and peers relevant to career goal	Has at least 50 connections and is following at least 2 of these: companies, professionals, and/or peers relevant to career goal	Has at least 50 connections and is following at least 1 of these: companies, professionals, and/or peers relevant to career goal	No connections or less than 50 connections	
Recommendations	Has 3+ recommendations from colleagues, peers, professors, or supervisors	Has 2 recommendations	Has 1 recommendation	No recommendations	

Rubric adapted from The Career Center at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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LinkedIn for Job Search

You've taken the time to create and review your LinkedIn profile and are now ready to start using it to find career opportunities.

Strategies to maximize LinkedIn for job search in this guide are split by **"Outbound"** (*e.g. you reach out to someone)* vs. "**Inbound**" (*e.g. someone finds you*.)

You should always strive for a mix of both.

Outbound: The Job Board

LinkedIn's Job Board functions are similar to others you may be familiar with such as SJSU Handshake or Indeed. However, keep in mind that LinkedIn is not designed just for student entry-level jobs/internships, so the "early-career" filter may not always be accurate.

Be sure to read the job description and make note of any requirements vs. preferences for candidates. This is the best way to determine if you are qualified for a role regardless of the classification.

- **Requirements** are typically non-negotiable, so you'd want to meet as many of these as possible and make sure they are well reflected in your resume.

- **Preferences,** are nice to have, but won't necessarily affect your candidacy if you don't have them.

It is also recommended to **filter positions by the date posted**. Try to be within the first 20-30 applicants, not the first 200. Keep in mind that LinkedIn counts a job application if a person clicks the "apply" button regardless of if they complete the application process or not. There is no way to view the number of actual applications. but you can consider this a general estimate of an opportunity's popularity.

Reminder: Be sure to also use SJSU Handshake when searching for jobs/internships. SJSU Handshake has specific filters and categories for SJSU students including but not limited to: "on-campus," "work-study," and "OPT/CPT" that LinkedIn doesn't offer.

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Outbound: The Hiring Manager

You can take advantage of the fact that LinkedIn allows recruiters and hiring managers to indicate that they are actively hiring. There is an "I'm Hiring" profile banner, as well as a suggested headline/tagline that is searchable. This is a great way for candidates to find out about positions soon after they are posted as well as a way to make a personal connection with the recruiter who will be reviewing your application.

- You can search keywords "**I'm hiring**" to find recruiters who actively have this designation

- It is recommended that you only follow 1-2 recruiters per company, and do your best to target those hiring for positions that interest you at your top companies.

- When a LinkedIn recruiter posts an opportunity that interests you, apply through the proper process and send them a quick email. If their email is not posted on the role, you can use tools such as Hunter.io to help you make an educated guess on what their work email might be.

The goal of a direct message to the recruiter is to identify in what way(s) you can support the organization.

Here's an example that you can utilize to help draft your own post-application message.

"Hi _____ [recruiter name]

Good morning, I hope your week has given you something to look forward to thus far. I am reaching out as I just applied to your job posting for _____[job title and posting # - if applicable] and wanted to give you some additional insight into my application. Here are two key accomplishments that I believe speak to how I can support your team

[1-2 sentences on first accomplishment]

[1-2 sentences on second accomplishment]

If you think I'm a good fit for what you are looking for, I'd love the opportunity to discuss my skills and qualifications with you further and have included my contact information below.

I know you are likely very busy sourcing multiple roles and candidates. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[your name / email / phone number]"

Use the space below to craft your own personalized message.

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Outbound: The Referral

Current employees of your target company can *Refer* someone for a specific role via LinkedIn. Many mid to large sized companies offer bonuses to employees whose referral leads to a successful hire. In those cases, there is a benefit for the employee to support you as well.

Here are a few best practices when seeking referrals in the job search process.

Find mutual connections and ask for an introduction from your common connection. Maybe a friend of a friend works at a company in your dream role, ask for your *mutual friend* to introduce you.

Here's an example message for a mutual connection referral:

"Hi _____[mutual connection name],

[1-2 sentence introdiction on how you know them] e.g. I still remember our study group for Professor Hall's Accounting class.We've both come a long way and I hope you are doing well.

I am reaching out as I am applying to a role at _____[company name] for _____ [job title] and saw you have a connection there. Would you mind introducing me to _____ [name of person you'd like introduction to] so I can find out what it's like to work there and see if it's a good fit.

If you are open to this, I've included a brief message that you can forward. Thank you!

Hi _____ [name of person you'd like introduction to],

I hope all is well. I am reaching out to see if you would be willing to have a short _____ [minutes for conversation - no less than 10, no more than 30] career conversation with a fellow SJSU Accounting graduate of my class year [how you know them]. _____[your name] is currently applying for _____ [job title] at your company and would like to know more about the culture and work environment. If you are open to this, I'll forward their profile for you two to connect. Thank you in advance."

Find alumni from your school by utilizing **LinkedIn's Alumni Tool** to find new contacts to grow your network. Keep in mind messages to **new connections are capped at 300 characters**.

Here's a an example message for an alumni referral:

"Hi _____ [alum's name],

As a fellow _____ [school/college] alumni who also studied _____[major or degree], and is interested in a career in _____[industry], I was excited to see your profile. I'd love to connect with you for a short _____ [minutes for conversation - no less than 10, no more than 30] min conversation about your journey. Would you be available in the next 1-2 weeks to chat?"

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Inbound: The Linkedin Recruiter

LinkedIn Recruiter is a tool that allows company recruiters to identify and source candidates by comprehensively searching LinkedIn profiles. 65% of recruiters use LinkedIn to find job candidates and LinkedIn is where recruiters go to find the highest quality candidates (*Recruiter Nation Survey, Jobvite, 2021*)

As a job seeker, it is helpful to understand how recruiters utilize *LinkedIn Recruiter* tool to conduct sourcing. **Here are some things to keep in mind about *LinkedIn Recruiter:***

- Recruiters initiate the skills and/or keyword searches, not bots or AI.

- Completed profiles with recent platform activity (*e.g. post, messages, profile updates, etc.)* are prioritized in skills/keywords search results.

- Once a recruiter has identified profiles of interest, they can bulk message or individually message candidates they'd like to connect with.

- LinkedIn Recruiter also has a maximum number of communications that recruiters can send and it varies by which service they pay for.

- It is always strategic to follow up with recruiters via email, or to ask for another form of communication to contact them outside of LinkedIn.

- You can find additional details about *LinkedIn Recruiter here.*

You can take advantage of this and maximize yourself as a candidate by:

- Adding relevant skills and keywords on your LinkedIn Profile

- Staying active on LinkedIn by writing comments on posts and posting your own content

- Following companies that interest you to stay up-to-date on new opportunities

Inbound: The Networker

When needing to hire new employees, many employers will ask current employees for personal recommendations or referrals from their network. Take advantage of this strategy so that you can be on top of mind when your dream company is seeking a new candidate.

- Follow your peers and classmates, especially those who are 1-2 class years ahead of you.

- Look for influencers and leaders that post about open positions, as these folks are more likely to share future opportunities as well.

- Try to join events and webinars which offer new opportunities to connect with people and grow your social network.

What's Next

You've reached the end of this guide, but there's still more to do to prepare for lifelong career success.

- Follow the LinkedIn Guys to stay up to date with new LinkedIn trends and strategies. Many of the job search tips used in this guide were shared by Jeremy Schifeling and Omar Garriott in their book *Linked: Conquer LinkedIn, Get Your Dream Job, and Own Your Future.*

- Review our other online career resources such as the *Build Experience Guide*, *Job/Internship Search Guide* and/or *Interviewing Guide* to help get career ready.

- Consider checking in with your career counselor for 1:1 for an Online Profile Review.

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