LINKEDIN TRILOGY: Part 3. Top 20 Sources for Connections and How to Add Recommendations

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Introduction

This article makes this collection a "Trilogy"; otherwise, it would only be a pas de deux. As the LinkedIn finale, this piece of the profile puzzle will cover the remaining critical information you must complete before your profile is fully functional and you get a 100% passing grade from LinkedIn.

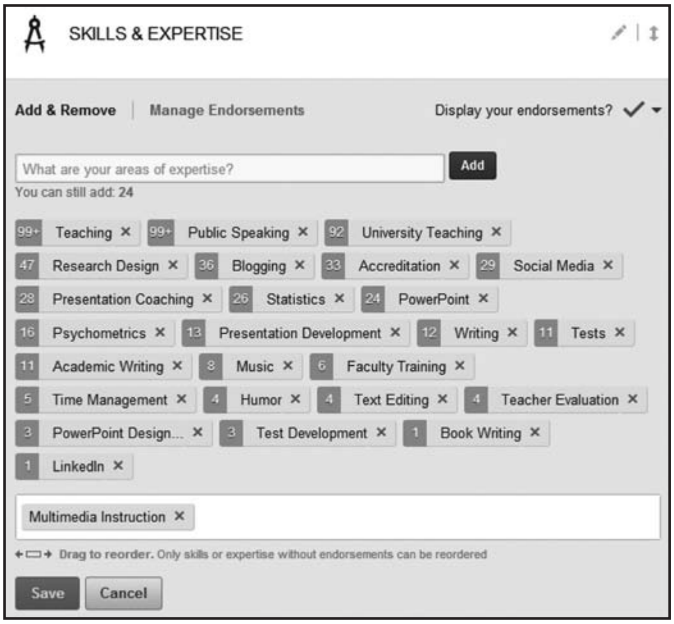
Following the seven sections described in Part 2 (Berk, 2013), this part will present the details for the remaining eight sections: (8) Skills & Expertise with Endorsements, (9) Honors & Awards, (10) Organizations, (11) Optional Sections, such as Publications, Projects, Certifications, Language, and Patents, (12) Recommendations, (13) Connections, (14) Additional Info, such as Interests, Personal Details, and Advice for Contacting, and (15) Groups. Posting profile information in all 15 sections is *free* as well every use described in Part 1. Make sure you're in *"Edit Profile" mode* as we hop along through these sections.

The Rest of the Profile Story

8. Skills & Expertise with Endorsements

Consistent with all of the previous sections, "Add" skills and expertise that comprehensively define all that you do and can offer your clients. Where do you begin to identify those skills? Here are a few suggestions.

Four criteria for skill selection. There are four criteria that should be met for your skill selection: (1) reflect your "academic" brand and image, (2) amplify upon your areas of expertise in the "Summary" and "Specialties," (3) consider whether your colleagues will endorse them, and (4) be listed in the dropdown after you type each skill in the "Add" box (see screenshots). The keywords in the dropdown may be detected in LinkedIn searches. (*REMEMBER:* LinkedIn requires at least 3 skills for 100% profile completion.)



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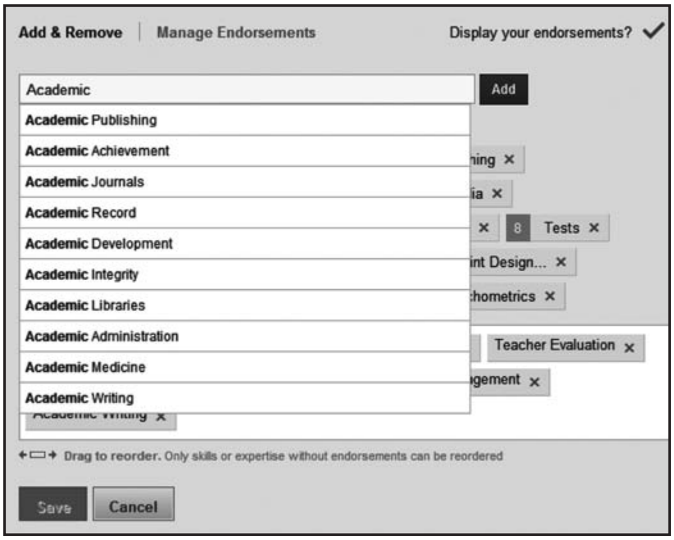
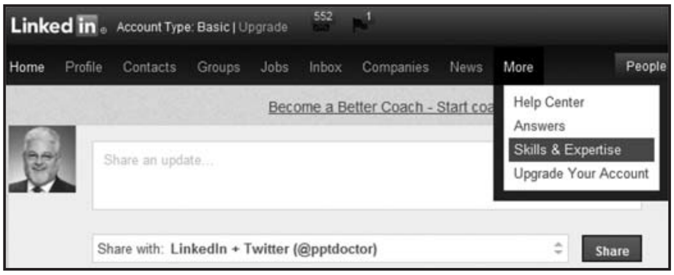
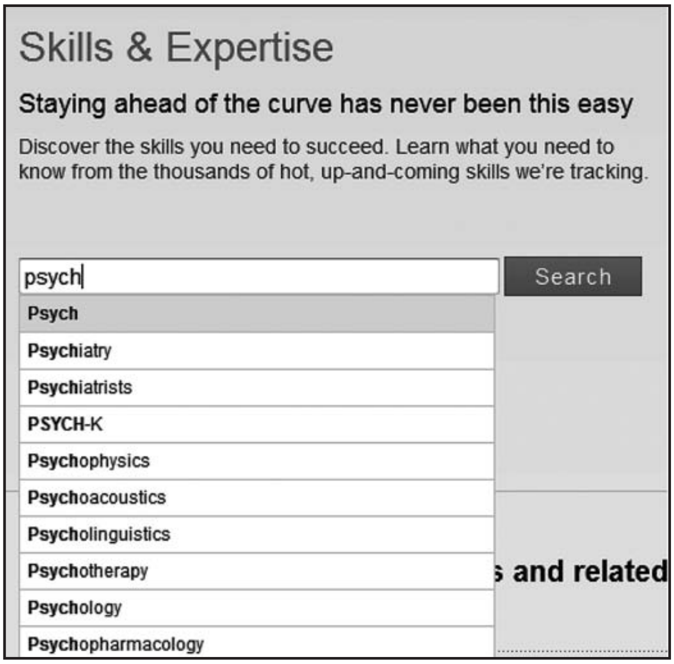


For each skill, you can also locate professionals with that skill and lots of other information. Go to top far right of the menu and place curser over "More," then left click "Skills & Expertise."



Type a skill in the Search box with the dropdown.

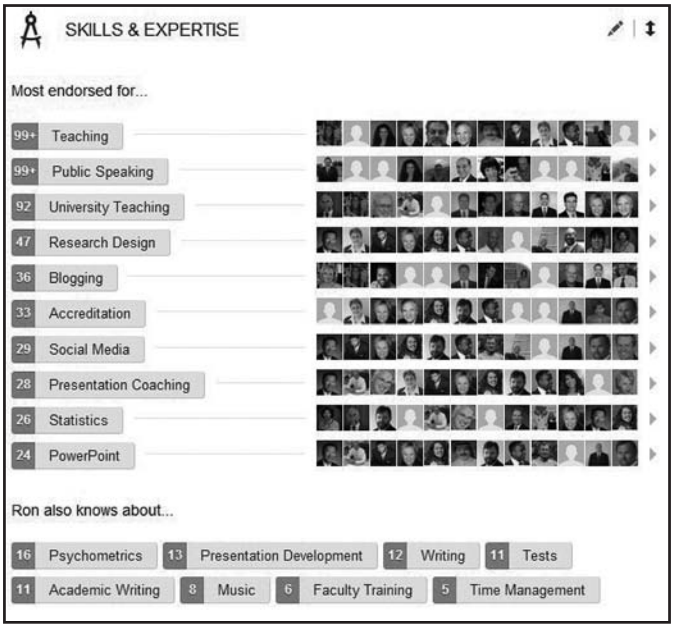


View all of the information on that skill. In the screenshot on "psychometrics, you can find a definition, growth of the profession, professionals with that skill, LinkedIn groups associated with that skill, and related skills and companies. Where else can you find that information on any skill in a nanosecond for free?

Endorsements. Once you've listed your skills, you now can enter the "endorsement" derby. This is different from the "Recommendations," which will be described in section 13. Endorsements by your connections (1) affirm your expertise, (2) improve your branding and image, and (3) provide feedback on what your peers perceive as your most highly valued skills (Schaffer, 2013).

Your connections' endorsements of your skills and your endorsements of theirs automatically increase your communication and engagement with each other. As colleagues, it gives you pause to consider their primary areas of expertise. More important, colleagues, prospects, and recruiters will compare your endorsements to your peers or competitors. Take them seriously. It is likely that both your skills and endorsements will eventually become part of LinkedIn's top secret search algorithm.

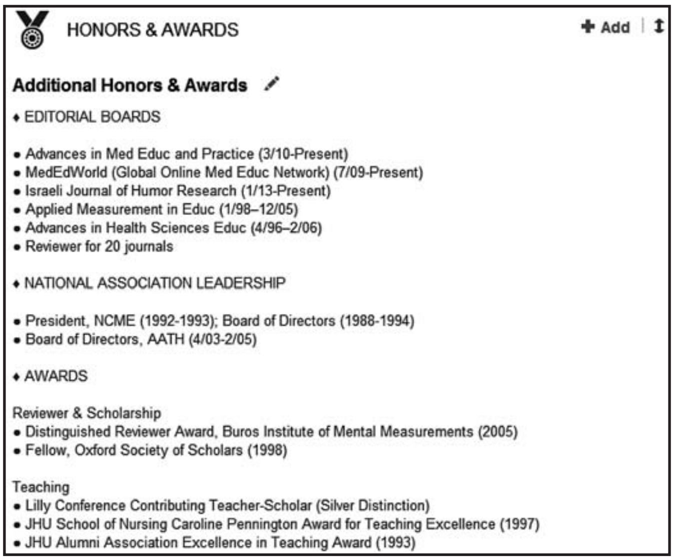
You can pick a maximum of 50 skills, but *only the top 10 with the most endorsements will be highlighted* with the photos of the endorsers (see display of endorsements in screenshot). Once you receive 100 endorsements or more for a skill, 99+ will appear in the left column.



Response to endorsements. When you receive one or more endorsements, it is appropriate to thank the endorser, return the favor, and/or write a recommendation. Although your expectation of reciprocal endorsements (Berkowitz, 2013) may be construed as "back-scratching" or "buddy" rating bias (Berk, 2010), it is still a common practice.

9. Honors & Awards

A long laundry list of awards takes time to read. *Create categories for this section so the awards jump off the screen.* Pick headings appropriate to your achievements, such as Editorial Boards, National and International Association Leadership, National and International Association Awards, and University Awards. This is the place for your Nobel, Pulitzer, Grammy, Tony, Oscar, Kennedy Center Honors, and other awards.

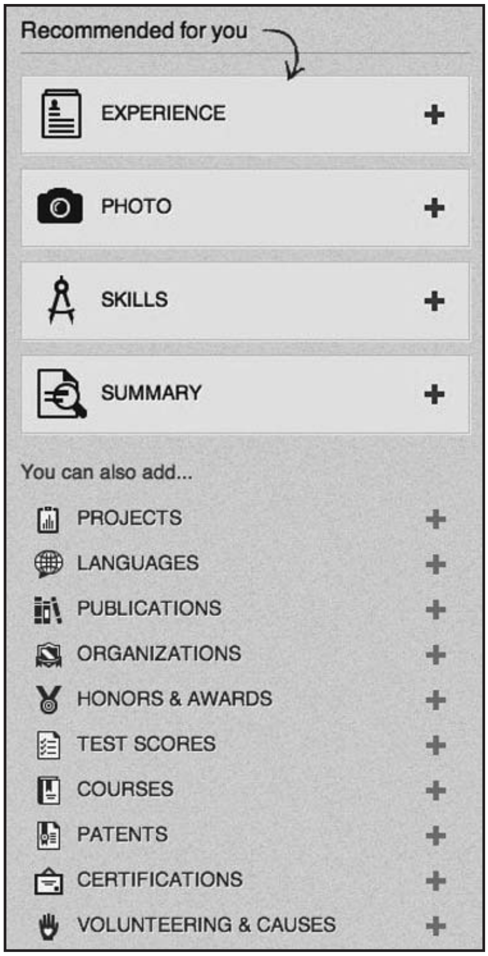


10. Organizations

List professional associations related to your skills and expertise described in previous sections. DO NOT use abbreviations or acronyms only. Not everyone will know what they mean. International, national, regional, and local organizations and groups can also be added here. LinkedIn groups with logos will appear in a separate section.

11. Optional Sections

Beyond the standard sections of the profile, there are several optional ones which can be added anywhere. They are listed in the right margin on top (make sure you're in "Edit Profile" mode). There are also a few that were "standard" sections in the pre-2013 profile format. There are particular categories that fit the credentials of many academicians: publications, projects, certifications, patents, and languages. Others are appropriate for students, such as test scores and courses, unless you aced your admissions, certification, or licensing exam.



Remember the "drag and drop" (D & D) arrow in the right corner of each section? No? Go back to section 5, Part 2. Now might be the time to consider the order of your sections. A few of the optional sections are described next.

Publications. This has to be one of the most important sections for professors. On my profile, it appears near the top, even before Experience and Education. *Nothing says credibility and expertise like books and articles in peer-viewed, quality publications.* .

When you add each publication, make sure to include a URL link so the viewer can immediately download the article or order the book. This click-through sends the viewer directly to your website (personal, publisher, business, or university), which can *automatically increase traffic to your website*. That traffic improves your positioning in the search engines.

Just left click the publication title and "Whal-lah!": Your viewer has immediate access to the publication and doesn't have to leave your profile. *The profile should be one-stop shopping for you.* Don't send them away to your website unless there's a specific reason, such as viewing your portfolio, registering for your webinar, or purchasing your books and videos.

When there is a URL link, an arrow appears at the end of the title. Unfortunately, many of your viewers may not know there's a link and they should click the title. Under my LinkedIn announcement at the top, I give instructions in parentheses to do just that (see screenshot).

I recommend picking a few of your most recent and salient publications related to your research or expertise, maybe five to ten articles. You can update your publications anytime a new one hits the streets and reorder the titles with, you guessed it: the D & D arrow on the far right.

PUBLICATIONS ✚ Add

★TOP 1% OF MOST VIEWED LINKEDIN PROFILES FOR 2012!★
(click on titles below to download PDFs)

LINKEDIN TRILOGY: Part 1. Top 10 reasons you should NOT join LinkedIn professional network!
Journal of Faculty Development, 27(2), 1-5.
2013

LINKEDIN TRILOGY: Part 2. Creating an eye-popping profile to be found and network with LinkedIn optimization
Journal of Faculty Development, 27(3), 1-8.
2013

LINKEDIN TRILOGY: Part 3. Top 20 sources for connections and how to add recommendations
Journal of Faculty Development, 28(1), Coming in April 2013.

Face-to-face vs. online course evaluations: A consumer's guide to seven strategies.
(MERLOT) Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 9(1). Coming soon.
2013

Should global items on student rating scales be used for summative decisions?

Since LinkedIn doesn't permit APA format for journal articles, enter "Title," and in the "Publications" slot, type the *journal name, volume, number, and page numbers* in APA format (see previous screenshot). Under "Publication Date," pick the *year* from the dropdown. Now you have a LinkedIn version of APA for each publication.

A "Description" may be too unwieldy when you list five articles, but you can write a brief one for each publication if the title isn't adequate. I definitely recommend a *description for each book title* (see screenshot below). (*OPTION:* The URL for each book can link to your website, publisher's website, vitae, Amazon, or other source with all of your publications.)

TOP 10 FLASHPOINTS IN STUDENT RATINGS AND THE EVALUATION OF TEACHING
Stylus Publishing
March 2013

★ATTENTION: ALL FACULTY & ADMINISTRATORS★
This book is written expressly for YOU. It is designed to solve YOUR problems in how to evaluate teaching. Here is a sampling of flashpoint topics and solutions this book offers:

• Limitations of student rating scales. SOLUTION: 14 other measures matched to formative and summative decisions
• Conversion to online administration. SOLUTION:... **more**

Projects. Major teaching, research, clinical, or community projects on which you are currently working should be listed and described in this section. If there are reports available, furnish links to access those reports. Also, supply any other pertinent information that may be of interest. The links should send the viewer to your website or the university's.

PROJECTS ✚ Add

★2013 SPEAKING BROCHURE★ FOR KEYNOTE/WORKSHOP TOPICS (click each title to view)

★2012 KEYNOTE ADDRESS★ on "EVALUATION OF TEACHING" in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
March 2012

As a speaker, what could possibly be more important than publications? Answer: the Nobel Prize in chemistry. Unfortunately, I was passed over again. An alternative answer is: a speaking brochure with testimonials and a video of one of my international keynotes. They showcase what I do and how I do it. I used the "Projects" section to display them prominently. They tell a story by themselves. The URL link to a YouTube clip provides my keynote in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (*NOTE:* This keynote can also be displayed with a link at the bottom of the "Background" section [see Berk, 2013].)

I dragged and dropped the "Projects" section to the top of my profile just under the "Background." The brochure was also dragged to the top of the section. This is critical information for a meeting planner, conference organizer, or director of faculty development. It's upfront and highlighted ahead of details on "Experience," "Education," etc. *What is the most important information that you need to D & D* (with the arrow in the right corner) *to the top of your profile?*

Certifications. If you specialize in medicine, nursing, clinical psychology, allied health fields, accounting, auto mechanics, insurance sales, cosmetology, taxidermy, espionage, or other professions requiring professional certifications and licenses, this is the category for you. Include the "perfect" score on the exam, if appropriate. Not everyone has these credentials. This is another category that can distinguish you from others in your field.

Patents. If you possess patents for particular inventions, list them in this section. For example, after someone invented a better mousetrap, if you invented a better mouse, this is the place to mention the patent on that mouse. The patents should be relevant to your areas of expertise and rodents.

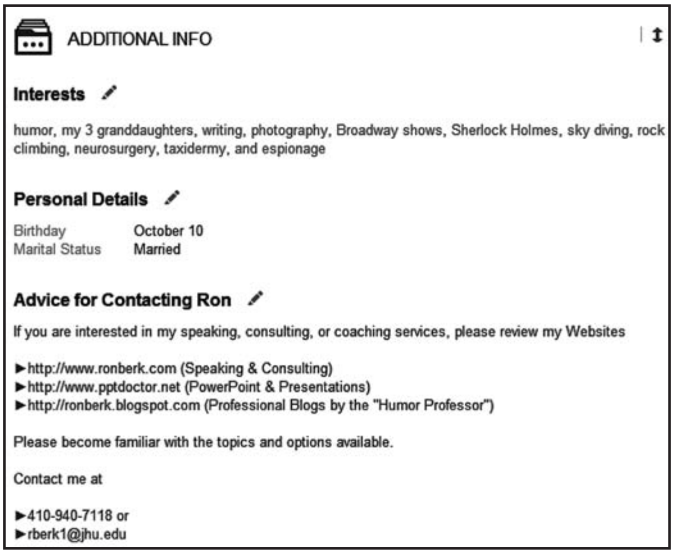
Languages. If you are fluent in several languages, identify them and your levels of proficiency. You never know when they could come in handy and give you the edge.

12. Additional Info

Interests. List your professional and personal interests and hobbies which you may share with other connections. Do you do anything but work? This could be a key area of connection with others. I also added a few humorous hobbies at the end (see screenshot).

Personal Details. As a professional network, the information in this section may be viewed as inappropriate. You decide whether you want to select "Birthday" and "Marital Status" from the dropdowns.

*Advice for Contacting Ron***.** Specify exactly how to contact you through your website(s) and email. Make it as simple and easy as possible.


ADDITIONAL INFO

Interests

humor, my 3 granddaughters, writing, photography, Broadway shows, Sherlock Holmes, sky diving, rock climbing, neurosurgery, taxidermy, and espionage

Personal Details

Birthday October 10
Marital Status Married

Advice for Contacting Ron

If you are interested in my speaking, consulting, or coaching services, please review my Websites

►http://www.ronberk.com (Speaking & Consulting)
►http://www.pptdoctor.net (PowerPoint & Presentations)
►http://ronberk.blogspot.com (Professional Blogs by the "Humor Professor")

Please become familiar with the topics and options available.

Contact me at

►410-940-7118 or
►rberk1@jhu.edu

13. Recommendations

Someone once said, *"What you say about yourself* [in the "Summary" section of LinkedIn] *is nowhere nearly as credible as what someone else says about you* [in a LinkedIn "Recommendation"]. The words of a client who hired you can provide a first-hand testimonial of your expertise, your impact, and the experience of working with you, if he or she doesn't lie. The power of that testimonial in a well-written short paragraph recommendation can do more to persuade a customer to hire you than just about anything else, including your gazillion endorsements. That's the value and importance of "Recommendations" on LinkedIn and testimonials on your business website. (*NOTE:* LinkedIn no longer requires at least three recommendations before it considers your profile to be 100% complete.)

Definition. LinkedIn's notion of "recommendation" is more akin to what is known as a "testimonial" in the business community, not what we know as a recommendation, such as a letter of support for promotion. It can range from one or two sentences to a long paragraph. Your clients are the most credible authorities to document your dazzling performance. Here the emphasis is on the *specific performance or impact at one time or collectively over multiple experiences*, such as in a series of workshops.

Who should write it? A colleague or administrator in your department, the person who hired you to consult or speak, or a professor, staff member, or student who was on the receiving end of your services would be the most appropriate choice. It should be a *professional who is in the best position to describe what you do, how you do it, and the value and impact of your contributions*. The last-named element is extremely important. Does your work produce any visible results, change, or impact? Did the benefits you promised actually result in the short- or long-term? (*NOTE:* The person writing the recommendation MUST be a 1st degree connection in your network; otherwise, it cannot be posted.)

When you consult, speak, or coach, specify a requirement in your contract that, if the event is successful, the *client will prepare two or three comments about the experience within a couple of weeks*. This is standard operating procedure to assure you will receive some type of recommendation.

*Preliminary request for solicited recommendation***.** Here are steps I suggest for you to solicit a recommendation in the academic arena:

a. Immediately following your workshop, consult, speaking event, or other activity, *email your primary contact* (director, chair, meeting planner, etc.) *a request to draft a recommendation*. It can take the following form:
"Please write 2–3 comments on the value and impact of my consulting on your employees or project plans (or presentation to your faculty or coaching experience).

There are recommendations on my profile (or website) that may help you compose one."

If he or she requests that you send him or her a draft recommendation, do it.

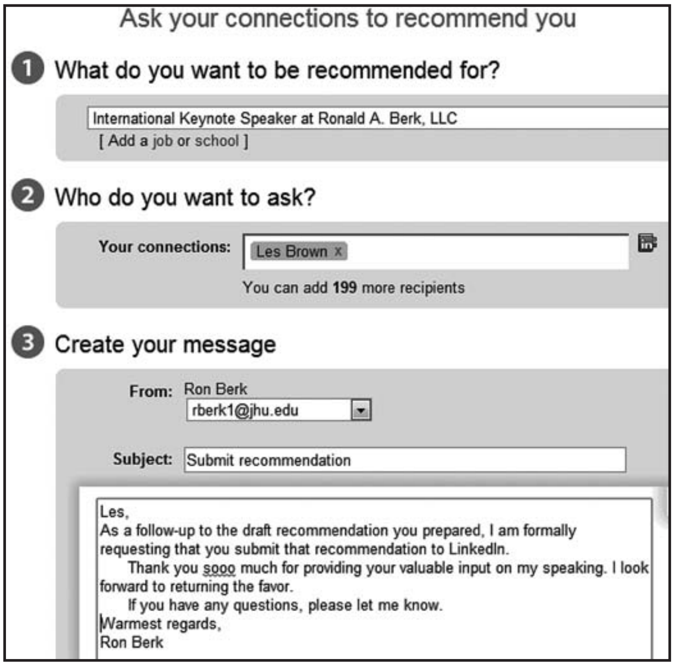
b. *Edit the draft and send it back and forth until you both approve the recommendation*. Make sure it is generic and doesn't contain acronyms or abbreviations so it will be understandable to any viewer and stand the test of time once it's posted on your profile.

c. *What if you get a milquetoast recommendation*? Sometimes you will get a less than enthusiastic, mind-blowing, show-stopping recommendation from a colleague who will not change anything. Professors and directors can be tough and may not fully understand the intended spirit of a testimonial. Hyperbole and lying are usually involved. Even your groveling may not work.

What do you do? Proceed with the rest of the process, be grateful and appreciative, and, when you finally approve the recommendation, you can decide whether to post it on your profile. If it doesn't highlight what you do best, hide it. Then you can put out a contract on milquetoastboy or girl.

Alternative unsolicited recommendation source. Instead of you requesting a recommendation from scratch, one or more may simply be dumped right in your laptop. After the event, you may receive unsolicited emails or texts from faculty, students, and others who attended your session with glowing comments about how much they enjoyed it and found the content useful in their work. Those are recommendations waiting to happen! *Take the phrases and sentences from their correspondence and transform them into viable LinkedIn recommendations*. Then send them back for changes or approval. This makes recommendations easy for those sources. They are usually heartfelt, very effective recommendations.

*Formal LinkedIn request***.** At the top of your LinkedIn profile, under "Profile," left click "Recommendations," then click "Ask for recommendations."

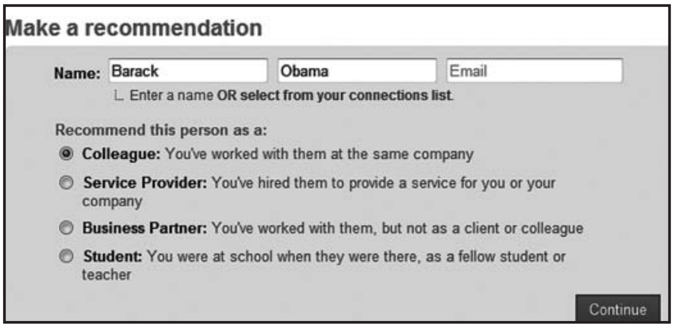


a. For 1, click "Choose" on the box, and a dropdown will appear with all of your job and student positions. *Click the title* to which the recommendation will apply, if you have more than one.
b. For 2, type the name of the person writing the recommendation or *click "IN"* and pick the person from your list of connections. (*REMEMBER:* He or she must be a 1st degree connection, not just on LinkedIn.) If you're tempted to send the request to 50 colleagues in your network, hoping to get a few responses, DO NOT do it. This should be a personal request.
c. For 3, *personalize your message,* as in the screenshot.
d. Click "Send."

*Response to request***.** Your colleague, client, student, etc. will receive the request and copy and paste the recommendation you both approved into the box provided. You will receive the recommendation by email from LinkedIn and be given a chance to revise or approve, then post on your profile.

Unsolicited recommendation. You can also send a recommendation to anyone in your network without a formal request. What a great way to build relationships with colleagues whom you respect. Do not recommend dirtbags. This recommendation should be sent without any expectation of a reciprocal recommendation.

At the top of your LinkedIn profile, under "Profile," left click "Recommendations," then click "Received." Scroll down to the bottom of the page and you will see a box "Make a Recommendation" (see screenshot). Just follow the directions.



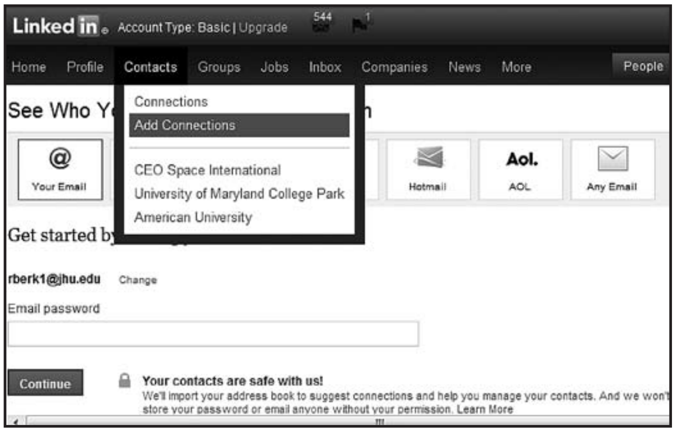
Computer-generated recommendations. Can you believe it? Using the "Endorser" (http://endorser.org), instead of the "Enforcer," you can request a recommendation for a colleague. It saves writing your own if you can't think of anything positive to say, although it's hard to imagine a professor with a loss of words. With minimal information you supply, Endorser produces a recommendation. However, Serdula (2011b) recommended that you use the ideas in the recommendation as a starting point to write your own rather than the actual computer version.

14. Connections

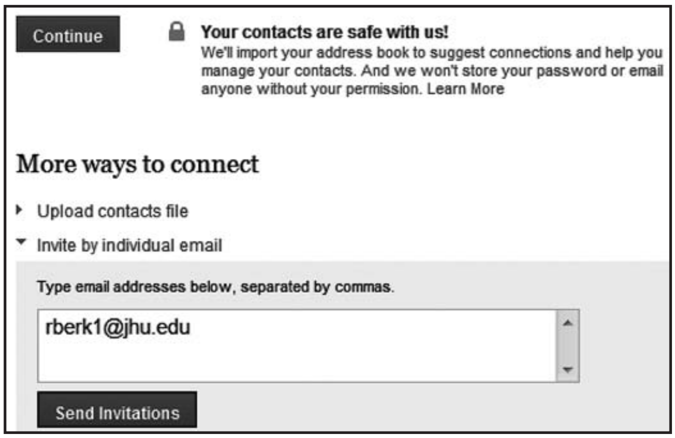
Degrees of separation. Based on the concepts of *six degrees of separation* (Karinthy, 1929**)** and networking (Vermeiren, 2008)**,** LinkedIn operates on the number of steps or distance you are from the person with whom you wish to connect. The site uses three degrees of contact. To the right of each person's name is a rank, which indicates his or her degree:

a. *1st degree:* When you connect with someone on LinkedIn, he or she becomes a 1st degree connection in your network.
b. *2nd degree:* These are people with whom you are allowed to connect based on LinkedIn's "top secret" algorithm, which my LinkedIn snitch says is based on your mutual connections and possibly other factors you have in common, such as current connections, group membership, interests, schools you've attended, institutions where you have worked, prisons where you've been incarcerated, etc. These other factors have not been verified. That's the problem with "secrets." The 2nd degree connections should be people you "know and trust." When a 2nd degree contact accepts your invitation to join your network, he or she is promoted to 1st degree.
c. *3rd degree:* These are more distant connections in places like Madagascar who usually require an email address before you can send invitations. (*SECRET:* Is anybody looking? If you want to connect with a colleague at this degree, check to see if he or she is in one of your groups [Click "Members" on the group site]. You can send an invitation to connect with anyone in your groups. [Please don't tell anybody about this secret. My snitch could be hurt].)

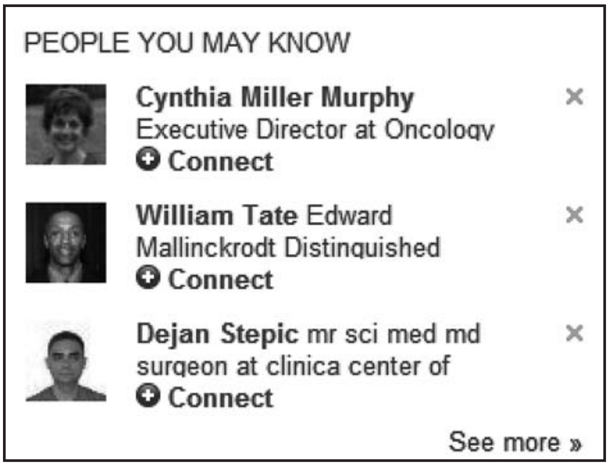
How do you add connections? Electronically, there are four basic strategies. All four are described, although only one requiring a *personal message* is recommended:



a. *Impersonal emails* (Not Recommended). On your profile page, under "Contacts" at top, click "Add Connections." Click the far right box titled "Any Email." At the bottom left, left click "Invite by individual email" (see next screenshot). A box below will appear where you can simply add emails of prospective connections. *All you need to invite someone to join your network is his or her email.* That's it. Type 1 or 50 at a time in the box. Then click "Send Invitations." This is the *easiest impersonal way to invite people who are not members* of LinkedIn or you're not sure whether they are. These invites will compel them to join, or not.

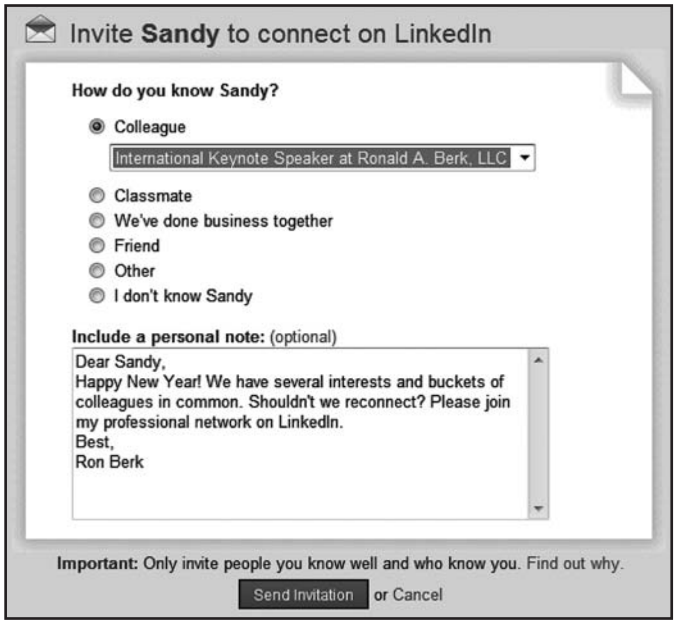


b. *Impersonal connect* (Not Recommended). The "People You May Know" box (upper right corner of your profile and LinkedIn Home page) suggests *three people with whom you can connect quickly and impersonally who* *are already members of LinkedIn*. Left click "See More" at the bottom of the box (see screenshot below).

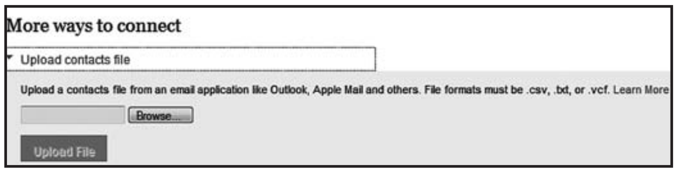


That click will open a floodgate of potential connections. An array of possible connections along with the number of "shared connections" in common with you are presented. These 2nd degree connections are people with whom you have in common institutions where you've worked, schools, locations, groups, skills, etc. With one click of "Connect" below the photo, an impersonal request is sent.

c. *Personal connect message* (Highly Recommended). An alternative that doesn't require the email is to *go to a person's profile and click "Connect."* Anytime you click on a person's name, such as in the preceding screenshot, you will have the opportunity to write a personal message, which is always more effective than just an impersonal request (see next screenshot). I prefer the personal note and many recipients have said they do too (see screenshot). The *personalized invitation typically produces a significantly higher hit (acceptance) rate*, especially if connections are receiving tons of requests to connect.



d. *Import address books* (Not Recommended). You can also *import emails by the bucket-load*. This is another "impersonal" approach. When you click "Add connections," click "Continue" and scroll down a bit to upload your address book as a contacts file (see next screenshot). It accepts .csv, .txt, and .vcf formats.



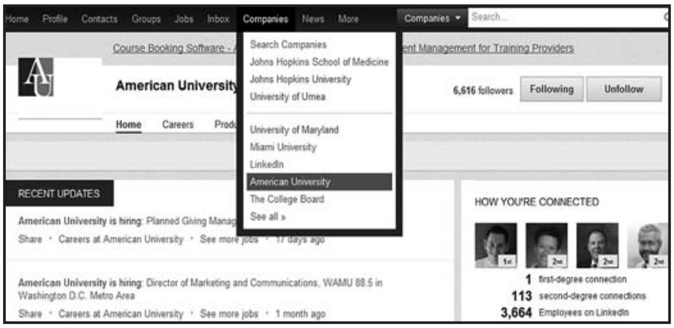
Beyond these basic strategies, what are the possible sources for connections? Short of contacting Homeland Security or Dog the Bounty Hunter to track them down, here are 20 sources to consider in order to bulk-up your network. Start with invitations to people who are already 2nd degree contacts on LinkedIn, then pursue other online contacts, and, finally, tap your offline sources.

Top 20 Sources

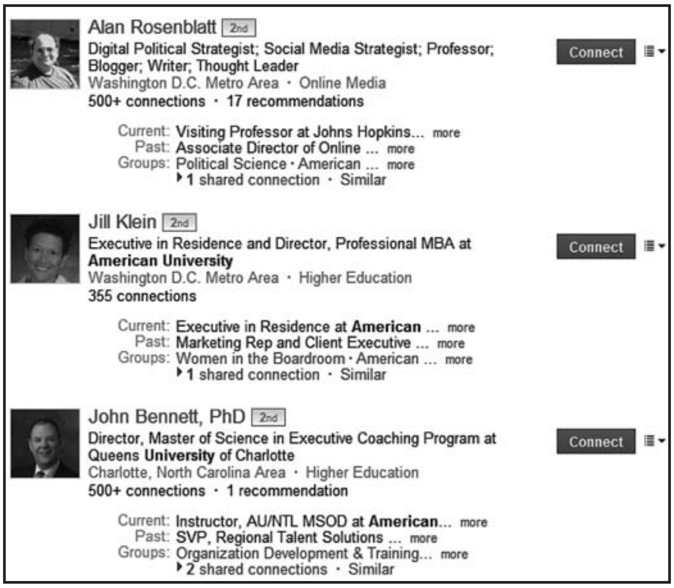
LinkedIn Sources

1. *LinkedIn connections at previous institutions or companies where you have worked or have gone to school* (colleagues, clients, classmates, faculty, administrators, students, employees, etc.). Place cursor over "Companies" on menu above your profile and click name of the university you attended or worked. In screenshot, I clicked American University. A page appears with current job posts on the left and 1st and 2nd degree connections on the right. I'm interested to see whether I know any of

the 2nd degree connections. Left click the number of those connections (113).

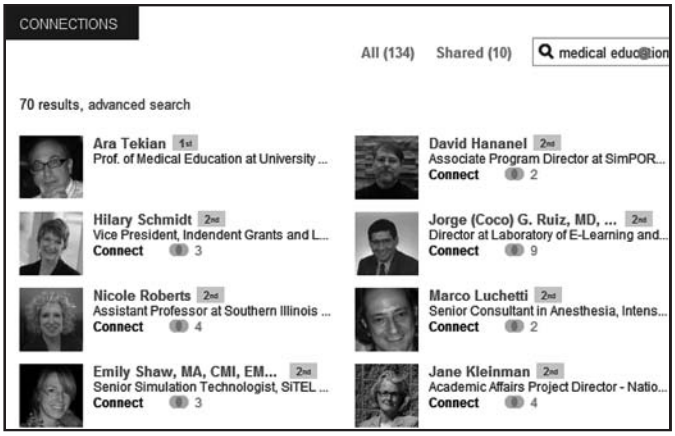


A new page with all of those connections appears (see next screenshot). Now I can scan those people or use the search box and try to connect with former classmates, faculty, and others I may I know.



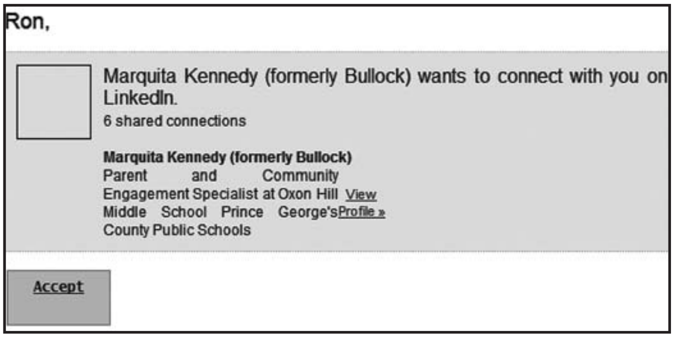
2. *LinkedIn group members as contacts in discussions to which you both contribute or comment* (you can invite any member of a group to which you belong; join a bunch of groups in higher education, professional associations and organizations, and relevant businesses)
3. *Colleagues you may know who are 2nd degree connections listed in your 1st degree contact's connections.* This can be a major source. You can identify potential connections with keywords to locate those who have a particular characteristic in common with you. Here are the steps to narrow your field to a specific topic:
   a. Pick a favorite connection in your network who has barrels of connections. Locate his or her profile. Scroll down to the "CONNECTIONS" section (see screenshot). On the right, left click the magnifying glass icon. A box will open. Type your keywords, such as "medical education."

   b. Hit the "ENTER" key on your PC/Mac. What pops up are 70 people in "medical education" out of 134 (see next screenshot). Those keywords appeared in their headlines or elsewhere in their profiles. You can try this with any descriptor to filter a specific group.



   c. Left click "advanced search." Now you have a more detailed listing of all 70 1st degree common connections followed by the 2nd degree connections. You can click the names for any of the latter to view their profiles and decide who to invite. This screen also permits you to re-sort and save these connections.

4. *LinkedIn connections who invite you to connect* because they see your custom LinkedIn URL in your email signature line or "Contact info" in the opening box of your profile. When you receive an invite in your email (see screenshot), click "View Profile" near name to check them out before clicking "Accept."



5. *"People You May Know" box* (upper right corner of your profile and LinkedIn Home page) provides Dumpsters of people as you scroll down like Facebook; left click "See More"; note the number of "shared connections" in common with you next to "Connect" (those with higher "shared connections" are more likely to connect than newbies with low numbers); left click name and then "Connect" on the person's profile to compose a personal message

Online Sources

6. Online address book (e.g., AboutOne, Plaxo, Telnic, Unyk, conXt, and WikiWorldBook) (left click "Add Connections" and upload emails) (*NOTE:* This is a questionable, not recommended "impersonal" approach.)
7. Email lists uploaded from Gmail, Hotmail, Outlook, Yahoo! Mail, and AOL (left click "Add Connections" and import emails) (*NOTE:* Same as 6.)
8. Colleagues within your own department and institution
9. Professional email inquiries about your publications, products, permissions, and activities
10. Contacts from your website, blog, or other professional sites
11. Professionals on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media and people "following you" or "liking" your site or posts
12. Association listserv discussion contributors who share similar areas of interest with you or comment on your posts

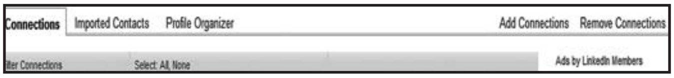
Offline Sources

13. Print address book/ Rolodex® cards
14. PDA (personal digital assistant) or PIM (personal information manager) directory
15. HR director, center director, or personnel who hired you to speak or train
16. Meeting planner or conference organizer and related staff who invited you to speak
17. Professionals you meet at conferences/meetings and networking events (with new business cards) who share your interests
18. Colleagues in print directories from associations and conferences who share your interests
19. Faculty, employees, students, or others who attend real or virtual workshops, seminars, or institutes you conduct (*DYNAMITE SOURCE:* After all, they attended your workshop because they're interested in the topic, your work, and/or you.)
20. Acquaintances in doctor's, surgical, auto repair, or other waiting rooms and in airline terminals, train and bus stations, bars and restaurants, and similar venues with whom you connect in a professional discussion; otherwise, connect on Facebook

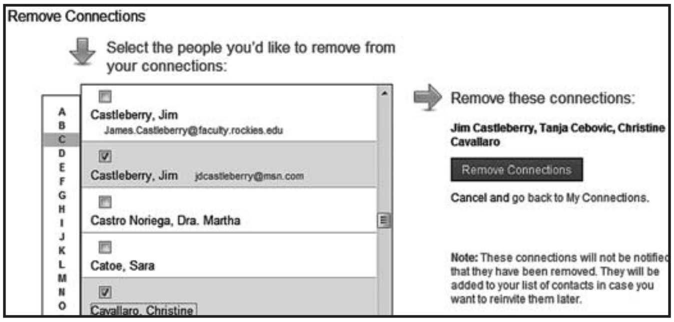
Tap as many of these sources as appropriate. That could be a fairly long list or a tiny one depending on the season of your career and your interpersonal skills. Once you have sent out the invitations, be patient. *Invitations to current members of LinkedIn (sources 1–5) typically yield the highest hit rate.* If they're not members (possibly sources 6–20), expect a very low response rate. Don't take it personally. Many professionals are hesitant to join another network with which they are unfamiliar, especially social media-phobic academicians. Just persevere.

How to delete a connection. You may want to delete connections for a variety of reasons, such as they have more than one site, they passed away, they bombard you with sales ads, they are nonresponsive, or they transmit evil or demonic forces. Here's the procedure to dispose of them:

a. On the menu at the top of your profile, under "Connect," left click "Connections."
b. On the far right, click "Remove Connections."



c. On the left column, scroll down and find the connections you want to whack. Click the boxes above their names. Check marks should appear in the boxes and their names should appear on the right.



d. Finally, on the right, click the blue box "Remove Connections" to complete the whacking. What a clean job. No evidence can be traced back to you.

How many connections do you need? (*REMINDER:* LinkedIn requires at least 50 for a 100% complete profile.) This is not a race or competition to see who can produce the highest number of connections, although I know some of you have already considered taking connection-enhancing substances to pull ahead of your colleagues. LinkedIn is all about building relationships. Yeah right! There is no magic number of connections.

Prodromou (2012) identified two strategies to networking:

a. *Strategic approach*, which is the most popular, emphasizes quality and in-depth relationships with fewer than 500, but regular contacts with 150.
b. *Open approach*, used by recruiters and sales personnel, typically involves thousands of connections to reach a wide potential market. These networkers are often called *LinkedIn Open Networkers (LIONs)*. They will accept invitations from almost any animal, vegetable, or mineral.

The bottom line issue with large numbers is: With how many contacts can you possibly correspond? *With more than 500 connections, most people can barely stay in touch with 20%.* But larger numbers increase your visibility and rank in the search engines (Serdula, 2011a).

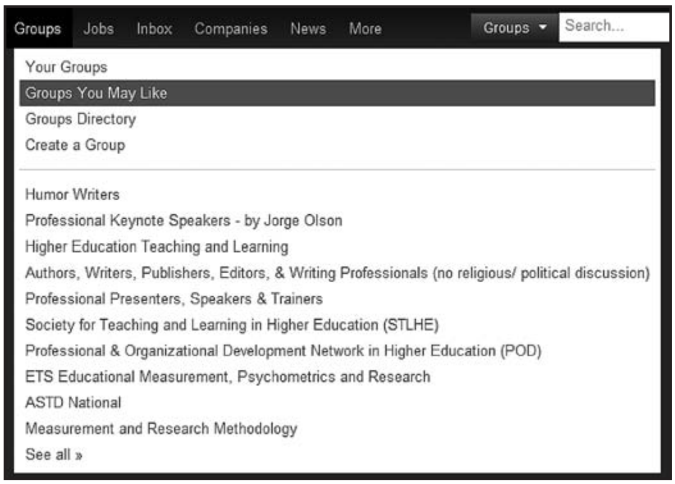
So what's the most appropriate target number for you? It depends on your purpose(s) for using LinkedIn. If you just add and maintain contacts as your e-directory only, the target will be as large as the number of colleagues you know. However, if you have a consulting, speaking, and/or clinical business beyond your university position, you will need large numbers to be found in LinkedIn searches and to generate leads. *The larger your network, the greater will be your chances of being identified by potential clients.* On my network, I have a few professors with only one connection (Moi) and a social media expert with 24,000. The maximum LinkedIn allows is 30,000.

Multiple target groups. The recent trend toward *solopreneurs* who have left the corporate world or academicians who have consulting businesses or clinical practices on the side suggests that individuals may have *several small businesses with different target markets*. In that case, you may have several different groups of connections by industry and location to whom you market your services and sell your products, like books, videos, CDs, etc. You constantly need to generate new clients and prospects. Collectively, all of these people may exceed 500 and even number in the thousands.

Reaching 500+. Technically, once you break 500, LinkedIn will report *500+ next to "Connections"* in your "Headline" box. That cut-off signifies that you have serious professional presence on LinkedIn. That number plus a high number of recommendations and a 100% complete profile convey you are an active and committed user of LinkedIn representing your academic institution and your business. Those numbers will improve your positioning in the searches.

15. Groups

After "Connections," near the bottom of the Dead Sea scrolls on your profile is a section called "Groups." Place your curser over "Groups" on the menu at the top of your profile. Welcome to GroupLand!

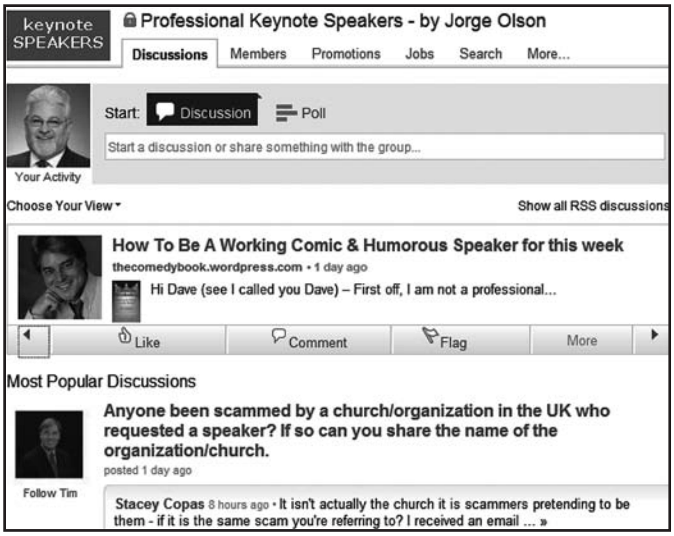


There are only 1.2 million groups in LinkedIn, so you need to be picky. You can join up to 50. The options are given in the preceding screenshot along with a list of 10 of the groups to which I belong. If you can't find the right groups, you can create your own. Make sure your groups reflect your brand, expertise, and interests conveyed in all of the preceding sections of your profile.

What is so special about groups? They provide the following 10 features:

a. Connect, engage, and build relationships with thousands of others with similar interests
b. Reconnect with faculty and students in groups representing your previous or current schools
c. Build credibility and prove your expertise by your activity in the discussions
d. Raise pertinent, probing, or vexing questions for discussion
e. Process answers to questions by experts from all over the galaxy
f. Respond to questions by commenting on others' questions
g. Reconnect with employers and employees in groups representing your previous or current institutions and companies
h. Invite 2nd and 3rd degree members of your groups to join your network
i. Find jobs posted by your group members related to group interests
j. Create a group and furnish leadership that increases your visibility

Start with about five groups with which you can become actively involved related to your discipline, research and/or clinical specialties, schools you've attended, and institutions where you've worked. Joining a bunch of groups and doing nothing doesn't help anyone. The payoff is in the conversations, initiating discussions, and participating in the discussions by others. Those discussions originate on your group page under the "Discussion" tab (see screenshot below). *The regularity with which you contribute will increase your level of engagement and visibility to your group connections*. That is another strategy for you to expand your network and establish your credibility as an expert in your field.



What's Next?

Once you've had time to process these guidelines and build, rebuild, and/or revise the sections of your profile, you'll need a nap. When you wake up, you can start using LinkedIn for the reason(s) you joined. Without spending anything for upgrades or business ads, you can proceed to

1. Post activities or updates
2. Track down individual colleagues to send messages
3. Invite nonmember colleagues to join LinkedIn and your network
4. Send messages or announcements to groups of connections (up to 50 at a time)
5. Add connections to your network
6. Search for researchers or clinicians for positions in your grants
7. Search for faculty candidates for your department
8. Initiate or contribute to discussions of your groups
9. Post announcements of upcoming events or activities in your groups
10. Solicit advice on a teaching, research, or clinical problem or issue
11. Find an expert in your field who can serve as a mentor
12. Search for part- or full-time job opportunities

Details on how to use LinkedIn for these dozen purposes may be enough to generate another article beyond this trilogy. You never know. Let me know your needs and thoughts on these topics. Stay tuned. Of course, if you're in my network, you will know about my writing activities and when my publications are available.

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