

# The LinkedIn How-To

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Everything you always wanted to know about LinkedIn and its Job Postings

By Joe Zinner

## In the beginning....

In late 2002, Reid Hoffman recruits a team of old colleagues from SocialNet and PayPal to work on a new idea. Six months later, LinkedIn launches. Growth is slow at first—as few as 20 signups on some days—but, by the fall, it shows enough promise to attract an investment from Sequoia Capital. LinkedIn's CEO is [Jeff Weiner](#), previously a [Yahoo! Inc.](#) executive. Founder Reid Hoffman, previously CEO of LinkedIn, is Chairman of the Board.

## A simple primer....

LinkedIn's functionality allows users (both employees and employers) to create their own profiles and connections to each other in an online social network that represents real-world professional relationships. Users can invite anyone (whether a LinkedIn user or not) to become a connection. However, if the invitee selects "I don't know" or "Spam", this counts against the inviter. If the inviter gets too many of such responses, the account may be restricted or closed.

This list of connections can then be used in many ways:

Obtaining introductions to the connections of connections (second-degree connections) and connections of second-degree connections (third-degree connections)

LinkedIn users are able to search for positions, people and business opportunities recommended by someone in one's contact network.

Employers and recruitment professionals can post positions and as well as search for potential candidates.

Job seekers can review the posted profiles and connect with their existing contacts that may be able to introduce them.

Users can post their own photos and view photos of others to aid in identification.

Users can follow different companies and can receive notifications about positions available.

Users can save and bookmark positions that they would like to apply for.

Users can "like" and "congratulate" each other's updates and new employments.

Users can see who has visited their profile page unless the visitor has opted to remain anonymous.

In reviewing thousands of profiles over the years, as an executive search professional, I am continually surprised by the personal information, inappropriate photographs, inaccurate information, grammatical and spelling errors etc. contained in the profiles of many professionals.

## Position Postings...

LinkedIn allows users to research companies where they may be interested in working. When typing the name of a given company in the search box, statistics about the company are provided.

These may include the percentage of the most common titles/positions held within the company, the location of the company's

headquarters and offices, or a list of present and former employees.

In July 2011, LinkedIn launched a new feature allowing companies to include an "Apply with LinkedIn" button on job listing pages. This new plug in allows potential employees to apply for positions using their LinkedIn profiles as resumes. All applications will also be saved under a "Saved Jobs" tab.

I will comment later on about LinkedIn Job Postings, but for the moment, one very aggravating and frustrating feature mentioned above has caused many recruiters and employers to throw their hands up in disbelief. Potential job seekers often hit the 'Apply with LinkedIn' button with no cover letter, no information as to why they are applying for a role, no connection to the job posting itself, etc.—just a 'throw something at the wall' attitude in applying for an advertised position. In fact, I have had notes from applicants to 'check out my LinkedIn profile and contact me if you think I am a fit'.

## **Business units...**

LinkedIn derives its revenues from three business divisions.

### **1. Talent Solutions:**

Recruiters and corporations pay for:  
Posting positions and requirements to attract potential applicants  
Branded corporate pages on LinkedIn complete with careers section.  
Pay per click-through posted position profiles that are targeted to LinkedIn users who match the job profile.  
Access to the database of LinkedIn users and resumes via multiple levels of access

### **2. Marketing Solutions:**

LinkedIn advertisers pay for pay per click-through targeted ads.

### **3. Premium Subscriptions:**

LinkedIn users pay for:  
LinkedIn Business for business users  
LinkedIn Talent for recruiters  
LinkedIn JobSeeker for LinkedIn members looking for a job  
LinkedIn Sales for Sales Professionals. Some elements of the various subscription services are also on a pay per use basis such as InMail. LinkedIn has cashed in from the millions of users who provide 'free content' by posting their personal profiles and resumes on LinkedIn. What other business model allows gathering 'free inventory' to market and sell through various ways and means! Kudos to LinkedIn's business model!

## **Present Day...**

As a relative early adopter, I joined LinkedIn on August 18, 2004 and my LinkedIn # is 986,666. Today, there are now over 400 million people on LinkedIn. Imagine looking up your LinkedIn profile number today and finding out you are # 401,002,019!

LinkedIn has been described as having "become the de facto tool for professional networking". It has also been praised for its usefulness in fostering business relationships. LinkedIn is, far and the most advantageous social networking tool available to job seekers and business professionals today.

However, what began as a serious tool for professional business networking has turned into anything but! There are profiles from front line part time fast food workers to exotic entertainers to Fortune 500 CEO's to President Barack Obama. It should be noted that less than 35% of Fortune 500 CEO's have a LinkedIn profile!

LinkedIn has also received criticism, primarily regarding e-mail address mining and auto-update.

The sign up process includes a step for entering your email and other contact information (there is an opt-out feature). LinkedIn will then offer to send out contact invitations to all members in your address book or that you ever have had email conversation with. When the member's email address book is opened it is opened with all email addresses selected and the member is advised invitations will be sent to "selected" email addresses, or to all. Up to 1500 invitations can then be sent out in one click, with no possibility to undo or withdraw them. Changing the description below a member's name is seen as a change in a job title, even if it is just a wording change or even a change to "unemployed". Unless a member opts to "turn off activity updates", an update is sent to all of that person's contacts, telling them to congratulate the member on the "new job". The feature that allows LinkedIn members to "endorse" each other's skills and experience has been criticized as meaningless, since the endorsements are not necessarily accurate or given by people who have familiarity with the member's skills.

As an executive search professional, I am especially not impressed by the 'endorse' feature! In many instances, it is obvious that if a person is endorsed for a certain skill set (or you can hit endorse 'all' skills!) then a friend, business colleague or some unknown person reciprocates, it is a waste of time for all concerned.

I am also personally not impressed by written recommendations and endorsements that are 5 or even 10 years old that continue to be part of someone's LinkedIn profile! After all, in a new job search, would you provide a reference from

someone you worked with 10 years ago? In our search practice, we put zero weighting on recommendations and endorsements on someone's LinkedIn profile.

### **LinkedIn Position Postings.....**

Before I begin, I want to share recent comment from a job seeker:

*"I've actually bypassed HR and contacted hiring managers and still gotten nowhere; not even an email back. I've even done this via LinkedIn and rarely get a response. I've used friends to connect me to people (hiring personnel) via LinkedIn and gotten connected but the end person doesn't even respond to my question(s); they just connect. What's the point of connecting then?"*

*Yes, the entire system is broken but people simply don't want to communicate with people anymore when it comes to job applications as everyone is having to do more with less due to budget and staff cuts, incompetence, disrespect etc. It's a vicious circle as you know in hearing from me too many times. The people who do reach out seem to have alternative motives -- not all the time but more times than not as I've experienced over and over again.*

*Frankly, I don't even know what to do anymore on this front as everything I try doesn't work for the most part. It's an unemployed person's worst nightmare to be trying to get a job with this type of environment."*

### **Applying for jobs on line is a colossal waste of time!**

I do not believe that I could be any clearer. The recruitment and hiring process is profoundly broken!

Job postings on LinkedIn are potentially viewed by thousands and thousands of job seekers around the globe. That's the good news.

The bad news is that those thousands of views translate into thousands of applications landing in the mailboxes of employers and recruiters.

On one side, we have thousands of employers seeking to fill thousands of positions via job seekers on dozens of social networking sites and job posting boards. On the other side, we have thousands of job seekers attempting to get their applications reviewed by a human being!

With respect to job postings, employers and recruiters sometimes write delusional job ads that in many cases will not prompt very capable job seekers apply for fear of never getting the role. In other situations, I see job postings that are so vague and without substance, that thousands of job seekers hit the 'apply here' button!

Compounding the job seeker's dilemma is that many employers force feed everyone into filling out endless forms so that their Applicant Tracking Systems can extract key words to sift through thousands of applications before someone in human resources will even consider the application. There are literally hundreds of websites dedicated to job seekers who want to imbed keywords into a resume to ensure the key word searching algorithm says 'pick me'!

The 'don't call us, we'll call you' attitude permeates throughout the system. 'Only those selected will be contacted for an interview'. Applications and resumes fall into an abyss. Many of the Applicant Tracking Systems do not even have an auto response mechanism to generate an acknowledgement or receipt to the job seeker.

It is also frustrating for job seekers to watch employers post the same jobs month after month. Does the job really exist? Is the employer trolling for resumes? Why can't the employer find the 'perfect fit' after 6+ months of posting the job? Do they expect a never ending cascade of resumes to fall out of the sky?

A potential fallout for organizations that do not treat applicants in a professional manner is their products and services. If I am treated badly through an application and subsequent interview process, will I continue to purchase goods and services from this organization?

### **Internal Hiring Practices via LinkedIn....**

Thousands of employers have thousands of staff buried throughout human resources departments. By continuously posting positions on LinkedIn, there is a continuous stream of thousands of applications.

Internal recruiters are bombarded all day long with applications from every corner of the globe. For any given position, it has been our firm's experience (we only posted 4 positions on LinkedIn in 2015) 99% of the applications we receive are 'not a fit', 'are you kidding me, 'why did you bother hitting the send button?', 'way over qualified', 'way under qualified', 'check out my profile on LinkedIn', etc. etc.

I cannot imagine a day in the life of an internal recruiter who must sift through the hundreds of applications for every position posted.

Some internal recruiters are beginning to get it. They actually go out on LinkedIn to troll for potential candidates who have posted their profiles and connect with them. Then nothing happens. Internal recruiters are reluctant to pick up the phone and actually contact someone! In addition, internal recruiters will

not contact or phone potential candidates from their competitors. Instead, they wait (and wait) for applicants.

On a final note, most job seekers fall into 2 categories and are applying for posted positions because they want to leave their current employer for any number of reasons or they are unemployed—in most cases these are 'B' and 'C' players. Search professionals will actively seek out the 'A' players who are not necessarily looking for a new opportunity, but may be willing to listen if approached by a convincing individual.

### **Professional recruitment practices via LinkedIn...**

'If you think it is expensive to hire a professional, wait until you hire an amateur.'

Hiring greatness is hard work! It requires an in-depth knowledge of the leadership and culture of an organization, a detailed position profile with expectations as to how success will be measured, impact on the organization, track record of potential candidates in previous organizations, 360-degree reference checks, psychological testing, tough interview questions along with situational interview questions, panel interviews as required, etc.

A successful professional search firm will data mine candidates on LinkedIn over and over again and selectively connect with potential candidates as well as sources (individuals who are networked in a sector) and then contact individuals personally via email and telephone.

An illustration—if our firm was engaged to search for a Vice President and CFO of a manufacturing organization in London, Ontario, we would 'research' every individual who has a professional accounting designation with a 30 to 60-minute commute in concentric circles around London, Ontario. We would also search

for individuals who have both a professional accounting designation and attended Western University, University of Waterloo and University of Guelph. Many individuals in today's hectic pace in the Greater Toronto Area (commuting times and associated costs), may consider selling their homes and moving their families to a more balanced situation. Perhaps they grew up in London, Ontario area and would return for lifestyle, elder care and a multitude of other reasons. Nevertheless, as search professionals we go deep into people's LinkedIn profiles to determine not where the potential local candidates may exist but to cast our net wider.

A great and many times overlooked benefit in using a professional search firm is that successful candidates are normally guaranteed for a period of 1 year after hire date. Before using a search firm, it is always wise to ask 'how many candidates have you or your firm had to replace within the 1 year window?' Internal recruiters and human resource departments are not held accountable for the success of newly hired candidates.

In closing, our firm has been called in dozens of times over the past 2 or 3 years to bail out an overwhelmed senior executive and human resources departments. In one case, a senior executive was provided with over 200 hard copy resumes by her human resources department as she was leaving to go on a one week trip across the country to review! When she landed in Vancouver, we received a message that she wanted to engage our firm immediately upon her return.

*Our firm would be delighted to review your needs and customize our approach before you hit tilt!*



**Joe Zinner** is President of Zinner & Company Leadership Search, which he founded in 2002. Previously Joe was a Partner with two International Executive search firms - The Caldwell Partners and Ray & Berndtson (now Odgers Berndtson). His client engagements have covered a broad range of industries and functional areas including technology, not for profit, communications, utilities, public sector, multi-media and consumer products. Joe also has more than 20 years of progressively senior sales and marketing management responsibilities with organizations including Rogers Communications, Bell ExpressVu, AT&T and Xerox. He is a strong supporter of community and charitable organizations; he has been an active Board Member of Reach for the Rainbow, Saint Elizabeth Healthcare Foundation; and also an Advisory Board Member for Special Olympics, Sports Celebrities Festival and previously a Board Director of the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation and a Loaned Executive, United Way Toronto. Joe holds an Economics Degree from the University of Toronto. He resides in Ballantrae, Ontario, with his wife Maureen and has two grown daughters.

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