

# 10 Reasons - Why LinkedIn?

by Terry Pope – Foremost Authority on LinkedIn SEO - SocialProfileMasters.com

The question for a lot of people today is, “Why should I be on LinkedIn”? Or, “What are the advantages of being a member of LinkedIn”? This quick list of ten important reasons (not necessarily the TOP 10) will help you understand WHY, if you haven’t yet become a member, you should stop everything you’re doing – at this very moment – and sign-up for a free LinkedIn profile.

## 1. TECHNOLOGY

Technology has changed almost every game in life, and the career game is at the top of the “change” list. The days of standing in line with 350 other applicants for that one job position are all but gone. The days of physically mailing resumes are passé. Traditional job searching has now been replaced by technology, Internet search techniques, branding, networking, and self-promotion. LINKEDIN IS that new career building, job searching, and business networking technology.

## 2. “NEXT-STEP” CAREER SEEKING

If you’re looking for a JOB, you can find one at McDonalds – TODAY - and be working that JOB tomorrow. But, if you have a CAREER, that means you’re looking for a POSITION or the NEXT STEP in your career. However, to look for another position means you’ve been doing your homework all along with the previous position, and developing yourself as a “Brand”. If you haven’t, you’ve got some serious work to do – LINKEDIN is your rescue.

## 3. BRANDING

If you have been doing your homework, you’ve been building your BRAND – letting others know that YOU are an expert at whatever it is your experience shows, typically in your chosen industry or profession. LINKEDIN grants you the ability to showcase your BRAND by allowing you to promote who you are and what you do. But, just having a good profile doesn’t mean the world will beat a path to your door - unless you promote it and use a few tricks to get “found”.

Used in tandem with your BRAND, there are all sorts of techniques to bolster your search result rankings both internally to LINKEDIN as well as externally with Google, Yahoo, Bing, and the other search engines called

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SEO (Search Engine Optimization). How do they compare?

- Basic Profile: Good
- Professionally written Profile with built-in SEO: Better
- **PROMOTED** Professionally written Profile with SEO: **BEST!**

## 4. SEARCH-ABILITY

LINKEDIN is a database or collection of personal job related data, displayed on individual webpages, each dedicated to a single person or company. Because all pages inside LINKEDIN are WEB pages, they lend themselves to the capability of being electronically searched. Too, each LINKEDIN profile page has two versions – one that is internal to LINKEDIN and one that is given to the search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.

If designed properly, you can be found by anyone in the world using Google, doing a search on your skills using what is called Keywords – how often and how quickly your info is presented in a search results from a search engine depends on other more technical aspect that work for both LINKEDIN and the search engines. But, at least having a LINKEDIN profile gets you in the game.

## 5. WHO ARE THE LOSERS? JOB BOARDS!

For finding that next position or looking for that first career step, LINKEDIN is now the place to be. The big job-boards like Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com, not to mention the scores of smaller sites, have lost as much as 70% market share to LINKEDIN in just the last few years. According to a 2011 article by Forbes ([LinkedIn is About to Put Job Boards \(and Resumes\) Out of Business, by Dan Schawbel](#)), *“Most companies hire based on referrals, and through their corporate websites, not job boards. They only use job boards in a last ditch effort to hire a candidate because the best people for the job are the one’s that aren’t looking (sometimes called ‘passive candidates’)”*.

I personally don’t agree that resumes are about to die out anytime soon – you’ll still need one when you get to that first (and many times, subsequent) interview. But the writing IS on the wall about how

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technology has changed the game and IS changing the game entirely. However, LINKEDIN has now become that all important “referral” system for accomplishing this, not to mention a new feature they’ve had for a while that allows companies to integrate their job listings directly into LINKEDIN.

## 6. SECURITY FROM THE MASSES

Unlike other truly SOCIAL network sites like FaceBook, LINKEDIN makes it more difficult to connect with just anyone you’d like. Because of its plan-level connectivity and rules about with whom you can and cannot immediately connect, HR departments and Head-Hunters (who purchase the more expensive plans) are able to find more QUALIFIED candidates by searching skill-sets (keywords) within LINKEDIN. And, because a LINKEDIN member connects to other BUSINESS related members, it’s more difficult to make it LOOK like you’re something you’re not.

Although there are ways to get connected to that SVP you’ve wanted to work for, the more proven approach is more like a Country Club or cocktail party. Since having a “referral” from someone who already works with or knows that SVP is more powerful than just listing skills and hoping that the HR person with that SVP’s company will find you, LINKEDIN works great for both sides of the fence. But, just like your current or last job, where you had to actually WORK at it, the same thing holds true about LINKEDIN – you have to WORK at it to make it pay off.

## 7. NETWORK – NETWORK – NETWORK

Since networking and referrals (although old approaches to business connections) are now the names of the new games, it suffices to say that you really can’t have one without the other. To be able to give and receive referrals, one must first have a network of people with whom they have worked or know each other well enough that they both feel comfortable referring or endorsing each other. LINKEDIN gives you the chance to build your net-work which in turn, builds your net-worth.

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But going back to the “Country Club” concept, many times you ARE who you’re SEEN WITH, and the more power-players you can be virtually “seen” with can help your quest to a different level or different position, or even different employer.

And don’t think that your networking stops with your job search. LINKEDIN is now being used more for job seeking and talent searching over the job boards, but that activity only constitutes about 35% of the total reason for what LINKEDIN is being used. The other 65% is used by businesses to actually do their daily business – seeking venture capital, channel partners, lateral ancillary agreements, all sorts of “business as usual”, but using LINKEDIN as the conduit. Your network of people can also help build your employer’s Brand.

## 8. YOUR PERSONAL URL

LINKEDIN creates what is known as a public or personal URL – a URL is merely a web-address for a page on the Internet – just like the URL for CNN is [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) and that hyperlink takes you to the main page (called the Home Page) of CNN, your public URL does the same – it takes those who click on your link to your public LINKEDIN page. Just like CNN would use their link to get people to go to their website, you TOO will use your LINKEDIN public profile URL to get people to see all about you. This URL can and should be added to business cards, resumes, websites, promotional collateral, letter-heads, email signatures, forums, blogs, FaceBook, Pinterest, Twitter posts, etc.

So, your PUBLIC profile on LINKEDIN is given a separate address than your internal profile page. They are, for the most part, identical pages with identical info, but those who may not have LINKEDIN memberships can find you through Google, Yahoo, etc. A critical feature like this is too important to have a really long, machine generated string of characters that other humans won’t remember, or you can’t fit on your business cards. And LINKEDIN generates that exact anomaly.

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Don't fret - you can change your public profile to be shorter and more meaningful. Try to incorporate your name, (without the additional garbage) that identifies you and maybe even your location (unless you plan to relocate).

## 9. BUT I DON'T LIKE PHOTOS OF ME

Hey – get over it. If you're so embarrassed as to how you look, how come you haven't been wearing a paper bag over your head every single day since Junior High? You ARE who you ARE, regardless of what you think about yourself and the way you look. Employers don't really care.

And, if it's any comfort, most people ARE self conscious about how they look. But would you rather have been born WITHOUT a face?

Resumes have traditionally been used without photos, but again, things have changed. When it comes to most social networks (and this happens to be a big one with LINKEDIN), those with no picture rarely get selected – FOR ANYTHING – regardless of their talents, skills, who they know, what they know, etc. Now – if you're so “celebrity” that you don't need a photo, I can understand. But, since I'm assuming (and I'm going out on a limb here) YOU'RE NOT A CELEBRITY – go get a photo for your profile. Heck – don't you know that every Hollywood celebrity would be disconcerted if they couldn't put their mug on something?

So, why are photos in LINKEDIN a must, but on resumes they're considered “no-nos”? For some time now, HR professionals have been limited by laws and corporate policy (based on the State or company for which they work) that a candidate must be chosen solely by their experience, without a beautiful “Glamour-Shot” enticing the talent pool choice and tipping the scales in their favor.

This may still hold true on that level or for those reasons, yet the hiring entity eventually has to see you once you're called in for an interview, which make the policies and laws a bit silly, in my opinion.

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But I'm not in an HR department. So, how do those people trying to play by the rules get around viewing a head-shot? There are settings in a LINKEDIN account which allow you to turn off all photos – so there!

However, put yourself in the position of the business colleague or contact who is trying to introduce you to that SVP of Sales you've wanted to meet. Now – ask yourself, would you feel comfortable contacting someone who doesn't even show enough self-confidence to post a picture of themselves? I certainly wouldn't – it shows lack of professionalism, character, leadership – all sorts of things.

It doesn't make for a very good first impression. Without a photo, think of what might be mentally asked: "From what or from whom are they hiding"? or, "Are they in a witness protection program"? or, "Running from back child support"? Hmm... questions start to arise!

And, **professionally** taken photos (usually by trained **professional** photographers in a **professional** photo studio with **professional** lighting and **professional** camera gear) will ALWAYS – ALWAYS do better for your business and career representation than a photo taken by your buddy on their iPhone at the bar last Friday night, or even someone who just happens to have an expensive camera – just because you PURCHASED a Boeing 777 doesn't mean you know how to fly it.

Too, a truly well taken photo is not just about the camera – there are both background and foreground issues, 3-point lighting techniques, angles, settings, shutter-speed options, F-Stop adjustments, focus, depth of field, and much more. Does the person taking that all important head-shot know about all those things? Any of those things? And, if so, can they do anything about it based on the equipment being used or their knowledge and experience?

Most "quick-shot" cameras and almost all cellphone cameras give you none of the advanced features found on professional cameras, despite

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the “hi-res” images you can take with these “low-pro” cameras. And, the attire you wear in that photo should reflect the business look and feel of your industry, the position you either currently have, or the position you’re wanting. This is not to say that if you’re in a Liberal Arts career, that you HAVE to wear a suit and tie. But, I would suggest wearing something that represents you, one-level higher than you’re currently in – whatever that is.

But if, right now, you’re in or wish to enter a corporate environment, make that head-shot look as if you just came out of board meeting – try to look, well ..., uh ..., AS “CORPORATE” AS POSSIBLE.

The dimensions of your studio photo will usually be in what is called “portrait orientation” - something that would fit a 4” x 5”, or an 8” x 10” frame, meaning it will be taller than wider. LINKEDIN profile photos, however, fit a square dimension (meaning the width and height are the same) and must be between 200 pixels square to 500 pixels square. The two preferred file formats are “.jpg” and “.png”, and the file size itself is limited to no larger than 4 Mgs.

**Tip #1** – although LINKEDIN allows “.gif” file format, **DON’T USE ONE** – they are limited to only 256 colors and look like drawings instead of photos – both “.jpg” and “.png” formats carry almost 17 million colors and look like clear, high-res photos instead of cartoons.

**Tip#2** – don’t EVER, **EVER** stretch a photo to meet the 200 or 500 pixel size – stretching a photo makes it “pixelize”, which makes it blurry. Going from larger to smaller DOES however work without degrading the quality of the photo. But you must use some type of graphics or photo editing software to pull off proper sizing. And, you don’t need expensive programs like PhotoShop to do this – an inexpensive or free software application or website will do fine.

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Too, I recommend using the maximum physical size - a 500 pixel square “.jpg” photo file with the majority of the frame occupied by your face (we don’t need to see much of your body – maybe only from top-bust to the top of the head), with good color contrast, clear focus, a simple background, good 3-point lighting, and high resolution.

LINKEDIN **DOES** have a built-in cropping feature as you upload your photo, or you can use inexpensive picture editing software to crop the photo to a square. But making sure it looks professional is the most important key – there are not enough “PhotoShop” techniques or features to doctor a poorly taken photo by an inexperienced photographer, inexpensive or lack of professional equipment, bad lighting, poor technique, etc.

**WORD TO THE WISE:** many portrait studios like Sears, Target, JC Penney, and many individual photographers make their money selling you the prints, so they don’t license the photo to you – they own the license. This means if you scan one of their prints and upload it to a website, or use it in promo material, or even make your own prints, you’re in violation of the **US FEDERAL Copyright Laws**, and CAN get sued for doing so. So, how can you get around the legal issues with that portrait?

Many retailers, like JC Penney and Target Photo Studios, have recently started offering licensed photo packages, designed for social media head-shots, and more specifically for LinkedIn Business Head-Shots. Not only are they inexpensive, good quality, and fast (you walk out the door with a disc right after you take the picture), but they also allow you to keep the licensing yourself – make sure that the package you get from ANY photo studio or pro photographer comes with the copyright license allowing you to do with that photo as you wish.

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## 10. TECHNO – SAVVY: YOU? “MAYBE” / HR PEOPLE? “FOR SURE”!

Using LINKEDIN shows you understand something about technology – it shows you’re keeping up with what the new tools are – it demonstrates you understand the value of the new technology and aren’t afraid to use it. Too many “Baby-Boomers” haven’t been keeping up with the times, or making sure their children are in the technology loop.

And now, due in part by the Social Security benefits debacle, the misuse of power by the banks, the con-artists on Wall Street, and a failed economy, many of the “boomers”, who are 50+, are being forced to think about going back to work after retirement, or waking to the grim reality that they’ll never even get to retire at all. Technology is one HUGE hurdle, especially if they haven’t been keeping up.

Most companies, whether they’re behind in technology or on the bleeding edge, all know that to survive, even in the next few years, they MUST embrace the technology or realize their extinction if they DON’T.

By using the tools of the Internet and LINKEDIN, not only do YOU show that you’re not ready for extinction, but are wanting to progress along with everyone else, regardless of age. LINKEDIN may not last forever, but they ARE the “big-fish” for the moment, (now being used by most if not all HR professionals and Head-Hunters), and they won’t be going away anytime soon. And, if (correction) WHEN the next big thing comes along and knocks LINKEDIN out of the water – guess what? It will be a new technology. The question will be, “are you going to be ready”?

So, do yourself a favor – look at this whole thing from the HR side of things – if you had a tool like LINKEDIN, wouldn’t you use it extensively to find that talent to fill the positions you need? Wouldn’t you rather do complex, “fine-tuned” searches via the Internet, which only take a few seconds to pull hundreds of qualified candidates with their own referrals who can vouch for their work ethics, leadership abilities, management skills, creativity, and loyalty, or would you instead rather sift through a

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pill of paper or PDF resumes, and just trust that what is in them is true? Tough call? Not really.

Too, there are other, less obvious reasons to court LINKEDIN's system that have nothing to do with job-seeking or career building. Just within the last few years, sales professionals, marketing departments, finance aficionados, capital venture professionals, vendors, partners, ... you name it – they're ALL clamoring to be a part of one of the biggest BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY networks in the history of the human race – LINKEDIN. It has become blatant that LINKEDIN is not just about job searches or career networking – it's about business – and every facet.

Now - think about this - as of just January 2013, the number of Fortune 500 CEOs on LinkedIn is more than those on FaceBook and Twitter combined, the growth of LINKEDIN world-wide has grown as much 111% in some countries, more than 60% of all LINKEDIN members are managers, directors, owners and C-Level executives, current membership has surpassed 200 million, their stock-price in just one year (from 2012 to 2013) alone grew over 65%, their growth is and has been exponential. Shouldn't that be your wake-up call right there?

The game has changed and you have the choice of playing or not. Just like a resume, it is now becoming a necessity. So you can hide from LINKEDIN, just like you can hide from the Internet, hide from owning a cellphone, never use normal means of transportation, live without any indoor plumbing, only use phone booths (good luck finding one), etc.

If this sounds like you, this would dictate that you would rather choose to live in a world of buggy whips, 8-track cartridges, CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) TVs, FAX machines (Oh – you didn't know they too were obsolete?), and the Pony Express. And if this IS you, I have some bad news - Euell Gibbons (along with that old technology) died back in '75 and won't be able to help you pick berries for your lunch.

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Hey – it's your call (just spend your 25¢ to 50¢ wisely).



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