



ConvergenceCoaching, LLC *I'm On LinkedIn – Now What?*

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is the largest professional network used today in social media, boasting over 400 million users. Many of us have LinkedIn accounts (find Jennifer Wilson at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jenniferwilsonprofile>) but we may not be maximizing our use of the platform or producing real results from it yet. In this article, **we'll explore a few "cash free" strategies you can employ to put LinkedIn to work for you.**

Use the Platform Daily

- **Schedule 15-30 minutes every weekday to work the platform.** Because it's online, you can do this at any time of the day or night, but it takes discipline to do it (like working out). For some, it will also take discipline to keep from getting "sucked in" and spending too much time on the platform. ***When you allocate the time, undertake one of the other activities outlined in this article.***
- **Go to your home page on LinkedIn each day.** This will allow you to read any messages you have, accept any invitations you receive and will also provide you with a "feed" of information about what your connections are doing on LinkedIn, and allow you to easily engage with their updates. You can like, comment on or share their updates and posts. You can also endorse others for skills or make connections via the suggested profiles that LinkedIn displays. ***As you view their activity on your home page, you may see that your connections are connecting to people you should know, attending events that you'd like to attend or doing other things on the platform that are worth exploring.***

Build Your Brand

- **While you're on your Home page, update your status by clicking on "Share an update" to tell all of your connections what you're up to.** Do this at least once per week to keep your name and firm appearing on your connections home page – which is a great way to keep you and your brand top of mind. Unlike platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn is not intended to be a platform for personal sharing. The picture that you might post of your weekend activities or your family on Facebook would be out of place on LinkedIn. Instead, focus on updates that relate to your areas of expertise, the clients and industries that you serve or the profession. Links to relevant articles, firm news updates, blogs or newsletters that you write or contribute to, and open positions at your firm are all great types of content to post on LinkedIn.
- **Add your company profile.** If your firm does not already have a company profile that someone manages, ask for permission or coordinate with your marketing team to set one up. Go to the "Interests" tab on LinkedIn and choose Companies. On the right-hand side of the page you should see "Create a Company Page" with a button that says "Create" underneath it. Click "Create" and follow the prompts to put your firm's information out on LinkedIn, including your logo, elevator pitch and specialties. Then, notify your team members that you now have a company profile and ask them to edit their personal profiles to link them to the company directly. You can then manage your company page, adding updates and content, by hovering over your picture in the upper right-hand corner of the site and choosing "Manage" next to the company page heading. ***When your firm has a company profile on LinkedIn,***



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people can follow your firm and your firm will show up in searches more often. This will also give you one more page on the web that has your firm name and web URL attached – helping improve your Google and other search engine rankings.

Broaden Your Sphere of Influence

- **Join some groups and get to know the groups' members.** Under the “Interests” tab, chose “Groups” to engage with and discover groups. Near the top, you’ll see three view options. The first is called “Groups Highlights” and shows updates that are being posted in any of the groups you’re currently following. The next option is “My Groups” which allows you to see which groups you are a member of. This is also where you can create your own groups and manage them accordingly. The third view is “Discover” which is where you can browse groups that your connections are members of and decide to join them, too. To search for groups specific to an industry or topic, you can use the search box at the very top of the site and select Groups from the drop-down. Type in keywords that are of interest to you – like “accounting” or “agriculture” or others industries, associations, schools or groups that might make sense to affiliate with. LinkedIn boasts thousands of groups and you are limited to 100 groups that you can join. Once you are a member of a group, go to “My Groups” and click on one that you want to view the other members of. On the right-hand side of the group page, you can view all of the members in that respective group. Do this to ***find members of your groups that you should know or be connected with and then outreach to them to either create an online connection or schedule a telephone call to share what each of you offers and see if there are ways to collaborate.*** While you’re viewing your groups, consider participating in or starting an online discussion to put your name and ideas in front of your groups’ members.
- **“Vampire” off of your connections.** Go out to each of your connections’ profiles and click on their connections to see who they are connected to. ***Remember, seeing and leveraging the connections of your connections is one of the most important benefits of LinkedIn!*** Take the time to read the list – no matter how long – to see if there are any connections worth having for now or in the future. If you find some that will make a good connection, ask your connection to make an introduction. If you know the target, click on their profile and then click the small button “Connect.” That will then take you to a page where you choose how you know the person and a text box for including a personal note. Instead of using its standard boiler plate invite note of, “I’d like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn,” stop and personalize it. Add the person’s name and some context around how you know them, like, “Susan, you and I met at the AICPA Governmental Conference last June. I’d like to add you to my network on LinkedIn.” Or “Susan, you and I are both connected to Brad Roberts. I’d like to add you to my network on LinkedIn.” ***The reason that we suggest going to the person’s profile to connect instead of simply clicking “Connect” during the search or preview functions is because it will send a generic invite like mentioned above. It’s a best practice that we teach to personalize your connection messages where possible as it creates relatedness.***
- **Start publishing posts on LinkedIn.** On the homepage, there’s an option to “Publish a post” that will take you to LinkedIn’s publishing page. You can then leverage a blog you’ve already



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written, if applicable, or you can write a new blog post. Consider writing about topics that will be of interest to your clients, prospects or a specific industry or the CPA profession. Make sure to include an image with your post and specify any tags that will help users find your post. Once you publish your post, LinkedIn will notify your connections and you will also have a direct link to that post to share with others via email or other social media platforms. If your post receives a high level of engagement, LinkedIn may even include it in their Pulse platform where they highlight popular posts and you can reach an even broader audience. Your published posts show up in their own section on your profile. Anyone can read your published posts, even if they are not connected to you on LinkedIn. People can also choose to “Follow” your published posts and receive notifications when you’ve published a new post, without actually connecting with you.

Research Your Prospects and Clients

- **Leverage the platform to get smarter.** Under the search function on the Home page, search by company to ***learn about prospect organizations and find the names of key decision makers.*** Learn how you may be connected to the people inside these organizations by clicking on each person’s profile, which will show you any shared connections. Conduct the same search by typing the company name in the “search by people” function to get a listing of all of the people who have that company name listed in their profile. ***Click on those with whom you share connections and pursue a “warm way in” to your prospect via an introduction from someone you know.***
- **Read the profiles of prospects and referral sources.** This will make you smarter when you meet with these people by phone or in person and will give you a better sense of the appropriate rapport building questions to ask when you are in a pursuit. ***Read about the connections of your referral sources and, instead of waiting for them to give you a referral, consider asking your trusted referral sources for an introduction to a specific connection they may have.***

Social media platforms like LinkedIn have revolutionized the way we communicate, market and sell. Differentiate yourself and your firm by being a “real” user – not just a passive account holder. Make a commitment to employ one of these strategies today!