

## Optimizing Your LinkedIn Profile

Contrary to popular belief, LinkedIn is not just your online resume. It can be so much more...if you take the time to use it as effectively as possible. Whether you're a job seeker, consultant, business owner, networker—whatever—your LinkedIn Profile is a good way to give a terrific first impression. Think of it as your initial interview!

Did you know that in 2010, HR and recruiting professionals plan to use LinkedIn **86%** of the time to research potential candidates?<sup>1</sup> Equally important is the fact that 70% of the time, recruiters **reject** candidates based on online information.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it's critical to put your best foot forward and to do everything you can to raise yourself above other candidates. Follow the steps outlined in this document to optimize your LinkedIn profile.

It's very important that your LinkedIn profile matches your printed resume...to a point. The goal is to use your resume as a starting point, then go from there.

If you're not looking for a job, you still want to have your profile optimized as it's a great business tool. Also, 77% of HR and recruiting professionals reported that they found passive job candidates—people *not* actively seeking employment—via social networks (including LinkedIn).<sup>3</sup>

### Basic Information

For your first and last name, use your legal name. However, if you are more commonly known by a nickname, or have a former or maiden name, enter that in the "Former/Maiden Name" box.

Enter your current Country and Zip Code (which is used in advanced searches).

LinkedIn has a lengthy list of "Industries" to select from, but it is not all inclusive. If your industry is not listed, select as close a match as possible. In addition, if you are changing careers, select the industry you want to move into, not what you are currently in.

### Professional "Headline"

Without a doubt, this is one of the most important fields in LinkedIn—and it should **not** be your job title! It *should* describe what you do (or what you want to do). You have 120 characters to describe yourself to your target audience. Use descriptive terms that makes someone want to read the rest of your profile. This is just like a newspaper headline: make it interesting! For example, which person would you want to know more about?

Vice President of Marketing

*or*

Brand management specialist, marketing strategist, search engine optimization (SEO) expert, social media consultant

### Photo

It's important to have a current photo on your profile page. While it doesn't have to be taken by a professional photographer, it should look professional. This is not the place to post a casual photo. Crop it to show just your face and not much more. However, you should be dressed in the same way that most people in your industry dress.

Headline

**Deborah Krier**

Social media adviser, speaker, and trainer ♦ Meeting & event planner ♦ PR Pro, marketing expert ♦ [debkrier.wordpress.com](http://debkrier.wordpress.com)

Greater Denver Area Professional Training & Coaching



# From the desk of

## Deb Krier, The SocialLight

### Summary

Next to your Professional Headline, your Summary is the most important part of your profile. You have 2,000 characters (nearly a full page) to write the “story” of your professional career. Put on your creative writing hat. As it’s often hard to write about yourself, ask your friends and associates for help if needed. Use descriptive terms and industry buzzwords—the important thing to remember for this section is to use words that someone who is searching for a person with your job skills and experience will use. LinkedIn doesn’t provide much flexibility with formatting, but you can add some special characters (see end of this document for instructions). You may want to write this section in a word processing application in order to check spelling and grammar. Then, paste it into LinkedIn. Keep your paragraphs short to make them easy to read. You can even include sections and subtitles if you want.

**Note:** this is your personal story, so it should be written in first person (“I”) as opposed to third person (“Deborah”). When you speak with someone, you say “I did” not “Deborah did.” The same applies here.

As with your Professional Headline, this is the area to catch people’s attention, so make it count!

I am a business owner, marketing and public relations expert with over 15 years of experience who teaches people how to use social media.

*or*

I am passionate about teaching people how to use social networking to enhance their professional credibility and to promote their businesses. My favorite social media sites are LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, but I recognize that there are many more and I encourage people to find what's best for them.

I show people how to use these tools to their best advantage. I present seminars and workshops and I work with people one-on-one. I really enjoy working with people who are searching for a new job, showing them how to incorporate these tools into their job search.

I’m also an entrepreneur. I founded Wise Women Communications, a full-service PR, marketing and advertising agency. I also founded WWC Events, which specializes in planning events for businesses and nonprofit organizations. I have incorporated social media into these organizations, as well as using traditional marketing tools.

### Specialties

This is a list of your areas of expertise. Use keywords and phrases that are common in your industry or your profession. In addition, use a thesaurus to include synonyms and list all your specialties in a column, rather than long sentences. You can use 500 characters, so there’s no need to be brief.

### Experience

List current and past work experience in this section. As with the Summary, you have 2,000 characters to provide detailed information on your work history, expanding from your printed resume. For example, your resume may state:

- Managed 20 employees and an annual budget of \$200,000

In your LinkedIn Profile, use this information, but expand on it to describe in detail your responsibilities:

- I managed 20 employees and our department was directly responsible for \_\_\_\_\_. My department’s annual budget was \$200,000. When I became department manager, it was \$300,000, but through cost-saving measures such as \_\_\_\_\_ we were able to reduce the budget.

Include all work history that pertains to why you are on LinkedIn.

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### Volunteer Experience

There are several places where you can include your volunteer experience. It is important to include this information to humanize yourself. If you have volunteer experience that directly ties to your career, you can include it in the Experience section. Just make it clear in the text that the position is/was a voluntary one.

You can also include volunteer experience in the Groups and Associations section.

### Education

Include all the education you have, including business and professional training. Also include course work that didn't lead to a degree and current courses that you are taking. If your education included special course studies (i.e., areas of emphasis) be sure to list that information. If you participated in activities and societies at school, list them in this section.

### Recommendations

In LinkedIn, more *is* better regarding recommendations (also known as references). If possible, you want to have several from each place you worked. While you do want to have recommendations from people who supervised your work, as long as it's made clear who the reference is coming from, it doesn't have to be a supervisor. References can also come from co-workers and people you supervised—even classmates! In addition, get recommendations from clients and customers, if applicable.

LinkedIn Recommendations can only come from an actual person who has a LinkedIn profile. This makes them credible as they are from a “real person” and cannot be faked. However, if you have references from people not on LinkedIn, you can use them. Paste them into the Experiences section, making it clear they are a reference, using quotation marks and the name, title and company for the person providing the reference.

When you ask someone for a Recommendation, it's OK to remind them “how” you worked together and when. It's also acceptable to provide them with information on why you are asking for the recommendation, so they can make sure what they write is appropriate.

You review the Recommendation before it is visible on your profile. Make sure you do! Check for spelling errors, incorrect information and so forth. If you need to have the recommendation revised, do so. The person making the recommendation wants to make sure it's correct, too. And, don't forget to thank them for their kind words! Finally, if possible, return the favor by writing a recommendation for them.

### Connections

How many Connections you have is entirely up to you. Some people prefer a high number, while others focus specifically on those who can help them in their career.

LinkedIn “suggests” possible connections, based on your information, your connections and their connections, and interests. If you see a **1st** next to someone's name, you are directly connected to them.

If you see a **2nd** next to someone's name, you are connected to someone who is connected to them. A **3rd** adds one additional connection to the chain.

If there is no number, you don't have any direct connections, but it is still acceptable to ask them to connect—as long as you explain to them why you want to connect.

If you see **group** next to someone's name, it means that they are in a LinkedIn group that you are in. You might want to connect with them because you have at least one common interest!

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## Websites

You can include three websites in this section. What you include is up to you—it can be your company’s website, your blog, your personal website, your Facebook page, and so on. What’s important is to change the title from the default names of “My Website” or “My Blog” (or the other choices) to the specific name of the site. Click the down arrow to select “Other” and then put the name in the first box and the URL in the second box.



Websites: Other: ▾ Deb Krier, The SocialLight http://www.debkrier.com

- Choose...
- My Website
- My Company
- My Blog
- My RSS Feed
- My Portfolio
- Other

## Twitter

If you are on Twitter, you can enter your screen name. This gives your LinkedIn connections another way to connect with you.

## Public Profile

The default for your individual LinkedIn URL is a mix of numbers and letters. Change this to something that is easier for you to use. Once you have optimized your profile, you want to direct people to it by using your personalized URL on your resume, your business cards, your email signature and so on. It must start with “www.linkedin.com/in/” but you can personalize it from there, by using your name (if possible). If that’s not available, try variations including your initials, middle name and so forth.

In addition, this is where you select what parts of your Profile people who are not connected with you can see. There are also options here for customized LinkedIn buttons that you can use on other websites.

## Additional Information

### Interests

This is the section where you describe what you do *outside* the office. As with your Summary, tell an interesting story about yourself. People like to work with others who have similar interests. Recruiters and HR staff are also interested in this information to see if you are a match for their corporate culture. This is a great way to emphasize your community activities and interesting hobbies and pastimes. While this section allows for the use of 1,000 characters, it is better to be brief than to provide too much information. Whatever you list, always remember to keep it professional!

### Groups and Associations

If you are a member of professional associations, this is where you list them. Be sure to list the full name, plus any acronyms that the organization uses (for example: Public Relations Society of America, PRSA). Be sure to list any leadership positions you have held. You can also list industry and social organizations in this section.

The LinkedIn Groups that you join will also show here (you can choose not to have their logo show). There’s more on LinkedIn Groups in another section in this document.

### Honors and Awards

List every recognition you’ve received, both personal and professional. You have 1,000 characters, so it’s plenty of room to be descriptive about why you won the award, when and so on.

### Personal Information

My advice is not to list any private (home) information.

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### Contact Settings

LinkedIn has eight options you can select. Choose them all, even if they don't currently apply. One person may think they are contacting you regarding a "career opportunity" when they're actually looking for a consultant. Don't limit the way that people can consider contacting you.

If you have a preferred way for people to contact you, put it in the box. It's OK if you prefer email or telephone calls—you just have to say so.

### Settings

Access Settings by clicking it on the very top right of the page. Set each of the areas for your individual preferences, depending on why you are using LinkedIn. Remember, though, that the more information you can provide, the better.

You can enter multiple email addresses in this section. It's important to add every email address you've ever had, even if some are no longer valid. Sometimes, an email address is the only way someone has to search for a person and you want to be found! Set a primary email address, but you can use other email addresses when you want to.

### Applications

LinkedIn has several applications that you can add to your Profile. For example, if you have a blog, have it automatically feed into your Profile page. If you give presentations, you can also set up an account at Slideshare (free!) and have your presentations show on your Profile page.

### LinkedIn Groups

No matter why you use LinkedIn, you should participate in Groups. You can join up to 50 Groups, as well as 50 subgroups. Join groups that appeal to you professionally as well as personally. Groups include alumni organizations, professional groups and virtually anything else! Search for interesting groups by using keywords. The results are listed with the largest groups first.

Groups not only look good on your Profile but are a great way to find new blogs on topics that interest you, read and join in discussions, see job postings, find out about upcoming events, webinars, and so on. Posting on Groups also shows that you are proactive and willing to participate—plus, it's a great way to show your expertise!

### Your Profile is xx% complete

When you are in the Edit Profile screen, LinkedIn tells you how complete (or incomplete!) your profile is. YOU are the only person who sees this—people viewing your profile do not. In order for LinkedIn to consider your profile complete, you need to have information in the following sections:

- Current position
- Two prior positions
- Specialties
- Summary
- Profile photo
- Education
- Minimum of 3 Recommendations

The more information you have, including Connections and Recommendations, the higher you appear when someone performs a search.

Also, when you are in View Profile section, scan down the right side to the bottom. You'll see "Viewers of this profile also viewed..."—this shows the name and headline for several people, including your competitors and those with similar skills. View some of these profiles to see what their profiles look like. You may find keywords, skills and other items to include in your profile...when applicable, of course!

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## Share an update

To fully optimize your LinkedIn experience, post daily. Remember that these posts should be professional. Posting links to interesting articles about your industry shows that you are current with what's going on. Even better, post links to articles that *you've* written!

Talk about professional events, meetings and seminars that you're attending, projects you've completed—or just started...anything that your professional connections will find important and interesting.

Do the same with Groups that you are a member of, when appropriate.

More importantly, comment on other's posts, both in your Network Updates and in Groups. Become an active participant who others view as a valuable resource!

## Answers

Establish yourself as an expert by answering questions other LinkedIn members have posted in the Answers section. Find Answers in the "More..." drop-down. You'll see questions that people in your network have posted. Search for questions in 22 categories. Your responses appear on your Profile page, as well as in the Network Updates for all of your connections.

If the person posting the question selects your answer as the "best" one, you earn points of expertise. The more points you have, the higher you appear on the list of subject-matter experts.

## Adding special characters

By using the Alt key with numbers, you can enter special characters. Hold down the Alt key while typing the numbers on the number keypad to get:

| Symbol | Number | Symbol | Number |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| ◆      | 4      | ■      | 8      |
| •      | 7      | ○      | 9      |
| ▶      | 16     | ©      | 0169   |

Many others are available, but try not to get too carried away.

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## About the author



Deb Krier is an internationally-known speaker on the benefits of social media. With over 15 years of experience in marketing and public relations, she shows people how to use social media to promote themselves and their businesses and in a job search. She's given keynote presentations and seminars to groups including the Institute for International Education, Women's Vision Foundation, Association of Public-Safety Communications (APCO) Officials, Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce (CWCC), Progressive Business Conferences, and National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). Visit her website at [www.debkrier.com](http://www.debkrier.com) or connect with her on LinkedIn at [www.linkedin.com/in/deborahkrier](http://www.linkedin.com/in/deborahkrier).

## References

<sup>1</sup> Jobvite 2010 Social Recruitment Survey

<sup>2</sup> Microsoft Study, 2010

<sup>3</sup> Jobvite 2009 Social Recruitment Survey