

The Busy Executive's Guide to LinkedIn

If you're reading this guide, you probably already know that LinkedIn is a social media networking platform for business professionals (no judgment if you don't!). You may still think of LinkedIn as just an online version of your resume, but in the past few years it has become a powerful marketing tool, especially for B2B businesses and executives. We like to say that this shift came with the rise of the "LinkedIn thought leader." Thought leaders are people who publish their insights, opinions and valuable content aimed at other executives in their fields on LinkedIn.

You might see thought leaders who write articles on major news websites, or who speak at conferences or participate in webinars to share their knowledge. But all of these avenues are mostly one-sided, and they keep thought leaders at an untouchable level, like the celebrities of the business world. Social media, on the other hand, allows thought leaders to become more accessible, opening up two-way conversations with their followers. And in turn, it allows pretty much anyone to *become* a thought leader. It's much easier to discover the work of someone new on LinkedIn because of things like hashtags, the news feed and the trending algorithm (more on those later!).

This guide should be used as a reference for becoming a better thought leader on LinkedIn using a process that we call Executive Activation. To make the most of this guide, read it all the way through and revisit often. Use it like you would a dictionary or an encyclopedia—mark it up with your own notes and reach out to us with questions if something is still unclear.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **LinkedIn Post:** Short pieces of content comprised of text no longer than 1,300 **characters** (including spaces) for a personal page and 700 characters for a company page. Posts usually include links to outside websites, videos, SlideShares, photos or infographics. For the purposes of Executive Activation, topics should focus on succinct opinions and industry news analyses.
- **LinkedIn Article:** Long pieces of content that live on LinkedIn like a blog post. In general, if it's too long for a post, you should make it an article. For the purposes of Executive Activation, topics should focus on in-depth analyses of timely industry news and issues.
- **Blog Post:** Content that lives on your website's blog, typically 500 – 1,200 **words**. For the purposes of Executive Activation, the topics of blog posts should be long-lasting insights within your industry.
- **Like/Reaction:** Clicking the "thumbs up" symbol on a post. Reactions on LinkedIn include Celebrate (clapping hands), Love (heart), Insightful (lightbulb) and Curious (chin-scratching face). When you like or react to a post, that post will show up in your feed for your audience to see (even if they don't follow the person or company whose post you've reacted to).
- **Comment:** Text commentary on a LinkedIn post or article. When you comment on a post, that post will show up in your feed for your audience to see (even if they don't follow the person or company whose post you've reacted to).
- **Share:** Sharing someone else's LinkedIn post or article in your feed for your audience to see.
- **Clicks:** Clicking on a post that includes a link to a website, blog post or LinkedIn article.
- **Engagement:** The total number of likes, shares, comments and clicks that a post or article receives.
- **Reach:** The number of people who will (potentially) see your post or article in their feeds. When you like or comment on someone's post, it will show up in your feed for your followers to see. Similarly, when someone else likes or comments on your post, it will show up in your feed, thus increasing your overall reach.
- **Message:** Private text conversation between you and one of your connections.
- **Connection:** Someone you've added to your LinkedIn network. Adding a connection allows someone to send you messages and see your full profile, posts and contact information.
- **InMail:** A message that is sent to you from someone who is not already a connection.
- **News Feed:** The feed of posts from your connections as well as people and companies you follow.

- **Trending:** A post that has gotten a lot of likes, clicks and comments over a short period of time. You might see trending posts that are categorized under specific hashtags or they might show up in your general news feed.
- **Hashtag:** A word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#) used on posts for the purpose of topic categorization. You can follow hashtags on LinkedIn so that all posts using those hashtags show up in your feed. You can also search hashtags and see a list of posts using them. Using hashtags on your posts allows them to reach more people.

LINKEDIN PROFILES

Your profile on LinkedIn is more than just a resume—it's a reflection of your personal brand.

Here are some ways to make the most of your LinkedIn profile. Overhaul your profile all at once or take it one step at a time. Implementing even one of these changes per week will get you well on your way to improving your profile.

Choose your profile picture.

Your profile picture should be a professional headshot if you have one. If you don't, be sure that your picture is framing your face (no far away shots) and has good lighting. When in doubt, have a friend or family member take a simple photo with your phone. Never use a selfie as your profile picture.

Write your headline.

The headline of your LinkedIn profile is a place to describe what you do in 120 characters or less. It's one piece of information other LinkedIn users can see in search results and on your profile even if you're not connected to them. Your headline could include your job title, but it could also include a succinct description of "what you stand for" to communicate your personality clearly. Resist the temptation to fill it up with buzzwords.

Example of a well-written headline:

Senior Director, Marketing | Empowering clients to be heroes of their own story

This headline lists a job title and a short description of the person's overarching goals that shows their personality and will make them stand out among other thought leaders.

Example of a poorly-written headline:

Innovative Business Leader

This headline is vague—it doesn't clearly communicate the person's role at their company. It also starts with an overused buzzword and is unlikely to stand out.

Write your summary.

Your summary is the “About” section of your profile. For the purposes of Executive Activation, it’s best to start your summary with a one-line statement about who you are as an executive. Then think about your story. What makes you tick? What are your core values and how do you apply them when you’re at work? Choose two or three of these story elements, write those as “headlines” and add descriptions under each. This makes your summary easy to scan, but doesn’t skimp on details of who you are.

Include past job descriptions.

Detailed descriptions of your previous roles will define you as an authority in your field. Be sure to include some of your key accomplishments and responsibilities, especially as they relate to the role that you have now.

Note: Personal profiles cannot be used as company pages; more on that below.

USING LINKEDIN AS AN EXECUTIVE

Becoming a thought leader on LinkedIn doesn’t stop at having a good profile. It’s essential to stay consistently active in order to build up a reputation, have meaningful conversations and make beneficial connections. Here’s how you should participate on LinkedIn.

Write a post.

From the home page, click on “start a post.” Write or paste your copy and link. We find that the best posts [“curate” content from another source](#)—a media outlet or another company’s blog—and then offer a brief bit of analysis on that content.

If you include a link, wait a few seconds after you paste it into the text box. A link preview will pop up, usually including a picture, and you should then delete the text of the link itself. This not only makes your post look cleaner but pulling in the headline and a picture of the article you’re linking to could increase engagement. At the end of your post, include a few relevant hashtags. LinkedIn will suggest hashtags related to your interests at the bottom of the post box.

You can also include multimedia elements in your post by clicking on the camera, video or document images at the bottom of the post box. Note that if you’d like to include a video that is uploaded to YouTube, you should paste the link into the text box instead of using the video button. The video will populate into the post itself and you can then delete the link. If you upload a

document to LinkedIn, all users will be able to download it as a PDF, so make sure it's something that has your logo or a watermark on it before uploading.

Tagging colleagues, companies or other thought leaders in your posts is a great way to get more eyes on them. To tag someone in a post, use the "@" symbol first and then start to type in their name or company name. A list of options will pop up below. Select the person or company you want to tag. Some tips: Make sure you actually click on their name instead of just typing it in, and make sure there aren't extra characters before it. You'll know that they're tagged if their name shows up bold within the post text before you post it. After you post it, their name should appear blue and bold if they are tagged correctly.

Use LinkedIn post templates.

LinkedIn has also added a variety of post templates to help you craft the perfect post for a few different occasions. Click the plus sign at the bottom of the post box and you'll see a few post options. "Celebrate an occasion" will take you to a number of options, including giving colleagues kudos or celebrating a work anniversary, which will populate an image, caption and hashtag to match the event. "Find an expert" is a way to search for mentors, freelancers or advisors and will include the category and service you're looking for, as well as the location, a short description and pre-populated hashtags. "Create a poll" is a great way to populate an interactive post. Once you fill in the poll options you can add a caption with hashtags or other outside links related to your poll. "Share a profile" will let you share a link to a connection's profile with a pre-populated caption and hashtag, both of which can be edited to your preferences.

Use hashtags.

Hashtags are useful in getting more eyes on your posts. There are a few different ways to use hashtags: First, you can follow them to make sure that relevant industry news shows up in your feed regularly. One way to do this is by clicking on a hashtag in someone's post. This will take you to the feed of posts tagged with that specific hashtag. At the top, you'll see the hashtag, how many followers it has and the option to follow.

You can also follow hashtags through the left navigation bar on your profile. At the bottom of the navigation bar, click "discover more." If you already follow some hashtags, you'll be redirected to a page with a list of popular hashtags and the option to follow them. If you're not yet following any, you'll see a button that reads "Follow fresh perspectives," which will direct you to a page of suggested people, companies and hashtags to follow. Once you follow relevant hashtags, it's easier to find new posts to comment on and share.

Visiting the "discover more" page can also help you decide which hashtags to include in future posts. Each hashtag on this page lists how many users follow it. This will give you an idea of how many people will potentially see your posts if you use these hashtags. Be sure to pick just a few

(two to four) to tag each of your posts. It's a good idea to mix up which ones you use, so you can make sure you're in front of a range of diverse audiences.

Write an article.

On the homepage, click on "Write an article on LinkedIn" in the "Start a post" box. Write and edit your article in your preferred word processing program or platform, then copy and paste it into the article editor on LinkedIn. Keep in mind that you can include multimedia elements in your article in order to get more reader interaction, as well as links to outside sources. You can add videos, images, infographics, slides, links and block quotes by clicking the box to the left of the text. Other text editing tools are in a bar at the top of the page.

Don't forget to add a header image to your post. Click on the plus sign in the top section of your article to add an image. Unless you have a designed image or brand-specific asset to use, you can use a stock photo here. Try looking on [Pexels](#), [Unsplash](#) or [Pixabay](#) for royalty-free stock images.

All LinkedIn articles will automatically save as drafts once you start them. You can share an unpublished draft with colleagues to review by clicking on "Publishing menu" in the text editing bar and then selecting "Share draft." You can access your drafts from this same menu or by clicking on "Me" in the top navigation bar, selecting "Posts & Activity" and then clicking on "Drafts" in the left side menu.

Once you publish your article, share it with your connections and colleagues. Scroll to the bottom of the article and click "Share" to post your article in your feed. Include a caption that summarizes the topic of your article, tag any relevant sources of inspiration and add in hashtags. You can also send the direct link to the article to colleagues and ask them to share.

Alert your colleagues that you posted.

After you post, there are a few ways to send your post to colleagues. First, click the three dots in the top right corner of the post. From there, you can copy the direct link to paste into an email to colleagues or share in Slack, Teams or another communication tool. You can also click "Send" at the bottom of the post and it will populate a private LinkedIn message that you can send to colleagues and connections.

Respond to comments on your posts.

If someone comments on your posts, you should reply to them to start a conversation. When you're replying to a comment, make sure you're clicking the small comment button below their comment to reply, instead of just adding another comment to the original post. This "threads" the comments so it's easy to follow conversations on a post from multiple people.

Comment on and react to other posts.

You should comment when your colleague or company posts something you find interesting or have an opinion on, when you see a conversation in the comments of a post that you'd like to join, and when you see a post from anyone that you'd like to share insight on.

If you see a post that you agree with or appreciate, you can add a like or reaction to it without commenting. This is a great way to support your colleagues and other thought leaders, but if you have more to say, be sure to comment on the post as well to share your insights.

WRITING TIPS

Authenticity is key.

Make sure you show your personality on your profile! An important aspect of becoming a thought leader is standing out in a crowd of similar executives. Add a header image of something that interests you, like a scenic view from a mountain you recently visited or art you admire. And be sure to include extracurricular activities in your profile. Do you volunteer your time at a nonprofit? Teach classes in your field? Have a passion for ultramarathons? Include these things in the sections at the bottom of your profile or in your summary.

Keep your tone of voice consistent.

If you've ever spoken or written on behalf of your company, you understand the importance of staying on brand. You also need to stay on brand when posting and commenting on your personal LinkedIn page. This means keeping a consistent tone of voice. This does *not* mean creating a whole new persona just for LinkedIn. Your tone of voice should be authentic to who you are as an executive and a person.

To nail down your tone of voice, think about how you communicate with your colleagues and clients every day. Do you make a lot of jokes or are you more straightforward? Do you tell it like it is or do you always have a positive perspective? It may help to think of a few words that describe your personality and keep them in mind when writing your posts and comments. Before you post anything, reread what you've written and ask yourself, "Does this reflect my personality? Is this written in my tone of voice?"

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How often should I use LinkedIn?

You should log in to LinkedIn *at least* two to three times per week, but it's a good practice to log in for five minutes every day. Make it a habit while you're checking your email in the morning or coming back from a lunch break. Consider downloading the free LinkedIn mobile app to make staying engaged even easier.

Try to interact with one or two posts every time you log in, whether you're commenting to weigh in on an article or sharing a colleague's recent post. But make sure it's authentic and something that you're interested in! Don't just like or comment on a post for the sake of doing it.

How do I know when to write what?

You should write a **post** when you find an article that you're interested in and you have a comment that is thoughtful and can start a conversation.

You should write an **article** when there is a topic or piece of news that you can write a more in-depth analysis on, or if you begin writing a post and determine it's over the character limit.

Blog posts are helpful content on evergreen topics published on your company's website. These can be written on newsworthy topics that many people in your audience would find relevant and helpful. For example, hurricane season happens every year—it makes sense to write a blog post about how to prepare your business and home for hurricane season. Once you write and post a blog on your website, share it on LinkedIn with a short description for your connections to see and share.

What should be shared on an individual account?

Anything you find interesting and relevant to your industry! Industry-focused news and articles from outside sources, posts from people you're following, posts and articles from your colleagues, company announcements and updates, and your own articles and blog posts are all great examples of what you should share on LinkedIn.

When should I send messages?

The best use of private messaging is for a short interaction, or to get someone's email address or other contact information, whether it is an acquaintance or someone who you know well and don't have their updated information. But beware: Messages are not equivalent to emails. Many people have their email notifications for LinkedIn turned off, so they might not see your message in a timely manner. Private communication is best done through email or phone outside of LinkedIn.

Who should I connect with on LinkedIn?

You should connect with professional contacts and clients on LinkedIn. Make sure you connect with your current and former colleagues.

You can also “follow” people and companies on LinkedIn who you may not know directly, but whose industry insights you appreciate. When you follow someone, it means their posts will show up in your news feed. To follow someone on LinkedIn, go to their profile, click on “More” in the top right corner, and select “Follow.” Note that some well-known thought leaders may have “Follow” set as a main button on their profile instead of “Connect.”

USING LINKEDIN AS A COMPANY

Company pages represent businesses on LinkedIn. You cannot have a personal profile as a company page, as they have different capabilities and uses. But creating and using your company page is just as important as using personal profiles.

Complete your company page.

Most of your company profile can be edited by clicking the pencil image on the right side of the header bar. This will bring you to an editing menu with multiple pages.

Make sure that you have the correct name, logo and tagline for your company under “Page info.” Under “Overview” you can edit your company’s description and other relevant information about size and industry. Under “Location” you can enter your office address. It’s also important to add a header image that is cohesive with your brand.

Choose your community hashtags.

Community hashtags can be useful for tracking conversations that happen around your industry and your company, specifically. They are also useful in joining industry conversations as a company. Your company page can choose three community hashtags. These can be changed at any time. Choose your hashtags in the editing menu on your profile.

If you’d like to track conversation happening about your company, you can add a hashtag with your company name (e.g., #scribewise). Choose other hashtags that are relevant to your industry and have a large number of followers; your company page can only comment on and like posts that appear in those hashtag feeds.

To interact with posts that appear with your community hashtags, navigate to them through your company page. Your hashtags are located in a panel in the bottom right corner of your page. Once you click on a hashtag, it will bring you to a feed of posts. Within that feed, anything that you like or comment on will appear as an interaction from the company.

Note: Having a strategy for your hashtag usage is an important part of organic marketing through social media. It creates repeatable messages and helps your organization go deeper into conversations. Need some guidance for creating your hashtag strategy? Scribewise can help.

Set your admins.

Anyone who you set as an admin on your company page will have access to edit the page, post jobs, change hashtags and write posts. If you'd like multiple employees to manage LinkedIn, add them as admins. There is no separate login for a company page.

Gain followers.

Expand your audience by gaining followers on your company page. Do this by posting on a regular basis with relevant hashtags, tagging other companies or industry thought leaders in your posts and commenting on posts in your community hashtags.

Another way to gain followers is to invite your personal connections on LinkedIn. This is something that all company page admins can do. On the right side of your company page, there is a panel that suggests "Invite Connections to Follow." LinkedIn gives companies 100 credits each month (shared by all admins) to invite connections to follow their page. If your connection likes your page, the credit used to invite them is returned. Each month you will receive a new bank of credits.

Make sure your employees follow your page and list your company as their employer. Invite your clients and customers to like your page with the tool above or simply send them a link to your LinkedIn page and ask them to follow.

Post as a company.

Just as on your personal page, you can post as a company on LinkedIn. Note that you cannot write a LinkedIn article as a company. There is also a shorter character limit for company posts compared to personal posts (700 characters instead of 1,300).

You should use your company page to post relevant industry news, blog posts from your website, articles that feature you or your employees and webinars or events you're participating in. You can also share your employees' LinkedIn posts and articles on your company page.

Get your employees involved.

It's important for your team to be involved on your company LinkedIn page. When they like and comment on company posts, those posts will show up in their feeds to their connections and followers. The more interaction your posts get, the more likely they are to appear as "trending" posts within specific hashtags.

You can notify your employees when you post something new once every 24 hours. On the top of every post on your company page, you'll see "Notify your employees." Again: Make sure that all employees have your company listed as their current place of work in their profiles so that they remain connected to your company page.

Note: If you're an admin on the company page and you're trying to share or interact with a company post on your personal page, you will need to click on "View as member" on the company page before liking, sharing or commenting.

Gather insight.

LinkedIn Analytics are great tools to give you some insight into your company page, its followers and its post performance. On the admin view of your page, you will see analytics under every post. Here are some key terms you should know to decipher your analytics:

- **Organic impressions:** This refers to how many people saw your post. The number is determined by how many feeds it shows up in without paying for sponsorship. If people share or comment on the post, this number will be higher. Similarly, if you're using hashtags, the number of people who see your posts will be higher.
- **Click-through rate:** The number of people who clicked on your post's link over the number of people who saw your post.
- **Engagements:** The number of people who interacted with your post (reactions, comments, shares, clicks) over the number of people who saw your post.

You can also see a larger picture of how your posts are performing by clicking on "Analytics" in the top navigation bar and selecting "Updates." This will show you a graph of how your posts are performing over time, so you can compare which posts have done better than others. It's a good idea to check in on these analytics periodically to see which of your posts are resonating with your audience and adjust your strategy accordingly.

Another useful tool is the "Visitors" page, also located in the "Analytics" drop-down menu. You will see a graph showing the visitors to your page over time, as well as the number of clicks to your website and the industries your visitors work in. Here are some terms to know when looking at visitor analytics:

- **Page views:** The number of times your page has been viewed by visitors.
- **Unique visitors:** The number of visitors that have viewed your page, not counting the number of views per visitor.
- **Custom button clicks:** Your custom button is the link to your website, which you can customize by choosing from a number of different phrases (Contact us, learn more, register, sign up, visit website). This measures the number of clicks on your custom website button.

An effective way to use your visitor analytics is to compare them to your posts, job listings, tags and other interactions on LinkedIn. Did one of your employees share a post of yours? Check out your visitor analytics to see if you saw a spike in visitors. Notice a spike in visitors on a particular day? See what you posted that day or what you may have been tagged in. This will give you insight into what's working and not working on your LinkedIn page.

CONCLUSION

You made it to "the end!" Whether you're brand new to social media or trying to expand your presence on LinkedIn, all of this can be overwhelming. We suggest taking it one step at a time. Find one or two things to work on every week, and slowly but surely you'll start to see more followers, more interactions and more business opportunities. We also want to acknowledge that there is always more to learn when it comes to using LinkedIn, and this guide doesn't cover every nook and cranny. Social media can change rapidly, so it's important to stay on your toes with your LinkedIn strategy. And we'll do the same, updating this document or alerting you whenever we discover something new to be learned.

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