

## Ten Tips on Building a Strong Profile

**LinkedIn is all about connecting, but before we connect, we look for what we have in common. That's the key to putting together a profile that jump-starts conversation. Think of your profile as a way to promote your brand—a professional permalink, a fixed point on the web to promote your skills, your knowledge, your personality. Brands build trust by using an authentic voice and telling a credible story. Here are ten tips to help you do the same:**

**1 Don't cut and paste your resume.**

LinkedIn hooks you into a network, not just a human resources department. You wouldn't hand out your resume before introducing yourself, so don't do it here. Instead, describe your experience and abilities as you would to someone you just met. And write for the screen, in short blocks of copy with visual or textual signposts.

**2 Borrow from the best marketers.**

Light up your profile with your voice. Use specific adjectives, colorful verbs, active construction ("managed project team," not "responsible for project team management"). Act naturally: don't write in the third person unless that formality suits your brand. Picture yourself at a conference or client meeting. How do you introduce yourself? That's your authentic voice, so use it.

**3 Write a personal tagline.**

That line of text under your name? It's the first thing people see in your profile. It follows your name in search hit lists. It's your brand. (Note: your e-mail address is not a brand!) Your company's brand might so strong that it and your title are sufficient. Or you might need to distill your professional personality into a more eye-catching phrase, something that at a glance describes who you are.

**4 Put your elevator pitch to work.**

Go back to your conference introduction. That 30-second description, the essence of who you are and what you do, is a personal elevator pitch. Use it in the Summary section to engage readers. You've got 5–10 seconds to capture their attention. The more meaningful your summary is, the more time you'll get from readers.

**5 Point out your skills.**

Think of the Specialties field as your personal search engine optimizer, a way to refine the ways people find and remember you. This searchable section is where that list of industry buzzwords from your resume belongs. Also: particular abilities and interests, the personal values you bring to your professional performance, even a note of humor or passion.

**6 Explain your experience.**

Help the reader grasp the key points: briefly say what the company does and what you did or do for them. Picture yourself at that conference, again. After you've introduced yourself, how do you describe what you do, what your company does? Use those clear, succinct phrases here—and break them into visually digestible chunks.

**7 Distinguish yourself from the crowd.**

Use the Additional Information section to round out your profile with a few key interests. Add websites that showcase your abilities or passions. Then edit the default "My Website" label to encourage click-throughs (you get Google page rankings for those, raising your visibility). Maybe you belong to a trade association or an interest group; help other members find you by naming those groups. If you're an award winner, recognized by peers, customers, or employers, add prestige without bragging by listing them here.

### **8 Ask and answer questions.**

Thoughtful questions and useful answers build your credibility. The best ones give people a reason to look at your profile. Make a point of answering questions in your field, to establish your expertise, raise your visibility, and most important, to build social capital with people in your network—you may need answers to a question of your own down the road.

### **9 Improve your Google PageRank.**

Pat your own back and others'. Get recommendations from colleagues, clients, and employers who can speak credibly about your abilities or performance. (Think quality, not quantity.) Ask them to focus on a specific skill or personality trait that drives their opinion of you. Make meaningful comments when you recommend others. And mix it up—variety makes your recommendations feel authentic.

### **10 Build your connections.**

Connections are one of the most important aspects of your brand: the company you keep reflects the quality of your brand. What happens when you scan a profile and see that you know someone in common? That profilee's stock with you soars. The value of that commonality works both ways. So identify connections that will add to your credibility and pursue those.

**A final note: As you add connections and recommendations, your profile develops into a peer-reviewed picture of you, of your personal brand. Make sure it's in focus, well composed—and easy to find. Remember that permalink? Edit your public profile's URL to reflect your name or tagline, then put it to work: add it to your blog, link to it from your website, include it in your e-mail signature. Then go start a conversation.**