

How I Used LinkedIn to Grow My Business (And you can, too.)

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What Is LinkedIn?

- It's a way for your ideal clients to find you so you can help them
- It's a real-time, automated contact management system for all your favorite people
- It's a structured, professional community
- It's a way to meet strategic partners
- It's a way to get and share thoughtful feedback, information, advice

Popular Misconceptions.

LinkedIn is not:

- Just an online resume.
- A place to send prospects so they can learn more about you (that's what your website is for)
- Best only for job seekers.
- Useless unless you need something from someone.
- Good for marketing yourself to someone ONLY if you're connected to them by someone else.
- A waste of money when you invest in InMails--their proprietary emails--at \$10 a pop.
- Great for growing a gigantic network so you're connected to thousands of people you'll never meet.

What Are Your Goals?

- Getting new clients?
- Finding strategic partners?
- Gathering information?

Who Is Your Audience?

- It's best for B2B (business to business). Not so great for B2C (business to consumer).

How Do You Find Them?

- When I was just starting out, I read Guy Kawasaki's blog post and, armed with this critical information, created a profile. Here's his blog post from January 2007: http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2007/01/ten_ways_to_use.html
- He has since created a newer post from February 2009: <http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2009/02/10-ways-to-use.html> (substitute

- "clients" for "job")
- And here's my blog post on how to create a good profile:
<http://copylicious.com/2008/03/are-you-making-these-mistakes-on-your-linkedin-profile/>
 - I ran a keyword search for job titles in my industry
 - Sent them an InMail. Here's my blog post on that:
<http://copylicious.com/2008/03/how-i-used-linkedin-to-get-a-41-response-rate-6-new-clients/>
 - They also found *me* through keyword searches
 - Groups and answering questions (credibility)
 - For big-picture social media strategy, see Shama Hyder's ebook, *The Zen of Social Media Marketing*. Excellent ebook for a beginner; covers Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. She also details how you go about creating a friending policy. Here's the link: <http://zenofsocialmedia.com/>

Benefits of LinkedIn?

- Get found by potential clients who are looking for someone like you (forget SEO optimization; prospects are heading straight for LinkedIn)
- Increase visibility by answering and asking questions
- Improve your website's SEO rankings by linking keywords back to your site.
- Find and attract new clients, direct outreach that gets their attention without picking up the phone or mailing a letter with InMail.
- Can go straight to the decisionmaker, bypassing everyone (often in their personal email inbox, too!)

Success Story

- I got 6 clients, 41% response rate using InMails:
<http://copylicious.com/2008/03/how-i-used-linkedin-to-get-a-41-response-rate-6-new-clients/>
- A few other clients found me through keyword searches.
- Colleague used groups to increase her blog subscribers and commenters.

Features I Use

- Q&A
- Groups
- InMail
- WordPress Plugins
- What I'm Reading

Mistakes

- In the beginning, I tried to add people I'd just met while networking, without reminding them who I was, and they IDK'd (I Don't Know) me.
- Didn't use my InMails because I was busy, wasted money; should have sent out consistently even though I was busy.
- Accepted invitations from people I barely knew, then realized if I couldn't vouch for them, I didn't want to be connected.

Dos:

- "Write like it's your website," and 21 more tips:
http://linkedintobusiness.com/?page_id=114
- Think of it like an elevator pitch--not a resume.
- Make your profile warm, human, engaging. No one wants to read about strategic innovative solutions.
- Drive people to your website with a descriptive link -- not "My Company."
- Give lots of testimonials--and make it a part of your process when you work with anyone.
- Experiment, play. Be okay with making a mistake. Just be willing to explore, to try new features, to see what works.
- Send personal InMails to your target audience (just be sure they're open to receiving "Consulting Offers" and "Inquiries"). Give them a small offer, an easy next step that removes the risk.
- Join a LinkedIn Group.
- Consider starting a Group. (Dianna Huff tells me her blog readership has dramatically increased ever since she started the B2B Marketing Group on LinkedIn.)
- Think about your goals. What are you trying to accomplish? Then make sure your activities support that. Don't try to do everything all at once.
- Awesome article on how to ask for an introduction from Jason Alba (who also wrote a book on LinkedIn):
<http://imonlinkedinnowwhat.com/2009/03/27/killer-linkedin-introduction-request/>
- Share your expertise, focus on how you can be helpful. You get more out of LinkedIn when you answer questions and try to connect people.
- Remember all of this is a work in progress. No need to reserve 5 hours of your Saturday to "Get Started On LinkedIn." Petit a petit. Just as your business is always changing, so should your profile and tactics.
- Make LinkedIn a part of your balanced marketing breakfast. It's not going to replace all the other marketing activities; but it's another channel to feed the right people into your system.

One Thing to Remember:

Now more than ever is the time to expand and play and be curious.

If everything else you're doing is working out great, don't let this become another *should*. But, if you want to build your business now and over the long run, then give LinkedIn a chance. Allow yourself to play and to see the possibilities. You just might meet someone who makes it all worthwhile.