

FIVE ways to improve your new LinkedIn profile

By Debra Donston-Miller



Here's how to take advantage of LinkedIn's new look and feel. LinkedIn recently updated the look and feel of its user profiles, in an attempt, it said, to make it easier for users to "tell their professional stories, be found for opportunities, and build relationships through meaningful interactions." The profiles, which are still being rolled out to users, are much more visual in nature and integrate elements reminiscent of Facebook, Twitter and Google+. Some people love the new profiles and some, well, not so much. But they are what they are (for now), so The BrainYard has put together some recommendations for making sure that you are making the most of the updated profile features.

1. Upgrade your profile photo

Profile photos are now much larger. If your existing photo is grainy or old, or if you don't have a photo at all, find (or take) a high-res shot that puts you in a professional light, recommends Jake Wengroff, founder of social business consultancy JXB1.

2. Use the new networking insights view

"Probably one of the best parts of LinkedIn is to understand how many degrees of separation you have with people that you want to connect and network with," said Tony Deblauwe, founder of HR4Change. "This new display helps provide you with a quick snapshot of your reach and allows you to more easily click down to new connections/introductions you want to make."

3. Get active

With any social network, a big part of building your personal brand is sharing links and stories. But, of course, you don't want to overshare and clog connections' feeds, and you want to make sure that what you are sharing is relevant to your audience. This is true more than ever: "Daily activity is a more pronounced area, so showcase your thoughts and interesting links to stories that you are following," said Deblauwe.

Deblauwe warned that there are "dangers" to this more prominent view: "One, you do nothing -- no updates, no links to useful info -- and a recruiter doesn't

think you are as engaged for a role vs. someone who is. Or, two, you connect meaningless stories or provide updates that are more appropriate for Facebook, and recruiters could view you potentially in the wrong way." Deblauwe noted that taking the time to effectively curate content will make you stand out in a good way: "I think LinkedIn made the design choice to push this piece as a better way to create a path of your professional story," he said, "but the feature, like all social media, becomes meaningful with usage -- I'm not sure the majority of LinkedIn users will take the time, so if you do, you automatically stand out."

4. Leverage data

You have no doubt been hearing more and more about Big Data, and how the use of the reams of data generated from social media (and many other sources) can be analyzed and used by companies to make business decisions moving forward. The data generated on your LinkedIn profile may not be exactly big, but it can be analyzed, and it can be used to help you hone your personal marketing message.

Larry Stybel said that the endorsements he has been receiving have told him a lot about how his company's evolution is perceived. Stybel, president and CEO of [career management](#) and leadership development firm Stybel Peabody Lincolnshire, as well as executive in residence at the Sawyer Business School at Suffolk University, said he has received many endorsements for recruiting, executive coaching and organizational development, but none for outsourcing -- once a focus for his organization.

Analyzing the endorsements was "the best marketing research that I could have ever done," he said. "I would have predicted that outsourcing would be No. 1, but it's not even listed. It tells me something about how people perceive me. This tells me that I'm moving in the right direction, and that the market has accepted it."

Users should periodically examine the data that LinkedIn provides -- including endorsements and who is looking at your profile -- to make decisions about the effectiveness of their profile over time.

5. Ask for recommendations

If you do not have any recommendations, or if they are older and highlight skills that are not in high demand right now, ask past and present colleagues to write a recommendation that focuses on the skills and experience you want

people to associate you with. (And be prepared to return the favor.) With the introduction of LinkedIn endorsements, which some have derided, LinkedIn recommendations have taken on additional weight and value.