

5 Tips for Optimizing Your LinkedIn Profile for Your Job Search

According to the JobVite 2011 Social Recruiting Survey, 89% of companies use or plan to use social media for recruiting. In order for job seekers to be found, they need to be visible on social networking sites, and in particular LinkedIn - the largest social networking site for business professionals, with over 135 million members worldwide.

If you are looking for job, either actively or passively, you need a LinkedIn profile that not only showcases your expertise and credentials, but one that is optimized so that you will be found in searches.

Below are 5 tips that will help you improve your profile to present yourself in the best possible light for hiring managers and recruiters:

Write a Descriptive Headline

Your headline is the sentence that appears just below your name. Rather than just stating your title and company (if you currently have a job) make it a short phrase that provides a description of what your expertise is. This is especially important for those individuals who are not currently employed. For example: Experienced B2B content marketer, seeking position with interactive agency. Yes, it's bold to state that you are out of work, but understand that your network is willing to help you out *if* they know you are looking for your next opportunity.

Upload a Professional Photo

You know the phrase, a picture is worth a thousand words. So make sure you upload a professional photo of yourself, preferably in colour and against a light or neutral background that includes only yourself – no pets or kids! A friendly photo will draw people into you. LinkedIn statistics show that a profile with a photo is **seven times** more likely to be viewed than one that without.

Tell Your Story in the Summary

The summary section is the place where you can shine and "tell your story" in 2,000 characters or less. Are you passionate about marketing? Do you have a certain philosophy about how you deal with clients? How are you a problem solver? State it here to show how you are unique. Make sure that you also summarize your experience here to back it up. For this section, write in full sentences in the "first" person, using the word "I". Two or three short paragraphs will be enough.

Add Specialties and Skills

There are two places in your profile where you can list your expertise. One is in the "specialties" section under your summary and the other is under "skills" – where you can add up to 50 of them. Pay extra attention to skills, because this one of the ways in which you will be found when someone conducts a search using key words. Be specific, using terms such as: mobile marketing, IT project management, or user interface design.

Get Recommendations

In order to have a 100% complete profile on LinkedIn you will have to add at least 3 recommendations to your profile. This is the place where you can ask former bosses or colleagues to write a short testimonial for you. A few sentences is more than enough which should recap how they know you, in what capacity, and what your best skills and attributes are.

Good luck with your job search!

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