

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE | SOCIAL MEDIA

# Quick Guide to Getting Started: LinkedIn for Small Businesses and Nonprofits



# Social Media

## Quick Guide to Getting Started: LinkedIn for Small Businesses and Nonprofits

### What Is LinkedIn?

Whenever the topic of social media marketing is discussed, Facebook and Twitter seem to attract most of the attention. While LinkedIn may not get the digital ink of its social media peers, it's still worth considering because it's a social network for professionals, without the games and distractions of many other networks.

Simply put, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional online network, with more than 100 million members in more than 200 countries. Think of it as your local Chamber of Commerce, your entire rolodex, and an ongoing networking event all rolled into one. In short, if you are a professional person, you should be on LinkedIn in some form, because it allows you to:

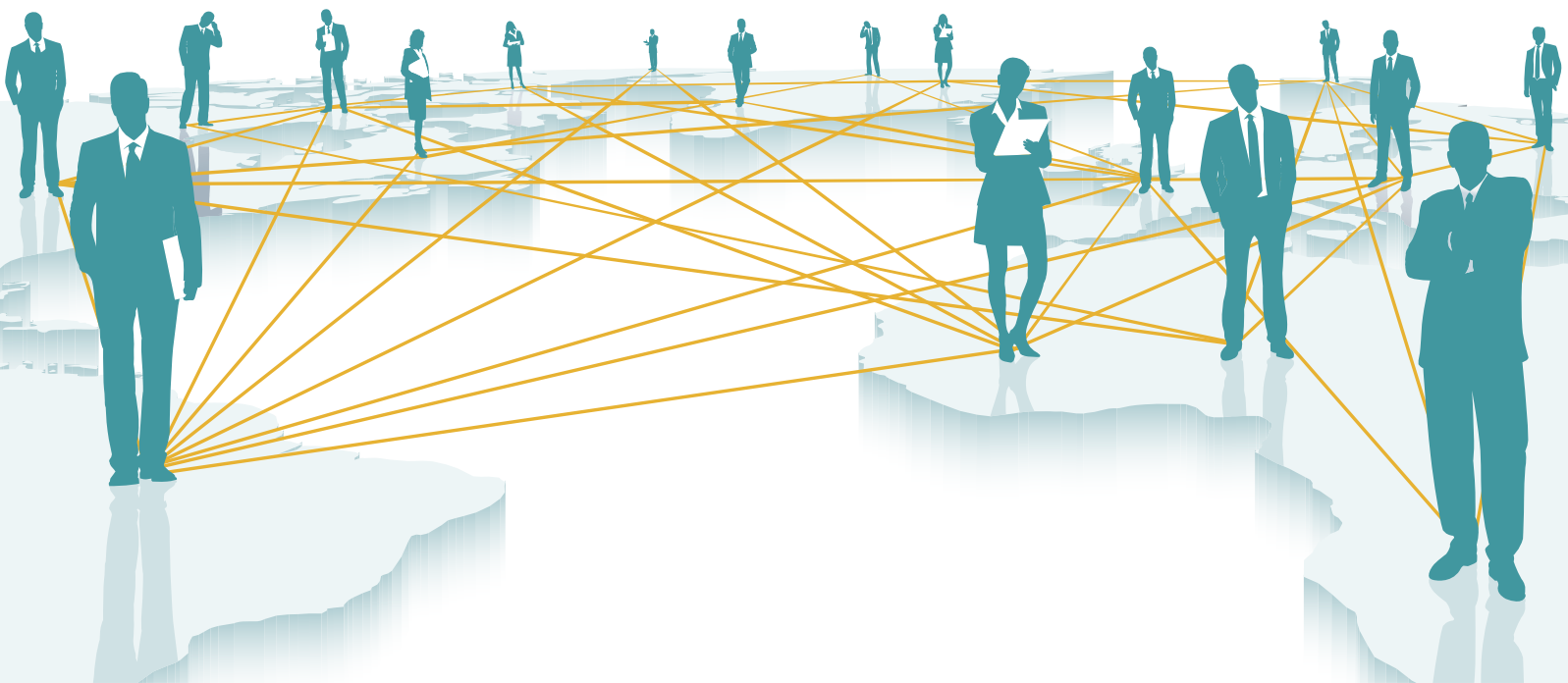
Too busy to check LinkedIn all day? Get all of your activity sent to your inbox for free with NutshellMail from Constant Contact.

- Demonstrate expertise through the content you post in the site's Answers section. Scroll through open questions posed by others on the site and answer those that fall in your area of expertise.
- Connect with professionals like you in the Groups area. Groups are discussion forums centered on a topic or industry. You can use the Groups area to share ideas with peers, pick up a few tips to help your organization grow, and connect with people who share similar passions.
- Help your search engine optimization efforts. Search engines love inbound links, and your personal profile and company page can both link back to your website, giving you a higher rank in the world of Google.
- Stay on top of industry news.

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### The “Network Effect”

As with other social networks (i.e., sites like Facebook and Twitter), LinkedIn can help your organization drive word of mouth in a way you never could have before. By sharing your expertise and content with customers, members, prospects, vendors, partners, etc. in a more social environment, you can not only stay in touch with your connections, you can also make it easy for others to share the things you are posting online with their colleagues, who can then share your content with their friends and more down the line. Even better, you can now actively encourage this online word of mouth and thank people for sharing your message.



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By leveraging LinkedIn's many features, you can increase the online visibility of your business or organization and join in on the many conversations taking place on the network. It's one powerful way to stay top of mind, find new prospects, and connect with customers and members.

In this guide's five sections, we'll show you how to quickly get up and running on LinkedIn:

1. Setting up your profile
2. Adding connections
3. Joining relevant groups
4. Making and receiving recommendations
5. Setting up your news page: LinkedIn Today



## Quick Guide to Getting Started: LinkedIn for Small Businesses and Nonprofits

### Setting up your profile

#### Step 1: Sign up

Your LinkedIn profile serves as your online business card. It tells people why they should connect with you and what types of content you might be sharing. In addition, it makes it easy for friends, colleagues, and potential customers or donors to find you online because your public profile is searchable. This is a place to show the world all the great things you've done in your professional life.

Start by going to: <https://www.linkedin.com/reg/join>

When you get there you'll see a sign-up box that looks similar to the one seen here.

Enter your first name, last name, email address, and choose a password. That's it — you've joined LinkedIn!

You'll now be asked for some additional information. If you're a small business owner, you'll want to make that clear in your profile. Start by choosing "I am currently: A business owner" from the drop-down menu.

Next, choose your country, enter your zip code, type in your company name, select your industry, and click "Create my profile." You now have a LinkedIn profile!

In the next section, we'll show you how to add connections, so for now, in the interest of time, click "Skip this step" and then click "Confirm my Account" on the next page. You can then skip the next few screens until you reach the "Choose a plan" page. And because you're just getting started, all you'll need is a basic account, so click on "Choose Basic Plan."

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### Setting up your profile continued

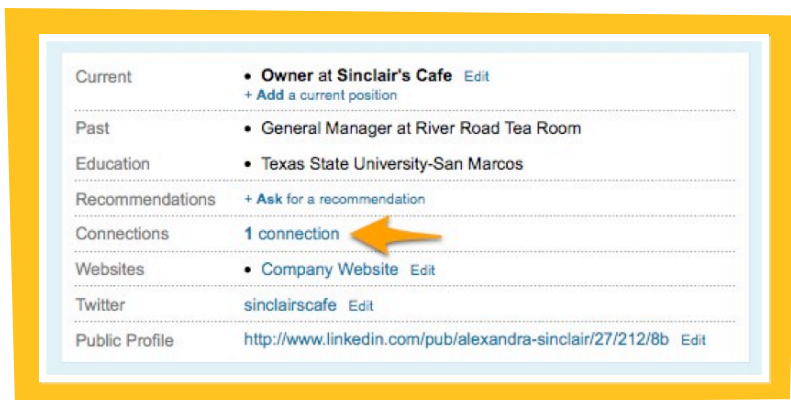
#### Step 2: Personalize your profile

Now it's time to personalize your profile so people can learn about you and your professional experience.

Start by going from your profile page and click on "Add a past position."

Fill in a company name, website (optional), industry, job title, time period you worked there, and a brief description of what you did or were responsible for. Like any good resume, be sure to present yourself in the best light possible. (Blank profiles leave a poor impression.)

Don't forget to click "Save Changes."



Next you'll want to add a school (or schools) so you can connect with alumni from your high school, college, university, or graduate program.

Adding your website(s) or blog(s) will also help people to learn more about you and your organization. And it also gives you a nice SEO (Search Engine Optimization) boost. To do add a website, go to your profile and select "Add a website."

**Note:** You can add as many URL links as you like. You may want to add a link for people to join your email newsletter list.

From this page you can also list your interests, groups, and associations you belong to, your Twitter account if you have one, and any honors and awards you've received.

As always, don't forget to click "Save Changes."

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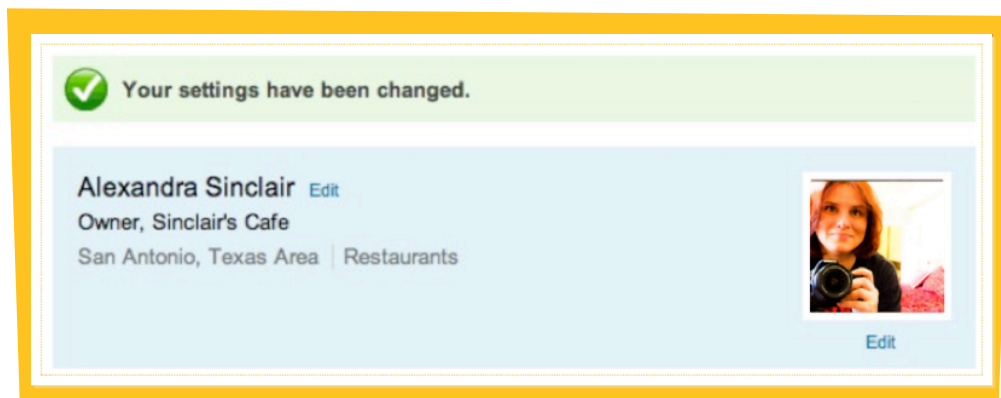
### Setting up your profile continued

#### Step 3: Edit Your Settings and Information.

You have now filled in your LinkedIn profile details, but before we can start to get connected with other people, we need to add a photo that shows what you look like in real life. To do this, just click on “Add Photo” from your profile page and follow the directions to upload a photo from your hard drive.

Depending on the size of your photo, a pop-up box may appear asking you to crop your image to showcase the desired sections. Make any changes you would like by moving and resizing the yellow box. When you’re happy with your image click “Save Photo.”

*Note: Unless you’re being chased by the paparazzi, we recommend that you keep your profile photo visible to everyone.*



Congratulations! You now have a profile pic associated with your LinkedIn profile.

You look fabulous and you’re ready to start making connections!

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### Adding connections

Making connections is the biggest reason to spend time on LinkedIn. It's like attending a networking event without the cheap appetizers and awkward conversation.

There are several ways to add Connections to your LinkedIn account. Start by logging in and clicking on Contacts, then click on Add Connections.

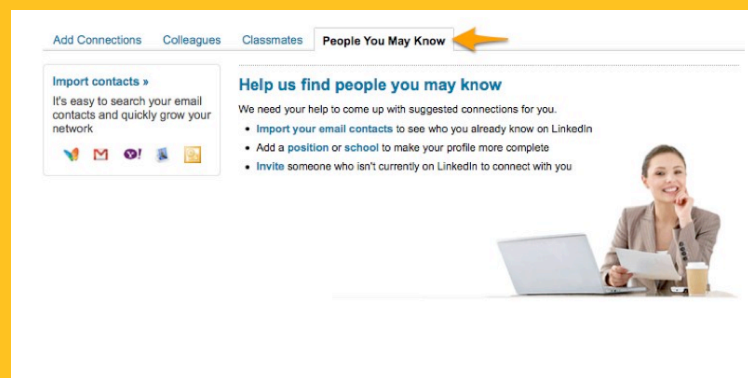
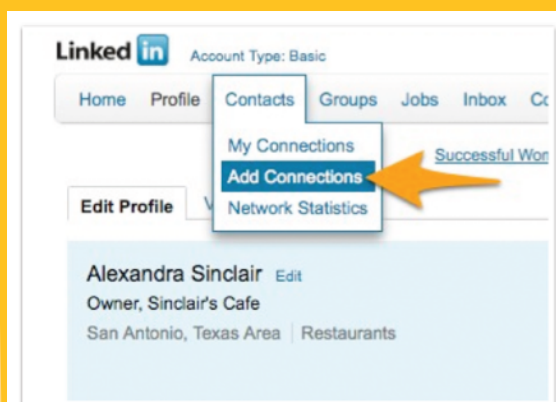
On the first screen, you're given the option of either adding contacts from your email account, or manually adding contacts by entering their email accounts in the box. You'll probably want to start by entering the email addresses of a couple contacts and click Send Invitations.

Next you should click on the second tab, "Colleagues." This screen will show you people you might have worked with at different companies or organizations in the past based on information you provided when you created your profile.

To make more connections you may also want to add "Classmates" (people you might have gone to school with, based on information found in your profile) and see if there are other people on the site who you may know (click on the "People You May Know" tab).

As you add connections, you'll see your network grow exponentially.

Even adding just a few connections to your current network can link you to tens of thousands of professionals.





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### Joining Relevant Groups

LinkedIn Groups allow you to connect with like-minded individuals, grow your network, share information, and find support. To find the right Group(s) for you, click on “Groups Directory.”

Imagine you run a café. In this case, you’d probably want to search for Groups related to Restaurants or a group about running small businesses. To get started, type in your search term and click “Search.”

When you find a Group that looks interesting, click “Join Group.”

For any Group you’re joining, you’ll be notified whenever there’s activity. To modify how often this happens, you’ll want to choose your “Group Settings” and how you’d like to receive messages.

When you’re happy with your settings, click “Join Group.”

You should see a screen like this to confirm that you’re now a member of the Group you just selected.

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn 'Join Group' interface for the 'Hospitality Recruiting Network' group. The group has 6,500+ members and is a 'Members-only Group'. The 'Join Group' section includes options to display the group logo on the profile, use a contact email (alexandracinciar@gmail.com), and choose notification preferences. The 'Delivery Frequency' is set to 'Daily digest email'. At the bottom, there is a 'Join Group' button highlighted with an orange arrow, and a 'Cancel' link.

**Note:** Some Groups require approval, so you may have to wait for a confirmation from the Group manager.

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### Making and receiving recommendations

With LinkedIn, you can ask colleagues, clients, and other people in your network to endorse you through LinkedIn Recommendations. Kind of like a reference letter, recommendations reinforce your professional identity online. Thankfully, LinkedIn makes it easy to request recommendations and return the favor.

LinkedIn recommendations from colleagues constitute “Social Proof.” Someone else has vouched that you are, indeed, good at your job and can deliver results if they get into business with you.

Writing recommendations for others can be powerful and show that your LinkedIn presence isn’t just about promoting yourself, it’s about being part of the overall network of professionals.

**Note:** If someone asks for a recommendation, but you don’t feel comfortable endorsing this person, be honest, but polite in telling him you would rather not.

To recommend someone, click on Profile and select Recommendations. From this page you can manage recommendations you’ve

received from your connections, request recommendations, and make recommendations for others.

If you’d like someone to recommend you, find a position you’d like to be endorsed for and click “Ask to be endorsed.” Then select a colleague from your current or past position to endorse you.

To recommend a colleague, search for him by name, and then write a recommendation. Try to be detailed and specific. How does this person really excel? Did he help you to solve a specific problem? How is he unique?

#### Make a recommendation

Name:  First Name  Last Name  
 ... Enter a name OR select from your connections list

Recommend this person as a:

- ☐ **Colleague:** You've worked with them at the same company
- ☐ **Service Provider:** You've hired them to provide a service for you or your company
- ☐ **Business Partner:** You've worked with them, but not as a client or colleague
- ☐ **Student:** You were at school when they were there, as a fellow student or teacher

#### Make a recommendation

Name:  First Name  Last Name  Email   
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Recommend this person as a:

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Continue

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### Setting up your news page: LinkedIn Today

As a busy professional, you have lots and lots of choices for how you aggregate the news you care about the most and want to fit into your schedule. LinkedIn Today is one great option for getting all your news in one place based on your industry.

First, go to <http://www.linkedin.com/today/> and click “Take the Tour” in the top left part of the screen, right under where it says “LinkedIn Today.”

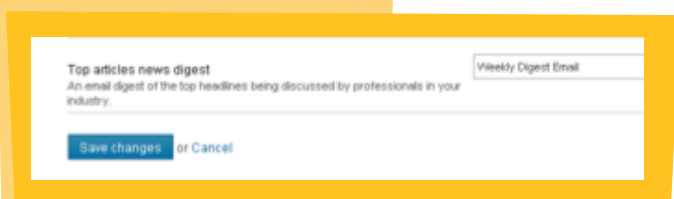
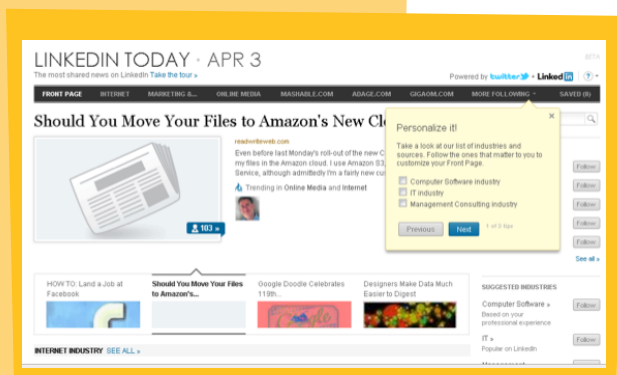
Next select the industries you want to follow based on your position and interests by clicking on the “Follow” button for each industry.

Third, choose which sources you want to see by clicking on “Sources” in the pop-up window and choosing which sources you want to show up in your news feed. If you want to see fewer options, you can choose from among the recommended options on the right hand side of your page.

Finally you’ll want to choose how you want to stay informed.

The easiest way is to get a digest of your news in your inbox. To set this up, visit <https://www.linkedin.com/settings/email-frequency> and scroll down to the bottom of the page to “Top articles news digest” and choose your frequency in the drop-down menu from weekly, daily, or never. Don’t forget to save your selection by clicking on “Save Changes.”

Another simple option is to bookmark the page and visit regularly, or to use the “News” page within the LinkedIn mobile application.



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### Tips for Success

Too busy to check LinkedIn all day? Get all of your activity sent to your inbox for free with **NutshellMail** from Constant Contact



Now that you have your LinkedIn profile set up, you'll want to make sure you're getting as much out of it as you can. Here are four easy ways to ensure you're making you and your organization look as good as you can:

- **Post Weekly:** Post something new to your profile each week. Add events, share links to blog posts and press releases, ask for and give recommendations, etc. Don't let your LinkedIn profile stagnate. But remember to keep it professional; save personal updates for Twitter or Facebook.
- **Participate in Group Discussions:** The more you participate, the more you'll build credibility and trust within your industry and specialty. If you're contributing valuable content, soon you'll be seen as an expert among by your peers.
- **Keep Your LinkedIn Profile Up to Date:** At least once every 3–4 months you should update your LinkedIn Profile, and certainly every time you receive an award or community recognition for a volunteer project, start a new position, or earn an educational achievement.
- **Ask and Answer Questions:** Tap into the power of your network 2–3 times a month to ask or answer questions (learn how to do this at <http://learn.linkedin.com/answers/>). This will keep your name and business or organization on the minds of your colleagues, and build your credibility with those colleagues, as well as with customers, prospects, donors, and others.

To learn more about social media, visit us at:  
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