

THIRD EDITION

Smart Personal Branding with **LinkedIn**

How to Use LinkedIn to Build Your Personal Brand and Land a New Job Faster!

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LinkedIn, Personal Branding and the New World of Job Search in the Digital Age

For successful executive job search today, you'll need to:

- Focus your efforts on specific employers who will be a mutual good fit,
- Target and research these employers to pinpoint what makes you a good fit and how you can help them meet their current needs,
- Define your personal brand around the areas of expertise and qualifications they need,
- Create brand-reinforcing content for your job search documents and online/ social media personal marketing, and
- Network your way into a job.

Your personal marketing content must be designed to resonate with your target employers and differentiate the unique value you offer, over candidates competing against you.

At a minimum, you'll need a resume, biography, cover letters and a LinkedIn profile. To learn how to write this and other content, see my post, <u>How to Build Personal Brand Content for Executive Job Search.</u>

8 Reasons LinkedIn Is a Job Search Must

- **1.** Your branded LinkedIn profile helps position your promise of value to your target employers, advance your thought leadership, and expand your brand community.
- 2. Recruiters have embraced LinkedIn as their #1 tool for referrals, candidate research and sourcing, and for publishing job openings. That makes LinkedIn one of the best places to be found online by recruiters and hiring decision makers.
- 3. LinkedIn constantly adds new features and tools to help you advance your job search and career.
- **4.** Networking to uncover leads and stay top-of mind with people who can help you are the best ways to land your next great gig. LinkedIn is the most important place for professional social networking.
- **5.** Many of the people competing for the jobs you want, with the employers you're targeting, are using LinkedIn to be found and network their way into these jobs. Just to keep pace with them, you need to do the same.
- **6**. Having a strong, fully fleshed out, keyword-rich LinkedIn profile boosts high-quality search results for "your name". When hiring professionals do a Google search on "your name" to assess you (a standard practice), your LinkedIn profile will likely show up within the first 3 search results.



- **7.** Having a strong LinkedIn profile indicates that you're social media savvy and up-to-date with the new world of work. NOT having a strong LinkedIn profile can actually be detrimental to your job search.
- **8.** Your LinkedIn profile provides critical "social proof" corroborating the claims you've made about yourself on paper (resume, biography, cover letters, etc.).

Building Your Branded LinkedIn Profile

Be aware as you use LinkedIn that, due to the ever-changing nature of social media, LinkedIn continuously tweaks and updates features, and changes the User Interface. Changes happen overnight. Features discussed here may have vanished, or may not function as I describe them. For up-to-date information about using LinkedIn, go to LinkedIn Help.

As you're building your LinkedIn profile and leveraging the site to advance your job search, refer to my post, Essential Checklist to Optimize LinkedIn For Executive Job Search.

First, A Few Words About Keywords



LinkedIn is a search engine. Executive recruiters and other hiring professionals search LinkedIn for candidates like you by using relevant keywords and phrases. These keywords usually represent your areas of expertise or hard skills. The more of the right keywords your profile contains, the more findable you'll be. You'll see examples of relevant keywords in the Professional

Headline and Summary section descriptions below.

Your entire LinkedIn profile should be packed with your relevant keywords — while still being readable and interesting to humans, not just the search engine. Fill out every profile section that applies to you, with as much content as you can. The more keyword-rich content in your profile, the better your personal SEO (Search Engine Optimization) . . . making you more visible and findable to people who can help you reach your career goals.

Pay particular attention to keyword density in these sections:

- Professional Headline
- Summary Section
- Job Titles in the Experience Section
- Skills & Endorsements

Professional Headline

Pump it up with the relevant key words your target audience will be looking for. You can pack quite a punch with the 120 characters allowed.

Which of the following headlines, for the same executive, do you think will make her profile more searchable and compelling, and capture attention better?



CEO - [Current Company]



CEO - Global Operations Change Agent | | Entrepreneurial Startups | | Crisis, Recovery & Turnaround Management |

Remember that your professional headline follows you everywhere on Linkedln in a mini pop-up giving viewers a brief snapshot of who you are — when you share an update, post a Pulse article, participate in Group activities, invite people to join your network, etc.

Photo



Choose your LinkedIn photo wisely. This is the first thing people are likely to see when they open your LinkedIn profile. Choose an appealing photo that strikes the right image and professional tone for your industry and niche. For consistency, use the same photo everywhere else online.

Discussions persist over whether including your photo can cause people to discriminate against you. You may have good reason not to include a photo, but I encourage you to

include one. Branding is about creating emotional connections. People believe content more when it's accompanied by the author's photo.

Your Public Profile URL

The default URL ends in an indistinct jumble of letters and numbers. Maximize your profile's searchability by personalizing it with your name. This is what my LinkedIn URL looks like:

www.linkedin.com/in/megguiseppi

If you have a common name or one that's already taken, you'll have to play around with this. Include your middle initial, or just use your first initial, or first and middle initials.

Once you change your profile URL, be sure to change it anywhere else you've placed the link — resume, other online profiles, email signature, etc.

Contact Information

- Fill in your personal email, IM and phone. Don't use any company contact information. And it's not a good idea to include your home address here, for your safety and online security.
- Fill in your Twitter and other social networking info, if you're active on these sites.

Websites

Include links to up to 3 web pages associated with you and your brand. If you don't have a blog or website, this is a great place to put a link to your online career portfolio, any notable recent press about you, a relevant white paper you published online, etc. The idea is to lead people to more brand-reinforcing information about you.

Tip: Optimize your profile by associating the link with what's actually on the web page. When naming your websites or web pages, use searchable and relevant terms. Instead of "My Blog" or "My Website", use the actual name of the blog or website if it's keyword-rich, or something like "My Turnaround Management Blog".

Connections



Opinions differ on whether it's more important to amass a lot of connections or concentrate on building fewer high quality connections. That's up to you, but be aware that the more connections you have, the wider you've cast your net for opportunities. And note that having at least 500 connections will boost your ranking in LinkedIn search, making you more findable.

In the menu across the top left hand of your LinkedIn profile, check out the options under "My Network" for building your network.

Summary

The Summary section is where you begin telling your personal brand story, to differentiate the value you offer over your competitors. Storytelling allows you to make a more vibrant connection with people than the dry resume-speak too often used here.

Weave together your key "hard" skills (areas of expertise that represent your relevant keywords, or personal SEO) and "soft" skills (personal attributes, leadership qualities, passions, people skills, etc.). Think of this section as a brief biography. I advise using first person voice here, that is, the word "I".

My Personal Branding Worksheet will help you develop content that balances personal SEO with personal branding. Try to get across what you're like to work with and how you get things done. Generate some chemistry!

Smart Personal Branding with LinkedIn

Create a lead-in paragraph for the Summary section that will draw people in and entice them to want to read your entire profile. Which of these lead-ins for the same executive captures attention better and indicates his promise of value?

Business Development and Operations Management

Experienced in new business development, technology solutions, acquisitions and divestitures, and customer service improvement.



C-level Global Business Development and Operations Management Best-of-Breed Technology Solutions ... Major Acquisitions & Divestitures Exceptional financial acumen with vast P&L experience

A "think big" business turnaround expert who invents strategies that shape the market, I recently stimulated declining business in shrinking markets to deliver double-digit revenue growth with up to 3-times margin growth. By re-engaging lost customers, capturing international growth opportunities, increasing partnerships and optimizing thought leadership, my strategic planning revitalizes brand positioning and market presence, and unifies all stakeholders.

Strategies to elevate your LinkedIn Summary section:

- Add a quote of yours or someone else's to showcase the value you offer.
- Add 3-5 bullet points to highlight hard-hitting achievements and/ or metrics, focused around your top relevant keywords and phrases, with a brief description of how you achieved these things.
- Include a brief paragraph about why you chose your profession or industry.
- For visual appeal, include plenty of white space and short paragraphs.
- Add some pizzazz with special characters.
- Break down the information into sub-sections, with headers in all caps.
- Leave a little room at the bottom of the Summary to list misspellings and variations of your name, so that people using them to search for you will still find your profile.

Your Articles & Activity

Posts

Once you begin writing posts for the LinkedIn Pulse platform, your posts will land in this section, right below the Summary section, highlighted by whatever image you use at the top of each article you post.

Formatting Tip

LinkedIn may not accept some graphic bullet points that you used in your resume, but you can get visual impact with various characters right on your keyboard, such as:

* ~ > = - <>

What's so great about posting on LinkedIn's Pulse?

Just like running your own blogsite, you'll be building your personal brand . . . demonstrating your subject matter expertise and thought leadership, and communicating your personality and good-fit qualities for the employers you're targeting.

But also, because they're on LinkedIn, your Pulse articles will draw people to your LinkedIn profile and keep you topof-mind with your LinkedIn network. Each time you publish a new Pulse post, your LinkedIn network is notified.



The immediate impact of having your most recent articles land at the top of your profile:

- Supports the claims you've made in your profile about your expertise.
- Shows you have something to say about your industry and vocation.
- Demonstrates that you're up-to-date with social media and know how to leverage LinkedIn.

Experience

This section zeros in on your scope of responsibilities for each of your jobs, along with the top contributions you made while in each job, that will be relevant to your target employers.

Each job, of course, should include the company name, location, your title, and beginning and ending dates you held the job. As noted earlier, job titles are important places for personal SEO (Search Engine Optimization). You can add several relevant keywords and phrases to each actual job title, as space allows.

Start each job description with a brief description of the company (you'll only need to do this once, if you held several jobs at that company), including size of the company and services/products.

In a few sentences, describe your scope of responsibility including budgets you managed (type and amount), major clients/customers (if applicable), number of people managed and their positions. Include any special circumstances about why you were hired.

Then follow with 4-5 bullet points (if space allows), showcasing your top contributions, in terms of what will be most important to your target employers. Lead these points with the WOW result first and surround each one with white space for better impact.

For added impact, you may want to lead each job description with your top contribution, that will be most relevant to your target employers.

If space allows, you can also insert a quote here from someone you worked with about your value to the company.

If you've held several positions within the same company, complete a separate experience section for each one, even if you can't come up with enough content to fill out each one.

Smart Personal Branding with LinkedIn

Many LinkedIn experts, including me, suggest that you include your employment history all the way back to the beginning, even if it isn't on your resume and may indicate your age. The thinking is that people searching those early company names will find you.

Education

As with the Experience section, fill in all of your education information, going back to the beginning. Add in specifics, as applicable.

Skills & Endorsements

A "Skill" endorsement is a one-click way for your connections to endorse the skills listed on your profile, or those suggested by LinkedIn. An endorsement is not the same as a "Recommendation", which is a written narrative submitted by a connection in support of your expertise and value.



A high number of endorsements for skills representing your best talents supports your personal brand and adds credibility to your

candidacy in job search and in doing business. These endorsements validate that you really do possess these skills, and they add value to your profile. Since these skills are also relevant keywords and phrases, a solid list should boost your profile search ranking.

Pull together a list of your top 50 skills (or areas of expertise), and post them to your profile in order of importance to your target employers. Then you can reach out to your connections individually and ask them to endorse you to build up your numbers. And you'll see others you haven't asked add endorsements to your profile.

LinkedIn lets you reorder and delete skills. Come back, say, every few months or so, and repeat to keep this section up to date.

Additional Profile Sections and Information: Use all the sections that apply to you.

radicional ricino cocciono ana información. Coo an circo coccióno cirac appriy co your
□ Publications
☐ Certifications
□ Courses
□ Projects
☐ Honors & Awards
□ Patents
☐ Test Scores
□ Languages
□ Organizations



Recommendations

Keep building up brand and value-reinforcing recommendations within each job you've held. Nothing speaks to your unique value proposition better than what others who know your work best have to say about you.

If they're amenable, it's okay to help people write a brief paragraph or two by providing them a little information about the kinds of positions you're seeking, so that they can align what they write with what hiring decision makers will be looking for. Let them know which attributes, skills, and achievements you'd like them to highlight.

Tip: Write LinkedIn recommendations for people you work with. They'll be much more likely to reciprocate with a recommendation for you.

LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn Groups are all about learning, positioning yourself as a subject matter expert (SME) and thought leader, and staying top-of-mind with your network.

To help you land a job faster, your network on LinkedIn should include recruiters and hiring decision makers at your target companies, and others who can help you reach your career goals. Steady, gentle reminders of the value you offer will help position you as a potential good-fit for your target companies.



How to Use LinkedIn Groups to Position Yourself as a Subject Matter Expert

Join relevant Groups – search the profiles of top-level executives, Board members and/or hiring decision makers, and other employees at your target companies.

And LinkedIn offers 2 ways to find new Groups:

- **1.** Search for groups by name or keyword:
 - In the search box at the top of your LinkedIn homepage, type key words or group name of interest and click Search.
 - On the search results page, click the Groups tab.
- **2.** Browse groups recommended for you by LinkedIn:
 - Click the "Work" icon in the top right of your LinkedIn homepage and select Groups from the dropdown.
 - Click Discover at the top of the page to view suggested groups.
 - You can then request membership by clicking the Ask to join button.

Additional LinkedIn Profile Branding and Job Search Tips

Once you've completed your profile, check out the other LinkedIn features you'll find in the menu at the top of your profile, such as SlideShare, ProFinder, Jobs, etc.

Possible Updates to Share:

- An online article, blog post, or white paper you've published
- ➤ An event or seminar you're presenting
- ➤ A new project you're working on
- ➤ A significant accomplishment or contribution to your company
- ➤ Activities with your networks or LinkedIn Groups
- An important seminar or event you'll be attending or have attended

Share an Update

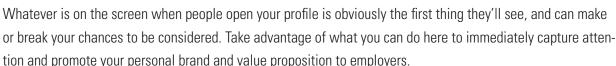
- Keep your LinkedIn network and those viewing your profile current with your latest activities.
- LinkedIn notifies your network whenever you refresh this or any other part of your profile, which keeps you and your brand value top-of-mind with them.
- To access this feature, click on "Home" in the menu at the top of your profile. To the left of your photo, you'll see "Share an article, photo, or update".
- As you create the update, include a link to more about it, if applicable. This area also represents another
 opportunity to brand your profile with relevant key words. Add hashtags at the beginning of each relevant

keyword and keyword phrase to make your commentary more searchable.

Typos and poor grammar can discredit you.

Meticulously check spelling and grammar. Have a few other people proofread and edit for you.





Make them want to scroll down to read your entire profile. Just as with your resume, it's wise to move up to above the fold those pivotal achievements and contributions that would otherwise be buried in the Professional Experience section, further down in your profile.

Sprinkle a few select key words and phrases relevant to your target and niche throughout your profile.

You'll rank higher for these terms when people conduct a Linkedln people search. If you land within the first few results, they're much more likely to click through to your profile.



For instance, if you're all about "Turnaround Management", make sure the phrase appears in your professional headline, summary section, and a few times in the professional section. But resist over-packing your profile with the same relevant key words. Remember that human eyeballs are reviewing your profile, too. Make it a compelling and interesting read.

Choose your privacy settings.

Go to the "Settings & Privacy" tab at the top of your profile and be sure your profile is completely open to search — especially that your "Public Profile" is set to display full profile information, so that it's fully accessible to search engines.

Lead people to your LinkedIn profile.

Include a link to your LinkedIn profile on your resume, along with your contact information at the top, and in your email signature, your website/blog (if you have one) amd elsewhere.

Use LinkedIn for research and market intelligence.

The more information you have about your target employers, the better prepared you'll be to position yourself as a good-fit hire for them, as you network and interview for jobs. Here's how and where to conduct research on LinkedIn:

- Search profiles of candidates like you, using your relevant keywords.
- Study the details on LinkedIn Company profiles of your target employers. Use them to assess the company and to identify employees.
- Look at the profiles of employees of your target employers. Connect with them and scan their profiles for market intelligence and relevant keywords to boost your personal SEO.
- Search job listings for your target employers on LinkedIn "Jobs"
 (on the main menu bar). A wealth of information about the company is provided in these descriptions.

How to Keep Your Job Search Undercover on LinkedIn

First, it needs to be stressed that, no matter how many safeguards you put in place, some people may notice if you're making changes to your profile to gear up for job search, and suspect what you're up to. I advise that you have a ready answer, in case people ask.

Even though you're looking elsewhere, be sure that all the content in your profile and all of your LinkedIn activities, support your current employer and yourself as an employee of that company or organization. Luckily, this strategy will also support, and provide evidence, of the value you offer your target employers.

Tips to keep your job search confidential:

- Perhaps this is obvious. Don't note anywhere on your profile, or anywhere on LinkedIn or elsewhere online, that you're seeking employment.
- You should belong to some LinkedIn Groups that focus on job search, but don't start conversations in those Groups. You'll instantly be "outed". Just read and learn from these Groups.
- Turn off notifications to your network before you make any changes to your profile.



- Change your "Profile viewing options" to "Private mode" before you view the profiles of people with jobs similar to yours and those working at your target companies. They will not know you've viewed their profiles to gain competitive intelligence.
- Add or change large chunks of profile content slowly, over a few days, so that you won't suddenly have a brand new profile.

About the Author: Meg Guiseppi



Meg Guiseppi has been partnering with c-suite and senior-level executives for more than 20 years to help them differentiate and strategically position their unique ROI for today's executive job search, and <u>Land a GREAT-FIT New Gig!</u>TM

<u>The Personal Branding Expert at Job-Hunt.org</u>, Meg has been featured and quoted in Forbes, Huffington Post, Fast Company, Wall Street Journal's FINS, Inc.com, Fortune, CMO.

com, PBS' Next Avenue, and many other esteemed publications.

Meg has written several ebooks including "23 Ways You Sabotage Your Executive Job Search and How Your Brand Will Help You Land" and "20 Little-Known, Insider Tips to Accelerate Your Executive Job Search."

She has earned 10 professional certifications, including <u>Reach Certified Personal Branding Strategist</u>, <u>Reach Social Branding Analyst – LinkedIn Profile Strategist</u>, and <u>Certified Executive Resume Master</u>.

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About Job-Hunt.org

Job-Hunt.org (don't forget that hyphen between the "job" and the "hunt") is a free guide providing excellent practical how-to job search advice from genuine experts to help you have a smarter and safer — also shorter — job search. Advice includes topics such as protecting your privacy, practicing personal search engine optimization (SEO) and personal online reputation management, avoiding job scams, working with recruiters, and finding jobs plus the best methods to successfully leverage LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media for a successful job search.

Assisting job seekers since 1995, Job-Hunt has won much recognition for the quality of the content, and our goal is to continue to deserve that recognition. Recently, Forbes chose Job-Hunt.org as one of the 100 Top Websites for Your Career. In the past it has been recognized by many organizations, publications, and websites for the quality of the content, including the US Department of Labor, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Chicago Sun Tlmes, and The Los Angeles Times newspapers as well as magazines like TIME, FORTUNE, and Newsweek, and websites like Forbes.com, AARP.org, USNews.com, AOL.com, and many, many others.

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