

Ten Ways To Use LinkedIn In Your Job Search

LinkedIn is an insanely useful tool for every working person, not to mention every job-seeker and student. The only unfortunate thing about LinkedIn as a job search tool is that most of what's powerful about LinkedIn as a job-search tool is not obvious to the casual LinkedIn user.

If the only thing you're doing on LinkedIn is updating your profile every now and then and waiting for the headhunters and recruiting managers to reach out, you're missing the boat.

LinkedIn is a massive database, and within its gazillions of records are critical elements in your job-search plan and strategy. Let's say that you heard about a growing company in your city and wondered whether they might need someone like you.

Before LinkedIn, you would have had to call or write to the company, search your contacts to see if any of your friends might know someone who works there, or call the front desk and ask for HR. Those are all slow, cumbersome and less-than-highly-effective research methods.



Your LinkedIn membership eliminates the need for that kind of tedious legwork. Let's call our imaginary company Angry Chocolates. You're a Marketing guy, Manager level, and you're curious whether Angry Chocolates might be able to use a guy like you. You hop on LinkedIn and conduct a search on Angry Chocolates to see how folks in your network are connected to the company. Hurrah!

You don't know anybody who actually works there, but one of your first-degree contacts did a consulting project for Angry Chocolates and another two first-degree homies have friends who work there. You're already way ahead of the networking-into-your-next-job game!

Now you check out the Angry Chocolates leadership team via their own LinkedIn profiles. What do you find? One of them went to your undergraduate alma mater. That means that the Alumni



Office can put you in touch with him, if you didn't feel comfortable reaching out yourself. (And why shouldn't you? Alumni connections are one of the pillars of networking.) One of the executives at Angry is on the Board of Directors of a not-for-profit where your fiancée's mom is a staff member.

Do you remember those see-through models of people, about a foot high, made of plastic parts that fit together and come apart to show kids how the human skeleton fits into the nervous system and the organs? LinkedIn makes your network visible the same way those anatomic models make human anatomy visible.

Using LinkedIn, you can see who your friends know, where people have been and what they're interested in, what people are talking about and who's gone from Company to Company B. If you're paying attention, LinkedIn can absorb at least thirty percent of your job-search-related research load. LinkedIn can save you hours that you used to have to spend at the library or on some corporate database, researching who's who and who's where. It's a new day! LinkedIn is a job-seeker's best friend.

Here are ten ways to use LinkedIn in your job search:

Make Your Headline Count

Your LinkedIn headline (just below your name) is your online brand, because your name and your headline are the only things a LinkedIn user will see when s/he conducts a search on the LinkedIn database and your profile comes up as one of the search returns. Your headline, your name and your profile photo are the only cues that user will get before deciding whether or not to click through your headline to your full profile. Make your headline count!

"Marketer seeking next opportunity" is weak, but "Consumer Products Marketer Looking for Small Brand to Make Big" tells your next boss what you plan to deliver.

Job-Hunting, or Just Eyes-Open?

If your job search is out of the closet, go ahead and say so in your LinkedIn headline. "Office Manager/Business Air-Traffic Controller Looking for Overstressed CEO to Make Sane" was a winning LinkedIn headline for a client of ours for about two weeks. That's how long her headline (making clear her job-hunting status) was posted on LinkedIn before she got scooped up by one of those CEOs in need of a capable administrator.



What corporate recruiter *wouldn't* call an Office Manager like that, seeing as the recruiter's biggest headache at that moment was an overstressed CEO desperately seeking sanity?

If your job search is under the radar, you can't use your headline to signal to recruiters "Call me!" but you can still make sure that your headline (and your entire LinkedIn profile) are pithy, full of stories and as human as you are in real life.

Follow Your Target Companies

If you've got specific companies on your target list — and I highly recommend that you create a list like that, if you don't have one now — you can follow them on LinkedIn via their Company pages. That way, you'll hear about anything new they've got cooking, from a new branch office opening to a new product release. Company news is exactly the kind of thing you can mention in a [Pain Letter](#) you're writing to reach your target hiring manager. Why not follow a handful of your favorite companies right now?

Broaden Your Network

The bigger your first-degree network on LinkedIn, of course, the bigger your entire network will be. One new first-degree contact with 100 connections of her own can expand your first-second-and-third-degree network by tens of thousands of people. That's good at any point, but especially in a job search where you're looking for as much visibility into your professional ecosystem as you can get.

If you haven't been meticulous about inviting new networking contacts and old colleagues to join your LinkedIn network, get caught up now! LinkedIn makes it easy. You can download your address books from Gmail or any webmail application and your Outlook contacts too, and invite any of them you like to join your posse.

You can use the Colleagues feature to reconnect with people you used to work with, even if you don't have their current email addresses. Don't misuse this feature though, or LinkedIn might suspend your invitation privileges!

Get That Intro!

If your first-degree connection knows someone you'd like to talk to — say, your prospective next boss at Angry Chocolates — you can ask your first-degree buddy to make an introduction for



you. Just browse to your target person's LinkedIn profile, look for the blue link that says "Send a Message" and click on the arrow on the right of the link to see a pull-down menu that will include the words "Get an Introduction" if you and your target person have someone you know in common.

Find Your Hiring Manager

If you want to avoid the Black Hole of Death recruiting portals, you've got to know who your hiring manager is in any organization you're targeting. It's easy to find your hiring manager in all but the most enormous and bureaucratic organizations, where half the people walking around are called Program Manager, Project Manager or Director of Special Projects.

To find your hiring manager on LinkedIn, just use the Advanced People Search feature (click on the word Advanced next to the search bar at the top of the page) with your target company name filled in and the most likely title for your hiring manager as a second search term.

If you're a Marketing person, your hiring manager could be Angry Chocolates' Marketing Director or Marketing VP, for instance. Once you've got your hiring manager's name, you can send him or her a paper Pain Letter via snail mail with your [Human-Voiced Resume](#) and avoid the Black Hole part of the process altogether!

Get the 411 On Your Next Boss

Once you've found your target hiring manager, of course, you're going to do more than just add your future boss's name to your Pain Letter envelope. You're going to learn who this person is, what s/he cares about and what he or she may be up against on the job. The more you know about your hiring manager's situation at work, the better for your pitch! Read his or her profile, check out the Groups your hiring manager belongs to and see which Influencers s/he follows.

Read some of those Influencers' posts to see which topics and perspectives make your hiring manager's heart beat faster. When you're the customer, don't you appreciate a salesperson who has done his or her research? Your hiring manager is no different!

Your Network Is A Fount of Wisdom

Go back to the Advanced Search page and conduct a search using just your target company's name (Angry Chocolates, e.g.) as a search term. Who in your network is connected to that company, and how? Those folks can do more than just make introductions. They can tell you



what they know about Angry Chocolates, who they know there, and what they've heard about the firm.

Remember that a job search is not just about being noticed and making connections. It's also about learning enough to decide whether a firm — Angry Chocolates, for instance — can use your talents and grow your flame, and whether it's worth your time to pursue opportunities there.

Burnish Your Flame

If your profile is just a boring chronology of the jobs you've held, you're missing out on the branding power of a well-written LinkedIn profile. Add some elements to give your profile spice and substance, like your best-ever PowerPoint presentation or a video of you speaking to a group. Use the Status Update feature to share anything you write, any event you're attending that others might be interested in and anything else that will add value for your LinkedIn connections. Hey, that's what community is for, right?

Stay In It!

A white-collar job seeker can swap out hours of time poring over delusional job ads and replace them with pertinent, professional overtures to hiring managers facing [Business Pain](#) that only someone with your experience can relieve. LinkedIn will help you do that, but only if you use the site as an active participant, not a passive flower on the wall. Step in and step up to your next opportunity!

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