

What All Effective LinkedIn Profiles Have In Common

William Arruda, Contributor, Forbes Magazine

When it comes to your professional reputation, your LinkedIn profile is more and more likely to deliver your first impression. That's thanks to Digital First, a phenomenon coined by Mitch Joel in his book, *Ctrl Alt Delete*. We all understand the common habit of personal googling to learn about people we haven't met (or learn more about them once we've had an interaction). This important habit impacts your ability to influence others and, ultimately, your career success. The good news is that when you focus a little effort on crafting a compelling and authentic LinkedIn profile, you can deliver a positive and powerful first impression to those who are checking you out.

When someone googles you, it's likely that your LinkedIn profile will show up at the top of the search results. So spending time on your profile and keeping it up to date is the best way to deliver a consistently positive first impression. Here are the six characteristics that are common to the best LinkedIn profiles:

1. **Completeness.** A profile that's missing important information says you're sloppy – or worse, it makes the reader wonder if you're hiding something. Take the time to fill in content in all sections, especially your summary and experience. This will prove that you are thorough and have good follow-through.
2. **Consistency.** In both content and tone, you need all the sections of your profile to reinforce your brand message. If you're organized and structured, make your profile reflect that. Make it easy for people to know what you're all about.
3. **Potency.** When someone looks at your profile, they are only given a snapshot of the full content. That content must be pure and potent to get people to want to expand the sections of your profile and learn more about you. That means your headline and the first few sentences of your summary and experience sections need to capture readers' attention and compel them to want to know more.
4. **Visual interest.** LinkedIn has been adding features to allow you to post multimedia content to your profile. Four places to do this for an immediate impact on viewers are:
 - **Your background photo.** This sits behind your picture and is one of the first things people see when they check out your profile. If you don't add your own image, you'll have the same blue connect-the-dots image that most other profiles have. Replace it with a graphic that helps you bolster your brand attributes and express your personality.
 - **Dazzling examples in your summary and experience.** Even though LinkedIn will not show people your complete summary or experience content (without having to click "see more") they do show the media elements – video, images, whitepapers, etc. – you've added to these sections.

- Your latest posts and articles show up with their associated images toward the top of your profile. This adds some visual glitz and also shows that you are engaged and active on LinkedIn.
- For education and experience, always choose your employer/school from the LinkedIn list. This will automatically add the appropriate logo to your profile. In addition to the visual pizzazz, your profile gets a extra dose of credibility. Thanks to brand association, these logos let a little brand value from these organizations rub off on you.

5. Personality. People connect with others on a human level. Sure, when checking you out, they want to see your credentials and accomplishments, but they also want to be able to connect with you on a human level. You can do that the way you write your summary. Include content that goes beyond your accomplishments and credentials. Add your values, passions, and quirks and make sure your summary is written in a way to exude your personality.

Your headshot also goes a long way to helping you connect with others. Make sure that yours is professional and takes up most of the frame. Face forward so you are “looking into the eyes” of those who are evaluating you.

Writing in the first person also gives you a better opportunity to engage with the reader – like you’re having a discussion with them. It also conveys transparency and honesty. Everyone knows you wrote your own LinkedIn profile content. A third-person summary does not make us think it was written by your publicist; in fact, it just creates a little more distance between you and the reader and prevents them from getting to know you on a deeper, more human level.

6. Up-to-date. Nothing says “lazy” like a profile that’s out of date. Once you build a stellar profile – one that’s magnetic, engaging, and authentic, it doesn’t take a lot of time to keep it current. Yet many profiles I check out are stuck in the past with headshots featuring 90s hairstyles and bare-bones summaries that reflect entry-level aspirations.

With over half a billion members and a focus on professionals, LinkedIn is not something to take lightly. Your profile can be an important career booster when you invest a little effort on building and maintaining it.