

The background of the entire page is a dense, overlapping pattern of blue LinkedIn logos. Each logo is a square with rounded corners, featuring the white 'in' symbol and a white circle representing a profile picture. The logos are arranged in a way that they appear to be floating or stacked, creating a sense of depth and movement. The color is a consistent medium blue.

LINKEDIN FOR LINGUISTS

HOW TO LEVERAGE THE
WORLD'S LARGEST
PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

ALBA SORT

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LINKEDIN FOR LINGUISTS:

LEVERAGING THE WORLD'S LARGEST PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

ALBA SORT

Foreword

This booklet gives an overview of the main LinkedIn features that can benefit freelance translators and interpreters. The social network offers many other possibilities, especially the premium versions, but I have deliberately skipped more advanced options to keep the content relevant for as many people as possible. Likewise, I only cover features available in the free version.

I hope you enjoy the content and find it immediately applicable. If you have any further questions tweet me at @albasort - I'll be happy to help.

Happy marketing!

Alba Sort

Introduction

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, with over 467 users in more than 200 countries. According to LinkedIn Corporation, two new members sign up to join the network every second. For translators and interpreters, it can be an incredibly powerful business tool. Best of all, you don't have to spend a penny, because it offers a free version alongside the paid-for ones.

First of all, a quick note on how LinkedIn works. Your network on the platform is made up of first-degree connections (your immediate contacts), second-degree connections (contacts of your contacts), third-degree connections and fellow members of your LinkedIn groups. You are able to message your first-degree connections, and invite your second-degree connections to join your network. However, you can only invite third-degree connections to connect if their full name is visible to you. Finally, you can also message individuals who are on the same LinkedIn Groups as you.

The three basic steps to using LinkedIn to the best of its potential are the following:

- 1) Optimise your profile;
- 2) Grow your network; and
- 3) Own your data.

Let's look at each of them in detail.

1) Optimise your profile

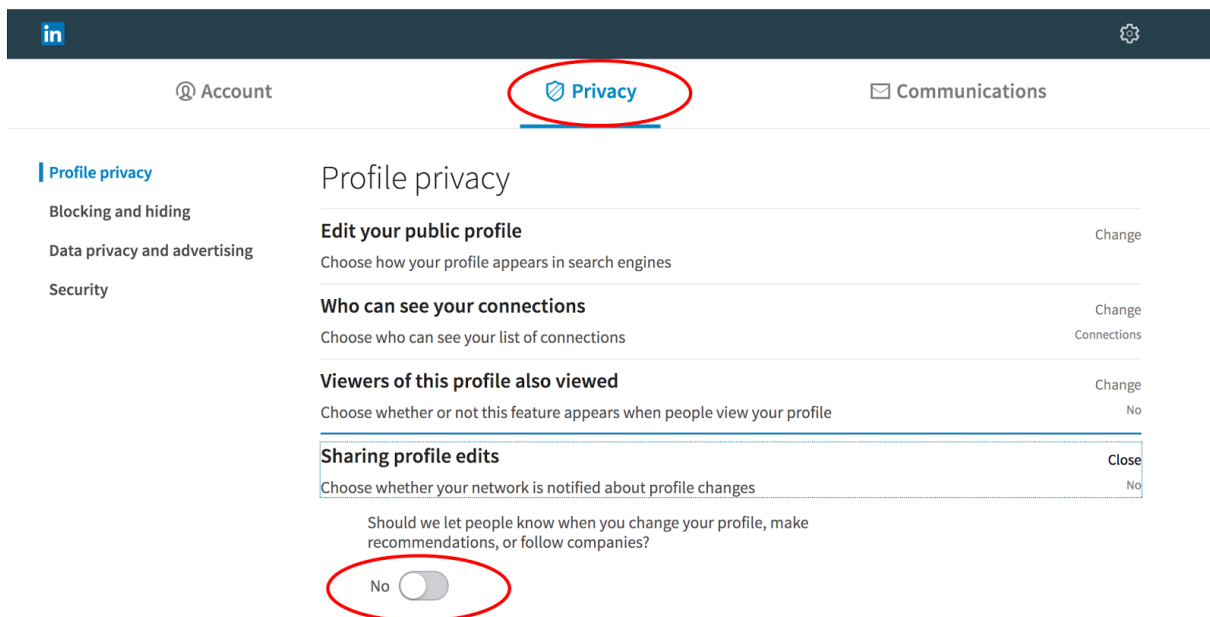
Who's your audience?

To craft the best possible LinkedIn profile for you, you first need to be clear as to who you are trying to reach and why. Do you want to attract agencies or direct clients? Do you intend to use your LinkedIn profile as on-the-go live CV where you can collect recommendations from clients and colleagues? Do you see your profile as the first step to a face-to-face interview and an eventual job offer?

Knowing your goal is important because you can then write your profile with that audience in mind, which will make your profile much more relevant for those reading it.

Turn off your activity feed alerts

Before you do anything, it's wise to check that your activity feed alerts – the automated messages that let your network know what you're up to - are turned off. To do so, go to your profile picture icon tagged "Me" on the right hand side of the top menu bar and select "ACCOUNT Settings and Privacy". Next, go to the Privacy tab and make sure that the "Sharing profile edits" option is off.



The screenshot shows the LinkedIn interface. At the top, the navigation bar includes the LinkedIn logo, a gear icon for settings, and three menu items: "Account", "Privacy" (circled in red), and "Communications". Below the navigation bar, the "Profile privacy" settings page is displayed. On the left, a sidebar lists "Profile privacy", "Blocking and hiding", "Data privacy and advertising", and "Security". The main content area is titled "Profile privacy" and contains several sections:

- Edit your public profile**: Choose how your profile appears in search engines. A "Change" link is on the right.
- Who can see your connections**: Choose who can see your list of connections. A "Change" link and "Connections" text are on the right.
- Viewers of this profile also viewed**: Choose whether or not this feature appears when people view your profile. A "Change" link and "No" text are on the right.
- Sharing profile edits**: Choose whether your network is notified about profile changes. A "Close" link and "No" text are on the right.

Below the "Sharing profile edits" section, a question is asked: "Should we let people know when you change your profile, make recommendations, or follow companies?". A "No" option is selected, and the toggle switch is turned off (circled in red).

Photography

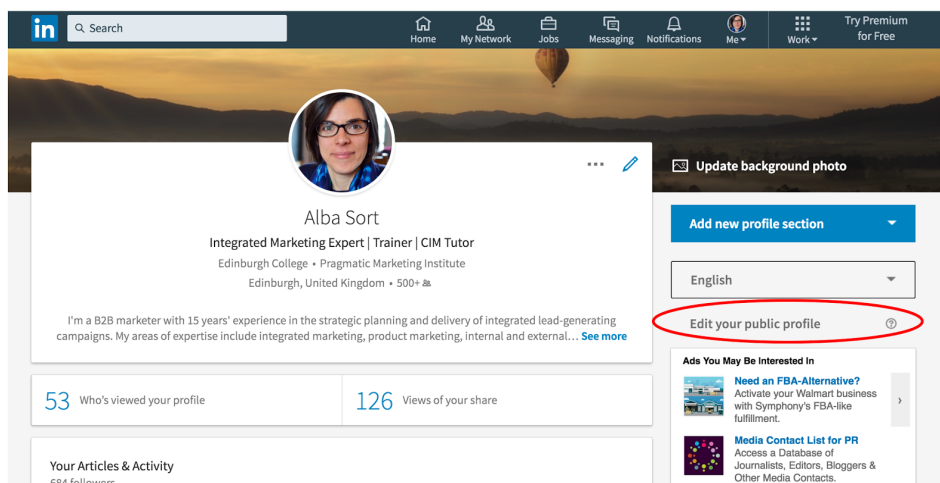
LinkedIn is a very visual tool. The images you use on the platform need to be of excellent quality, ideally unique to you and, particularly for the headshot, taken by a professional. Your LinkedIn profile picture is not the place to show off your selfie-taking skills, your new off-the-shoulder dress or your cute pet. Please avoid sunglasses, dramatic black and white shots and pixelated or low-res photographs.

And remember, any headshot is better than no headshot. Simply adding a photo to your profile will make you 21 times more likely to get profile views and 36 times more likely to receive a message on the platform. The default silhouette that new users get by default is your worst possible face on LinkedIn.

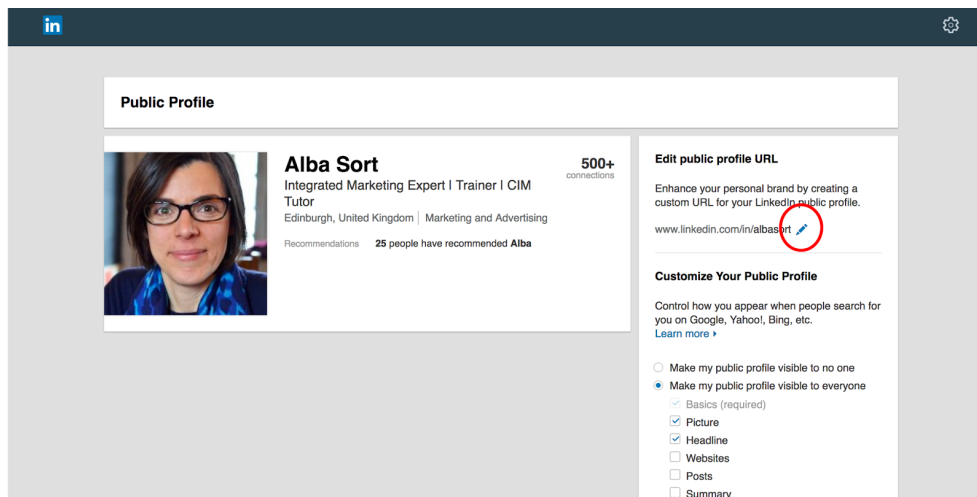
Customise your public profile URL

If you are quick enough (and aren't called John Smith or similar), you can get your customised user URL on LinkedIn, which means that your public profile on the platform will be a neat www.linkedin.com/in/yourname instead of the longer and messier default option. Personalised LinkedIn URLs look great on email signatures and the like and can also help your SEO (so how well you rank in search engines).

You can change your default LinkedIn user URL in two different ways. The first one is to click on the "Edit your profile picture" option to the right of your main profile page.



The second way to do it is to go to the “Settings and Privacy” option we saw earlier, click on “Profile Privacy”, then “Edit Your Public Profile”, then “Edit your profile URL” on the top right corner.



The headline: how do you see yourself?

The headline is the line of text that appears right below your profile picture. LinkedIn will automatically populate it with your latest job title, which may or may not be the most appropriate description of what you do. If it isn't, take the time to craft a good headline and use the 120 characters available to the best of your abilities. LinkedIn, just like many other online marketing channels, uses search algorithms that largely focus on content and relevant keyword use.

That doesn't mean that you should cram in all the keywords possible in your headline, because it may look odd to the actual human beings that will read it, but be sure to feature the words that your target audience is likely to use when searching for someone like you. For example, instead of defining yourself as “linguist”, it's better to use “translator” or “interpreter”. That's because those who search for people like you are far more likely to use those words than the word “linguist”.

Here are some examples of optimised headlines:

- Spanish Translator and Interpreter MCIOL Specializing in Food & Drink, Tourism, Forestry and Agriculture
- Polish-English Qualified Conference and Court Interpreter/Translator | Sworn Interpreter | Glasgow
- Providing Russian Interpreting Services for Business Events, Meetings and Negotiations Across Scotland
- Translator – Helping Companies Export their Goods and Services to 57 French-Speaking Countries Worldwide

The summary: how do you add value?

The summary is the body of text that appears below your headline. Here is where you articulate how you add value and what your [unique selling proposition \(USP\)](#) is. Ask yourself: how can you help your target audience? How have you contributed to projects in the past? Have you got any proof of this? Explain how you've helped others in the past, and highlight any proof of this.

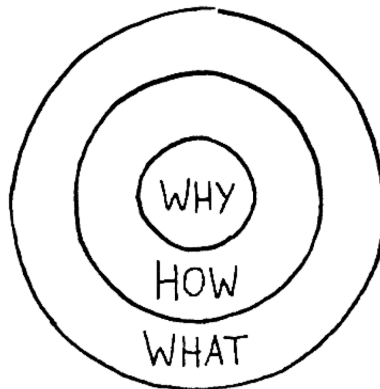
In the summary you should also consider mentioning your specialisms, memberships, accreditations and anything else that gives you credibility. However, keep it short and to the point. You have up to 2000 characters, but that doesn't mean you should use them all. Also bear in mind that in the new LinkedIn version, only the first two lines of text are visible on your main profile, so make the most of them.

If your career trajectory has not followed the more traditional routes, or if you're a career changer, the LinkedIn summary is the perfect place for you to explain what has brought you where you are. Be honest, genuine and positive, and you'll stand out for the right reasons. For students and new grads with little or no experience, the summary is also a lifesaver, and what will set you apart from your peers. Craft your story and focus on what your beliefs and on how you can make a difference.

To everyone, but especially to those who need to add some more nuanced storytelling to their summaries, I recommend checking out Simon Sinek's TED talk [How Great Leaders Inspire Action](#), where he discusses the importance of The Golden Circle. Always look at your

summary from the perspective of the person reading your profile: why should they connect with you? Give them a compelling reason.

The Golden Circle



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One last thing: there is some debate as to whether your LinkedIn profile should be written in the first or third person. I believe the first person is always preferable. After all, this is your profile on a social network, and speaking of yourself in the third person makes you sound like the Queen. Those of you who have been on Facebook long enough will remember how Facebook status updates used to be in the third person, and that was scrapped because it came across as stilted. It simply didn't work. Plus, this is not your CV, as we will see shortly.

Experience, education and accomplishments sections

In these sections LinkedIn gives you space to explain how you got where you are and how qualified you are, but please remember that a LinkedIn profile is not the same as a CV.

In the experience and education sections, add the most relevant information on your career and educational history. Explain who you have worked with and how you have contributed to solving their business challenges, but avoid using excessive jargon unless it's necessary for search optimisation purposes. To bring your past accomplishments to light, consider adding extra content, such as links to your portfolio, PDFs of previous work and video and audio files (particularly important if you offer voice over services).

LinkedIn also offers you the possibility to add a host of additional information here, including but not limited to publications, certifications, courses, projects, honours, awards and patents. I'm not a big fan of adding every single thing you've accomplished in the past. See it as a window shop: you want to entice visitors, so they'll want to find out more, not overwhelm them with so much merchandise that they won't know where to look. A good tip is to add links to other websites (or to your site) with the rest of the information.

You can also include the organisations you belong to, which helps your credibility. If you are a member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), the Institute of Translating and Interpreting (ITI) or another body that is relevant to your career, make sure to add them here.

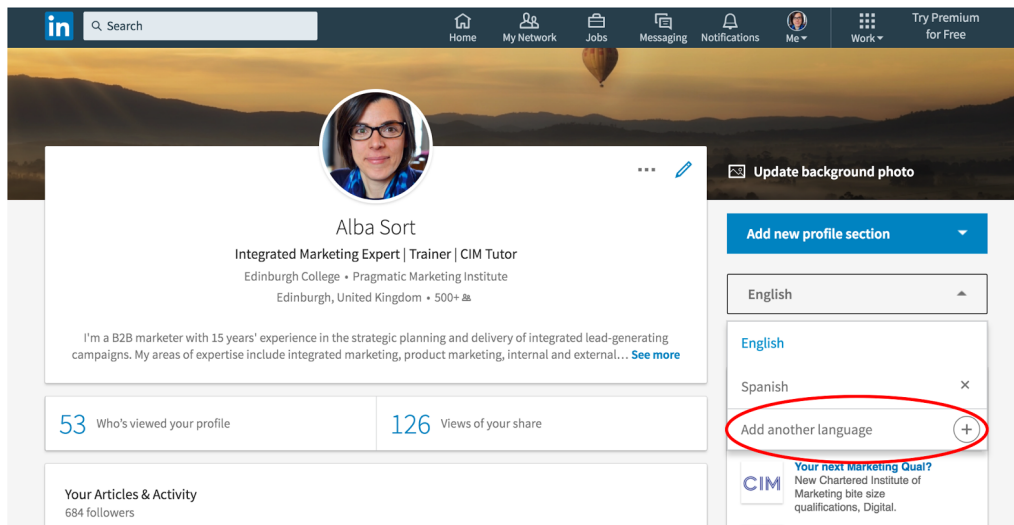
Finally, there is also a space where you can specify the languages you speak (and your proficiency in each). As linguists, you are bound to have at least two, and possibly more, so make sure you list them.

Create a profile in another language

LinkedIn allows you to create your profile in a language other than the one you pick when signing up for an account. It's a neat little feature for the multilingual amongst us and is particularly useful for language professionals or those working in environments or industries where the command of one or more foreign languages is a valuable asset.

More to the point, having your profile in another language will make you findable by LinkedIn users typing in keywords in languages other than English. To make the most of the feature, make sure that the words you use in your foreign language profiles match those that people conducting a search on LinkedIn are likely to use.

You can access the option to create your profile in another language from your main profile page. Go to "Add another language" on the top right section and simply add in the information in the language of your choice.



Multilingual profiles are available in 24 languages at the moment: Arabic, English, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai and Turkish.

Rally your advocates

No matter how good your LinkedIn profile, nothing enhances it like a few endorsements and recommendations, which means that the next step is to ask the people in your network to put in a good word for you.

The easiest way for others to confirm that you are good at what you do it is through the skills feature, below your accomplishments on your main profile section. Click on the pencil icon to pick the skills you want to see on your profile and your connections will be prompted to endorse you for them. Spread the good Karma at the click of a button and endorse others as well – what goes around comes around!


Recommendations are more sophisticated and require you asking people in your network to write a few (or more) words explaining how you've worked with them in the past, the value you added to the situation and generally what a great professional you are.

Never use the default “Can you recommend me?” message option. After all, you’re asking someone to take some of their precious time, think about your work and write you a recommendation that could get you business in future. The least thing you can do is add a personalised note.

Ask your connections to recommend you

- 1 What do you want to be recommended for?**
- 2 Who do you want to ask?**
Your connections: (You can add up to 3 people)
- 3**
What's your relationship?

What was (Sarah Jones)'s position at the time?
- 4 Write your message**
Subject:



WARNING:
Never use the default message.

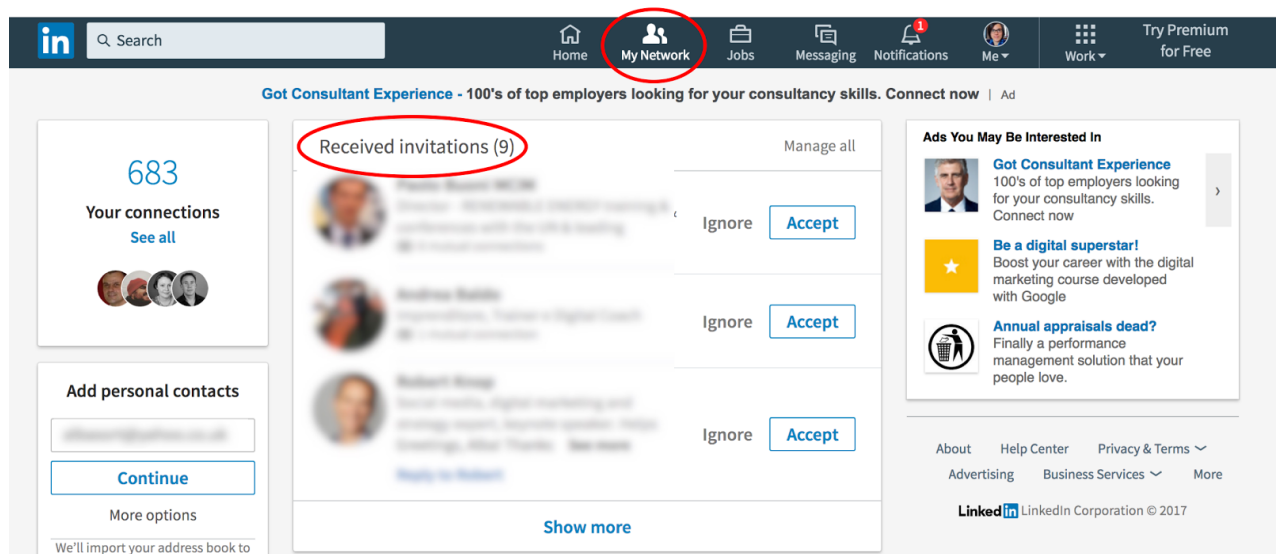
When you ask for a recommendation, make life easy for others. In your personalised note, gently remind the person you’re asking the particular project you’d like them to mention. Better still, copy and paste their comments at the time (for example, from a project or an appraisal), to help them jiggle their memory. Use verbatim words if need be. The people who recommend you will, of course, write what they want, but hopefully your prompts will help them get started – which should ensure you get a reply in a reasonable frame of time.

2) Grow you network

Now that you have a perfectly optimised LinkedIn profile, it's time to build your network. People on LinkedIn tend to use one of two strategies to add to their number of connections: they either add anyone that sounds interesting and accept all invites to connect, or they connect only with those they know already. I favour the second option for reasons that we will see shortly, but I occasionally connect with people I don't know. In such cases, however, I always immediately follow up with a personalised email to better understand what led them to connect with me and how we can help each other.

Connect with people you know (or may know)

Whatever the kind of LinkedIn user you are, the first step is to add your connections to your network. In the "My Network" tab, you will see the invitations you have received (if any), and the option to add those individuals to your network.

The image is a screenshot of the LinkedIn 'My Network' tab. At the top, the navigation bar includes 'Home', 'My Network' (highlighted with a red circle), 'Jobs', 'Messaging', 'Notifications' (with a red notification badge), and 'Me'. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar and a banner for 'Got Consultant Experience'. The main content area is divided into three sections. On the left, 'Your connections' shows 683 connections with a 'See all' link. In the center, 'Received invitations (9)' is highlighted with a red circle, showing a list of three invitation cards, each with an 'Ignore' and 'Accept' button. On the right, 'Ads You May Be Interested In' features three advertisements. At the bottom, there are links for 'About', 'Help Center', 'Privacy & Terms', 'Advertising', 'Business Services', and 'More', along with the LinkedIn logo and copyright information for 2017.

If the requests to connect are from people you know, and you value the connection, accept their invitation. But when you receive default requests to connect from strangers, don't rush to respond. First of all, check out the profile of the person who sent the invite. LinkedIn will tell you what you have in common, for example, whether you're based in the same city, studied at the same university or have one or several connections in common.

If you think the connection can be a valuable addition to your profile, I recommend you accept it but follow it up with a short and friendly email asking them if there's any reason in particular why they wanted to connect with you. Seventy percent of the time you will get an email immediately afterwards, and you can build the relationship on that basis.

As for those that never get back to you after a few days or weeks, I suggest you "disconnect" from them. Your professional network is precious, and you should only allow access to it to people you know and trust. Two simple reasons: first, your first-degree connections will be able to see all your other contacts (unless you've changed your settings), so you're essentially giving them the power to snoop around and see who and how you're connected to others.

Secondly, when you accept a stranger to your LinkedIn network, you are enabling them to connect with your professional contacts. There is the distinct possibility that your genuine connections might think that you know this person well, and perhaps even assume that you implicitly endorse him or her. It's one of those situations where it really is better to be safe than sorry.

Importing contacts

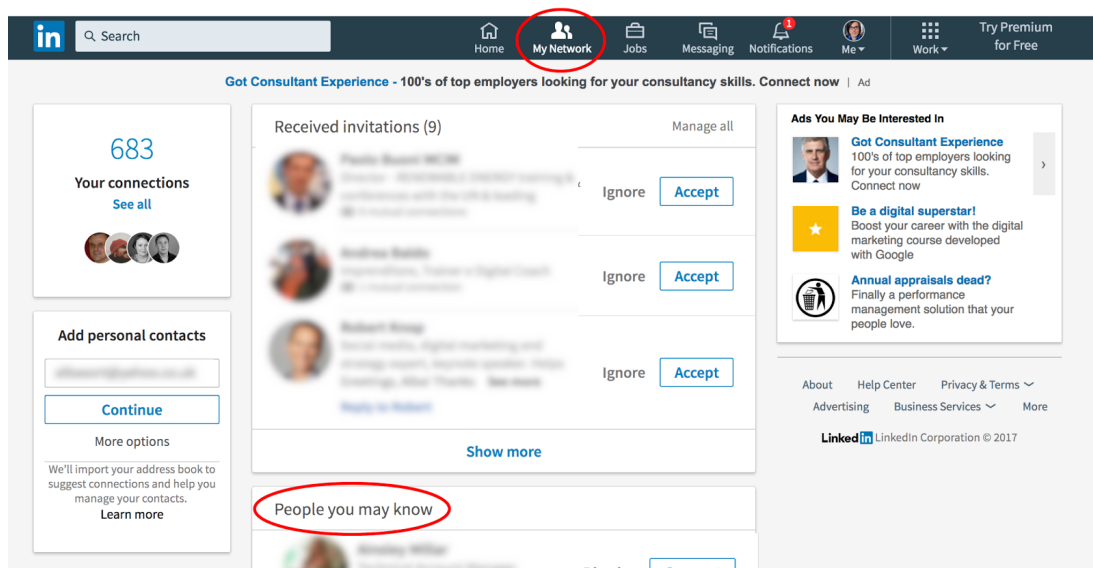
To the left of the "My Network" screen you will see that LinkedIn offers you the option to import all your personal contacts associated with your email address. My advice: don't do it. It may seem the easiest way to add actual contacts to your network, but it is not necessarily the wisest.

First of all, if your email address book is anything like mine, it will have personal as well as professional contacts – and random ones as well. Do you want all of those people to feature on your LinkedIn profile?

Secondly, when you add your contacts to LinkedIn, they will start getting those annoying "X wants you to join LinkedIn". You permanently lose the option to control who receives what when, and although there will be messages sent in your name, they will be default ones (and we've said already how they should be avoided at all costs).

People you may know

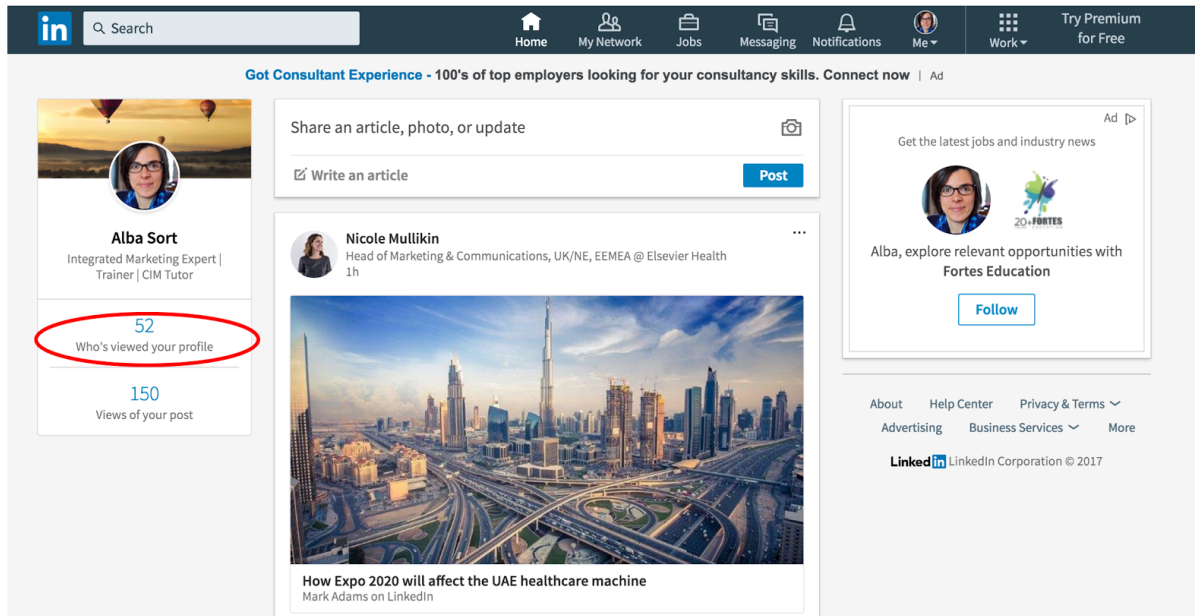
LinkedIn will also show you a list of individuals that you may know, based on your work history, education or the connections or groups you have in common. Again, don't just blindly accept. If it's an acquaintance, great, and this can be an excellent way to connect with contacts of your contacts you know already but wouldn't otherwise think of adding to your network.



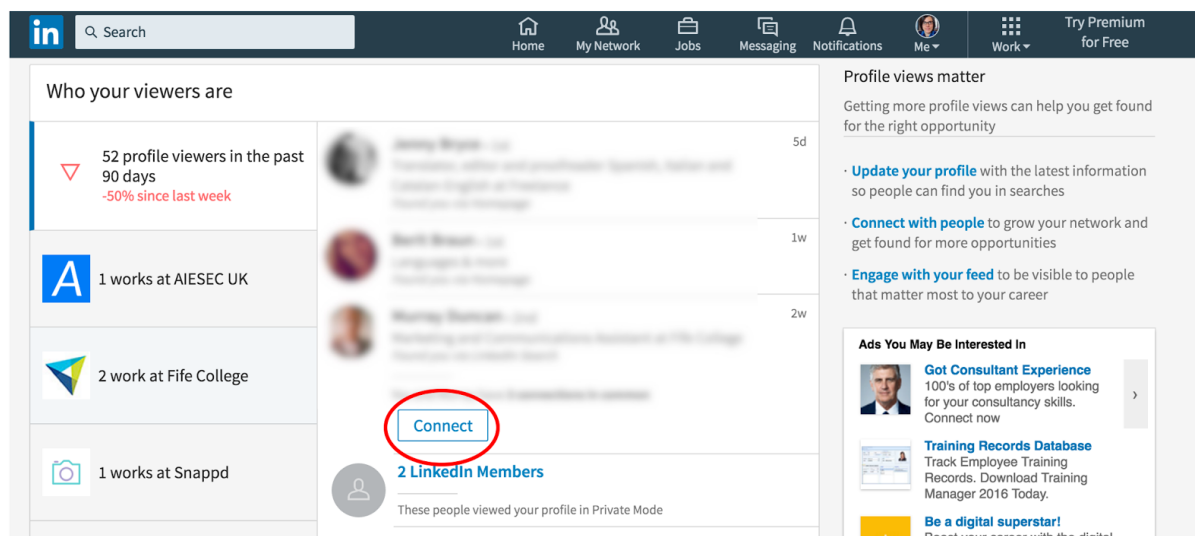
However, for any names that don't ring a bell proceed with caution. Remember what we said earlier about received invitations from strangers, and be aware that this time it'll be you issuing the request to connect – so at the very least send a personalised message explaining who you are and why you want to add them to your network.

Who's viewed your profile?

Another useful feature of LinkedIn is the ability to see who has viewed your profile. The number of views appears to the left on the homepage. If you click on the number, you'll see the people who have landed on your page. They may be contacts already in your network, people you don't know or anonymous LinkedIn members. Let's look at them separately.



In the case of existing connections, the chances are that they have checked your profile because they thought of you at a particular point, but for whatever reason, they never got in touch. It's a good excuse to drop a short and friendly explaining that you've seen they checked your profile and asking if there's anything you can help with. At best you might get some work, at worst you will have had a short exchange with someone you hadn't been in touch for a while. Regardless of what brought that person to your page, it's always good to connect with your network and keep those relationships warm.

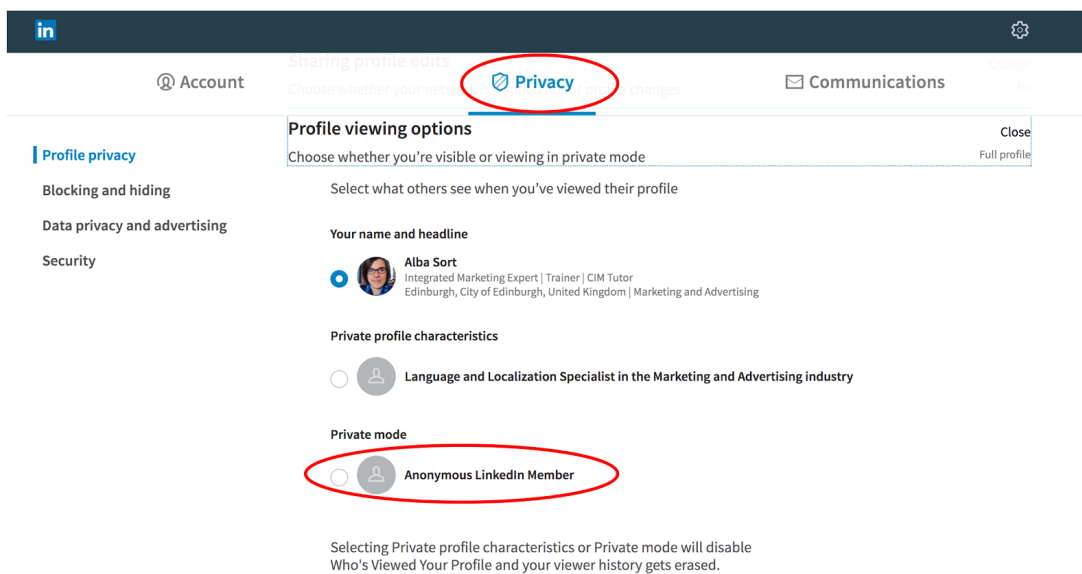


If the person who has viewed your LinkedIn profile is a stranger to you, have a look at their profile and check what you've got in common. If you think it can be an interesting connection, do as with the invitations from strangers, but in reverse: send them a personalised invite to add them to your network, explaining that you've seen that you both know X, Y and Z or whatever it is that you happen to share.

Anonymous visitors are LinkedIn users who have changed their privacy settings before checking your profile. Chances are that they are conducting some research. They may be considering you as a potential supplier or candidate, or perhaps they have landed on your page after using one or more of the keywords that feature on your profile. You will never find out. But the good news is that you can do the same, and check out other people's profiles without leaving a trace of your visit. Let's find out how.

Changing to private mode

LinkedIn is a great tool for carrying out market research and finding out more about your customers. But before you get typing in that search box, consider changing your mode to "private". By doing so, the trail you leave on the pages you visit will be anonymous, just like that of the users who checked your profile while keeping their identity private. To do so, go to the Privacy Settings, scroll down to Profile privacy and, in the Profile viewing options, choose "Private mode".

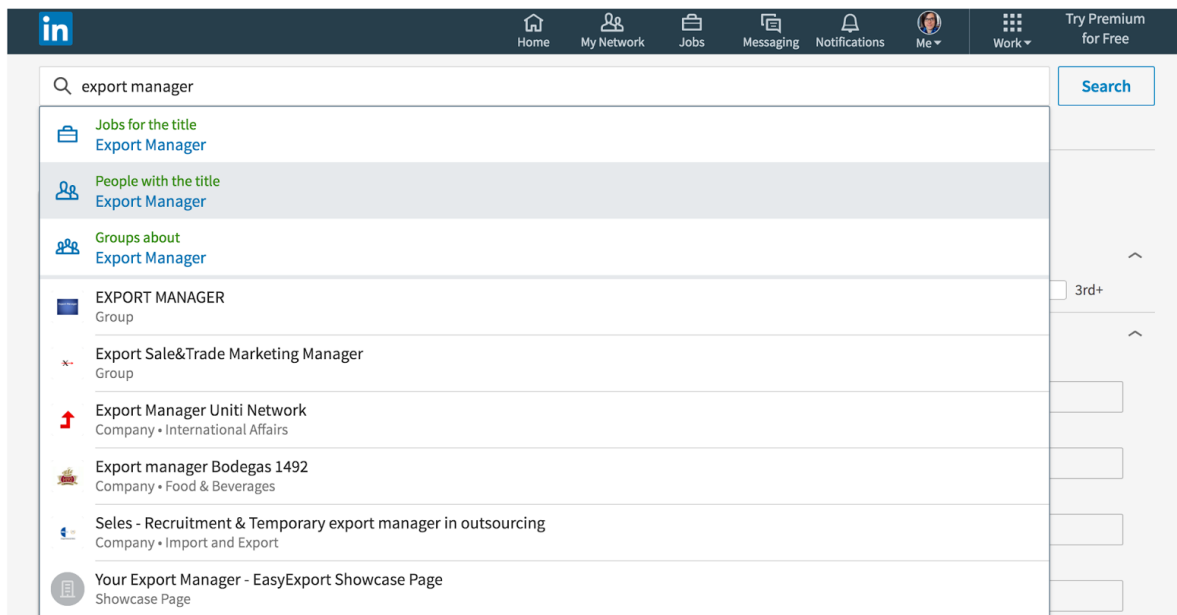


The screenshot shows the LinkedIn Privacy Settings page. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Account', 'Privacy' (circled in red), and 'Communications'. The main content area is titled 'Profile viewing options' and includes a sub-header 'Choose whether you're visible or viewing in private mode'. Under this, there are three sections: 'Your name and headline', 'Private profile characteristics', and 'Private mode'. The 'Private mode' section has two radio button options: 'Language and Localization Specialist in the Marketing and Advertising industry' and 'Anonymous LinkedIn Member' (circled in red). A note at the bottom states: 'Selecting Private profile characteristics or Private mode will disable Who's Viewed Your Profile and your viewer history gets erased.'

A word of caution: going on private mode will delete your viewer history. Moreover, while you are in private mode, you will not be able to see any information about who has viewed your profile. Make sure you change your settings back to the first option (“Your name and headline”) once you’re finished your research or prospecting efforts, or you will not be able to find out who has visited your profile.

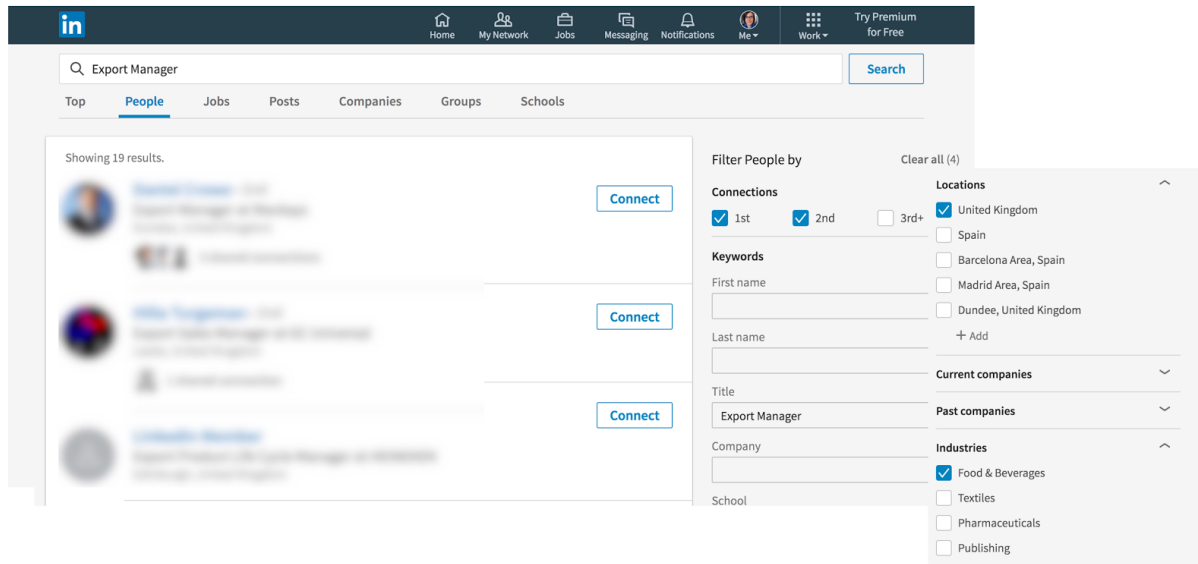
Using LinkedIn Search

LinkedIn has an excellent search tool that can help you gain a better understanding of your target audience, find potential customers and see how you are connected. To use it, just type your search in the bar at the top of the screen.



You will be able to filter the results of the search by different variables, such as job title, location, current and past companies, industries and more. All results will show you how are connected to those individuals, e.g. if they are first, second or third-degree connections, and you can filter by the type of connection as well.

LinkedIn gives you the option to connect from the search results page - as usual, proceed with caution, and always include a personalised message.

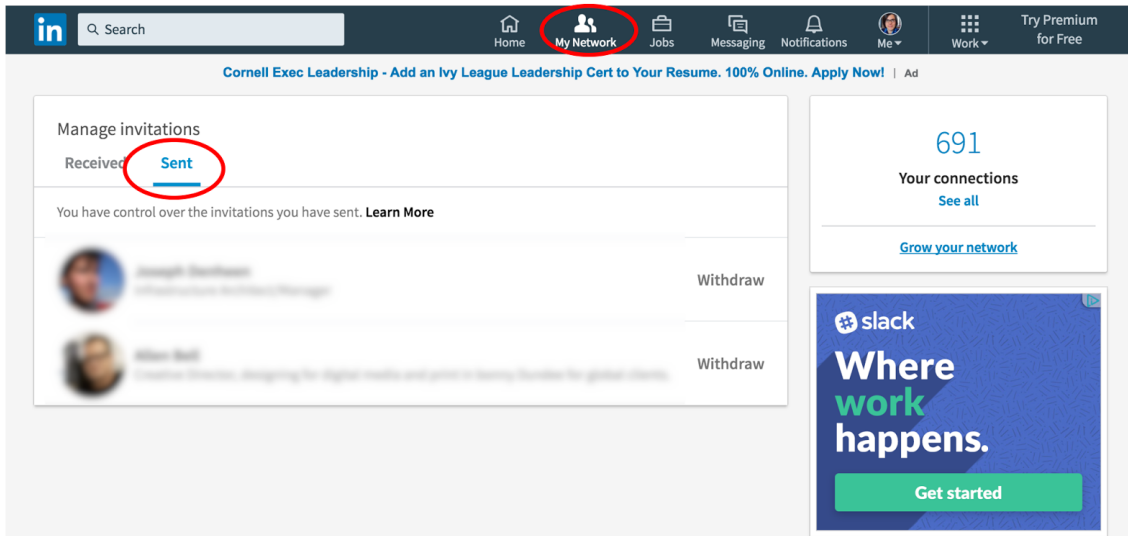


Prospecting on LinkedIn

If you want to take a more systematic approach to finding clients on LinkedIn, I recommend you carry out a search targeting individuals that match your ideal client or buyer persona ([read more on personas here](#)). Use the search filters we discussed earlier to drill down into your search results.

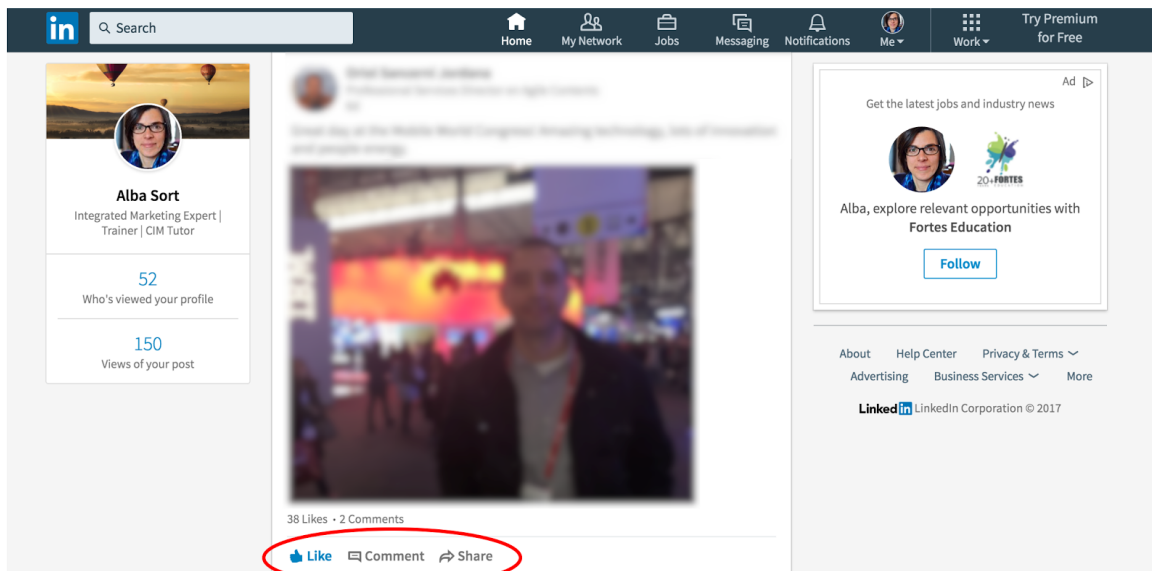
Next, create a spreadsheet with the names of the people you would like to add to your network, starting with second-degree connections. Take note of how you are connected. Then, send them an invitation to join your network. Mention what you have in common and explain why you would like to connect. Keep your notes short and relevant, and never use the default message. Track your new connections using the spreadsheet, and follow-up with them if necessary (but don't be a pest).

Be aware that if you send too many invitations, and they are mostly rejected or ignored, you will not be able to add any more contacts to your network. You'll need to cancel your outstanding requests to connect to be able to send new ones. Go to "My Network", then click on "Manage all" in the "Received invitations" tab".



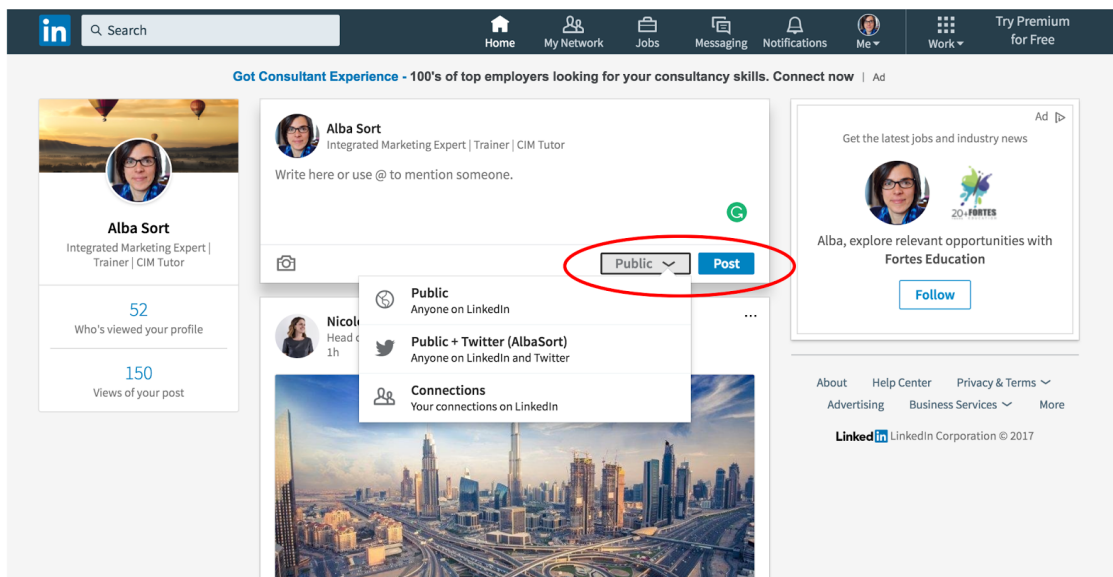
Engage with your network

The new LinkedIn interface makes it easier than ever to keep in touch with your network. Just like other social networking sites, the LinkedIn activity feed will inform you of birthdays and work anniversaries, show you what your connections have been up to, and give you the option to like, comment or share other people's updates.



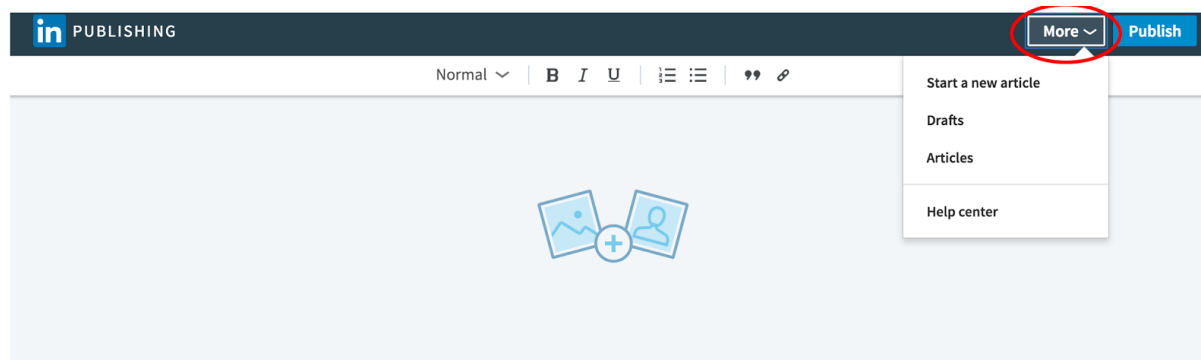
Get into the habit of checking your activity feed at least a couple of times a week and interact with those who feature in it - even if it's just to like a picture they've uploaded. Your contacts will appreciate and remember your support.

You can also post your own content on LinkedIn. Be it photographs, links or comments, you can decide to make your updates public, so visible to everyone on the network, or keep them for your connections only. Public updates have the potential to go viral, and even if they don't, the chances are that they will be seen by people outside of your network. Leverage the visibility you get with public posts by ensuring that your content is always compelling, relevant and valuable.



Publish on LinkedIn Publishing

If you have a talent for writing, LinkedIn is a fabulous platform to put your articles in front of an already existing audience. Just click on "Write an article" at the top of the main activity feed and a LinkedIn Publishing window will open.



Headline

Write here. Add images or a video for visual impact.

LinkedIn Publishing is essentially like a huge blog, with the unique advantage of having a built-in audience of millions of LinkedIn members. Creating original and exciting content is another great way to stand out for the right reasons, and you never know who may read what you write.

LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn Groups are forums where professionals are able to ask for advice, discuss ideas, share content and network. Groups, which can be open or require authentication, can be linked to companies, organisations, industries, publications, you name it. Joining and getting involved in LinkedIn groups used to be a good way to increase your visibility, but these days it's not always the case. Some groups are still incredibly supportive, whereas others are little more than self-promoting hubs.

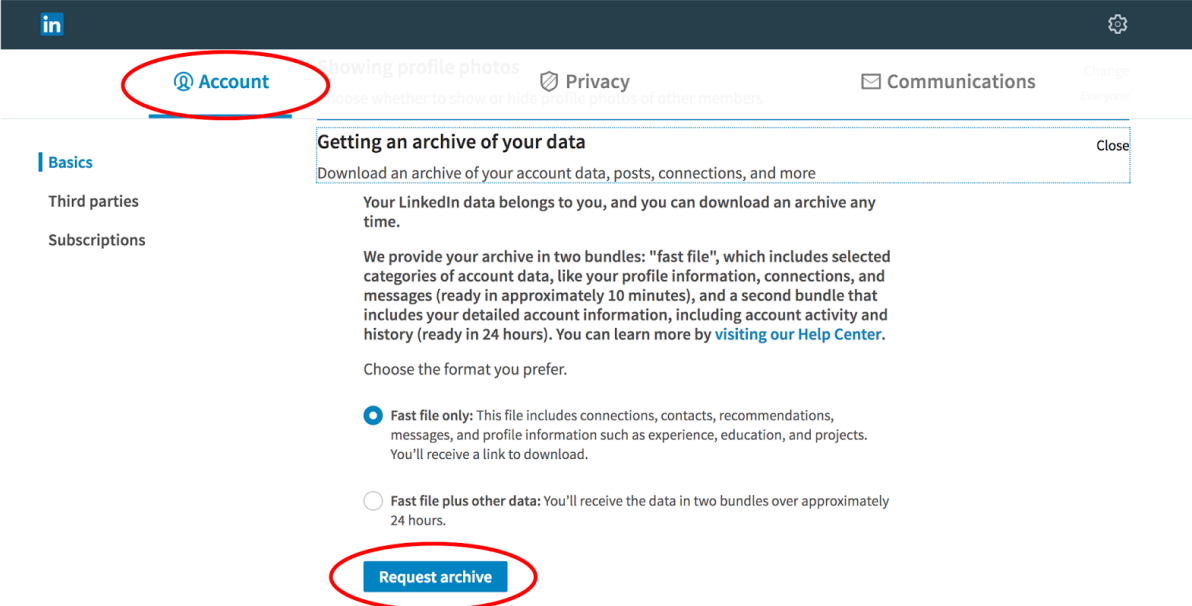
Pick your groups carefully, and observe the rules of engagement before jumping into the conversation. Often, smaller or local groups can deliver better results for freelancers. Use your time on groups wisely: you want your involvement to have a positive impact on your work, not become a distraction. Finally, remember that your profile will be visible to fellow members of LinkedIn Groups, so pay attention to the groups you belong to. Access your groups by clicking on the "Work" icon at the top right corner of your screen or going to <https://www.linkedin.com/groups>.

3) Own your data

LinkedIn is a brilliant tool, but remember that it is not run by a charity. The access to the content you freely upload to the network is totally dependent on the whims of LinkedIn Corporation. The organisation could decide to change its features from one day to the next, as happened recently with the tag feature (much to the dismay of thousands of professionals worldwide), or start charging you to access your connections, and you would be unable to do anything about it.

As a result, it's a sensible precaution to regularly backup the data you have stored on LinkedIn, from your contacts to your recommendations. Owning your data not only puts you in a much better position in the event of drastic platform changes; having a spreadsheet of your contacts can also be very useful on certain occasions, for example, if you send cards at Christmas time.

To request an archive of your data, go to "ACCOUNT Settings & Privacy" option in the "Me" icon, then click on the "Account" tab and scroll down to "Getting an archive of your data". You will receive it in your inbox shortly afterwards (the fast file is probably enough).



The screenshot shows the LinkedIn interface. At the top, the 'Account' tab is circled in red. Below it, the 'Getting an archive of your data' section is highlighted with a dashed border. The text in this section explains that users can download an archive of their account data, posts, connections, and more. It details two options: 'Fast file only' (selected) and 'Fast file plus other data'. The 'Request archive' button at the bottom of the section is also circled in red.

Getting an archive of your data Close

Download an archive of your account data, posts, connections, and more

Your LinkedIn data belongs to you, and you can download an archive any time.

We provide your archive in two bundles: "fast file", which includes selected categories of account data, like your profile information, connections, and messages (ready in approximately 10 minutes), and a second bundle that includes your detailed account information, including account activity and history (ready in 24 hours). You can learn more by [visiting our Help Center](#).

Choose the format you prefer.

Fast file only: This file includes connections, contacts, recommendations, messages, and profile information such as experience, education, and projects. You'll receive a link to download.

Fast file plus other data: You'll receive the data in two bundles over approximately 24 hours.

[Request archive](#)

Conclusion

To make the most of LinkedIn, you have to start with your profile. Make it as good as you can, starting with your headshot, continuing with your headline and summary and finishing with an array of glittering recommendations. A LinkedIn profile can be a powerful ally in your professional life, so give it the attention it deserves.

Next, concentrate on building a strong network of connections. LinkedIn makes it very easy to leverage your contacts and your contacts' contacts, so take advantage of the search features. If you use LinkedIn for prospecting purposes, keep an offline spreadsheet detailing your ongoing efforts, so you know exactly where you stand.

Finally, protect the profile and network you have built by requesting an archive of your data at least once a year, more if you have an extensive network that changes often. Owning your data means that all the effort you put into LinkedIn won't have been in vain if the T&C of the platform suddenly change.

About the author

Alba Sort is an integrated B2B marketer and member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing with almost two decades' worth of experience in branding, marketing strategy, content, digital marketing, communications and events. As well as a CIM tutor and marketing lecturer, Alba is a public speaker on marketing issues and a trainer with The Digital Co. and the Chartered Institute of Linguists. She is also a DipTrans qualified Spanish-English translator and a member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists. Her blog is albasort.com and she is also active on Twitter @albasort.