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## LinkedIn Task#2: LEVERAGING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

The Careerpilot's high TECH-HIGH TOUCH philosophy comes into play with the explosive growth of business professionals using social networks to build relationships, meet new contacts, and market themselves. While the Internet provides many choices, diving into the virtual meet-and-greet can represent a real challenge. Which one is worthy of your start-up investment: learning curve time and actual ROI of your efforts... Where to begin? The Careerpilot encourages a choice that reasonably assures one's confidentiality, has a multitude of useful applications, and can serve as your focal point of networking decisions.

A terrific launching site for such an effort is LinkedIn. Developed specifically for business, the site doesn't run the risk of blurring your professional life with your private one; and, it serves virtually every industry and profession.

Joining a network like LinkedIn is simple, but turning it into a powerful networking tool takes a bit of savvy. Here's how to build a network, leveraging your available time... and put it all to work — without HIGH TECH, social-networking anxiety.

### TASK #2 Build Your Network

Goal: Stay focused. Only connect with others who share your professional interests or are related to those interests in a complementary way... and can help you meet your goals. After you've created your profile, it's time to begin to connect to others.

LinkedIn will allow you to search for people you know to see if they're already members. But once you connect to someone, you can also look at the profiles of anyone they know, and in turn anyone those people know. Because of these three degrees of separation, your network can grow rapidly. Before you begin connecting, decide who you want to connect to. LinkedIn suggests in its FAQ, "Only invite those you know and trust."

I started with twenty contacts from my MSOutlook. My first line has grown to well over five hundred by accepting and sending out INVITATIONS to people I know, are likely to be interactive within our network, or who could provide resources to me or the Candidates I serve... what's really impressive is how this translates, numerically, into your second and third lines of contact... we're talking, WOW!!!

## The 411 on "How Not to Be Connected"

If someone contacts you and you don't want to form a connection with them, you don't need to flatly reject them and worry about the attendant awkwardness. When looking at the invitation to connect, simply hit "Archive." The other person does not receive a message saying their invitation has been rejected, and you don't have to worry about unwanted invitations clogging up your inbox.

Likewise, if you find that an existing contact is blasting you with too much information or making overly aggressive requests for introductions and recommendations, LinkedIn will let you remove that person easily — and without the contact knowing they're out of your network.

If only it were that easy in real life.

## What's Next?

1. **Check in on "Network Updates."** Found on your LinkedIn homepage, Network Updates are kind of like your Facebook news feed. Check these periodically for a quick snapshot of what your connections are up to and sharing. And, it's a 2-way street: Your updates, including white papers you may choose to "publish," go out to your network.
2. **Be identifiable.** Find out who's checking out your profile by allowing others to see who you are if you view theirs. When you click the information under "Who's Viewed My Profile" on your profile page, you'll be able to view users who have looked at your profile, stats on your profile's number of views, and its appearances in search recently. To change this, go into your settings and click "See what others see when you've viewed their profile."
3. **Export connections.** Transfer your LinkedIn connections to another contact management system? LinkedIn enables you to easily export your connections. Just click on "Contacts," "My Connections," and then scroll down and click "Export Connections." You have the option of either exporting as a .CSV or .VCF file.
4. **Easily find email contacts on LinkedIn.** Speaking of connections, the "LinkedIn Companion for Firefox" is a great plugin that helps you identify the LinkedIn profiles of people who are emailing you. It also enables you to easily access other LinkedIn features via your browser.
5. **Leverage the power of LinkedIn Groups.** Did you know that if you're a member of the same group as another user, you can bypass the need

to be a first degree connection in order to message them? In addition, group members are also able to view the profiles of other members of the same group without being connected. Join more groups to enable more messaging and profile viewership capabilities.

6. **Link your Twitter acct to LinkedIn.** Share your LinkedIn status updates on Twitter, and vice versa. Learn how to connect your Twitter account in your "settings" area.

## ***Get the Most From Your Connections***

**Goal: Now that you're connected, put all those people to use.**

There are three main things your network can do for you: answer business-related questions, make recommendations and introductions, and provide company information. Make sure that you focus on helping others when you first join. It's the idea of bringing something TO the party. If you offer up helpful stuff and services, your reputation will go a lot further than if you're just out there for yourself. GIVE before you expect to get interaction from you new, and developing, electronic network.

### **1. Ask and answer questions.**

While signed in, you can quickly see a list of open questions that have been asked by anyone in your extended network. Participating in these exchanges is an easy way of gaining trust and building your reputation. Asking questions will prompt informed sources to offer their expert advice (which helps everyone in the network), while providing answers gives you a chance to show off your own expertise to others.

### **2. Recommend and introduce colleagues.**

Recommendations work as a form of currency in a social network. Those who are happy with your work can write a brief description of their experience on your LinkedIn profile.

By having a broad range of endorsements attesting to your professional expertise, you show others that you can be trusted. And make sure to recommend those you've had good experiences with.

Introductions are trickier but also more valuable. This is where your personal judgment needs to come into play. When someone contacts you for an introduction, be sure you understand and approve of what they want before making the handoff. Likewise, make your intentions clear when you are asking for an introduction.

### **3. Learn more about your professional network.**

You can quickly learn a lot about a potential business partner or contact by reading their profile. This represents smart interview preparation... It can show you a lot of things you can discuss and build a relationship on. Unlike, for example, someone's Google results, everything you find on LinkedIn has been voluntarily placed there by your contact.

Further, watch to see who your contacts are becoming connected with to figure out who might be worth getting to know yourself.

## Manage Your Social Network

**Goal: Continue to gain benefits from your social network — without making it your full-time job.**

Don't expect that you can post something one time and get ongoing benefits. A developing network needs to be 'managed.' You'll need to continually update and refine your profile and your network. The most obvious way to do this is to add new contacts. When you come home from a conference, for example, go through the business cards you collected to see who's on LinkedIn.

- Adding new contacts, sometimes from outside your immediate field or industry, is also a subtly persuasive way to sell yourself by letting others see how far your professional sphere extends.
- Check up on your profile about once a month and make sure your job description is still accurate.
- Reach out to contacts even when you don't have a business concern. Try to touch base with a few contacts every week for no other reason than to check in and see how things are going.

Remember, social networking is only a technology TOOL to leverage your time in the evolution of your network of more personal relationships. It would be a mistake to reach out only when you have an issue — when you've lost their job, or you need something from out of the blue."

If you're linking to your personal blog, include your name or descriptive terms in the link, and voila! instant search-engine optimization for your site. To make this work, be sure your public profile setting is set to "Full View."

### 4 things you should never do on a social network

1. **Leave negative feedback...** It stays around for a very long time, so even if you have a change of heart, it can be very difficult to retract it. Rather, stay positive and future oriented when possible (Waypoint #2)
2. **Lie or OVER Sell Yourself...** Rather, create and consistently implemented your branded strategy.

3. **Spam.** It's not a push marketing strategy. Rather, give to your network before asking for something.

4. **Gossip.** Rather, look for news that a specific contact or group of contacts can use.

# TOP TEN WAYS

Most people use LinkedIn to “get to someone” in order to make a sale, form a partnership, or get a job. It is a tool that is under-utilized, so I’ve compiled a top-ten list of ways to increase the value of LinkedIn.

1. **Increase your visibility...** By adding connections, you increase the likelihood that people will see your profile first when they’re searching for someone to hire or do business with.
2. **Improve your connectability...** Fill out your profile like it’s an executive bio, so include past companies, education, affiliations, and activities.
3. **Improve your Google PageRank...** Create a public profile and select “Full View.” Instead of using the default URL, customize your public profile’s URL to be your actual name. To strengthen the visibility of this page in search engines, use this link in various places on the web.
4. **Enhance your search engine results....** In addition to your name, you can also promote your blog or website to search engines! Your LinkedIn profile allows you to publicize websites. There are a few pre-selected categories like “My Website,” “My Company,” etc. But, if you select “Other,” you can modify the name of the link.
5. **Perform “blind” and company reference checks...** Use LinkedIn’s reference check tool to input a company name and the years the person worked at the company to search for references. Your search will find the people who worked at the company during the same time period.
6. **Perform “reverse” reference checks...** You can also check up on the company itself by finding the person who used to have the job that you’re interviewing for. Do this by searching for job title and company, but be sure to uncheck “Current titles only.” By contacting people who used to hold the position, you can get the inside scoop on the job, manager and growth potential.
7. **Increase the relevancy of your job search...** Use LinkedIn’s advanced search to find people with educational and work experience like yours to see where they work.
8. **Make your interview go smoother...** You can use LinkedIn to find the people that you’re meeting. Knowing that you went to the same school or share outside interests or mutual acquaintances is a lot better than an awkward silence after, “I’m doing fine, thank you.”
9. **Gauge the health of a company...** Perform an advanced search for company name and uncheck the “Current Companies Only” box. This will enable you to scrutinize the rate of turnover and whether key people are abandoning ship. Former employees usually give more candid opinions about a company’s prospects than someone who’s still on board.
10. **Gauge the health of an industry...** If you’re thinking of investing or working in a sector, use LinkedIn to find people who worked for competitors—or even better, companies who failed.

## A Closing Note: 'Next Steps ...'

- **"On-Board" Yourself--Integrate into a new job...** When people start a new job, ordinarily their roots aren't that deep in the new company. However, with LinkedIn, new employees can study fellow employees' profiles and therefore help them get to know more people faster in a new company.
- **Scope out the competition, customers, partners, etc...** This seems like it's a no-brainer, but you can use LinkedIn to scope out the competition's team as well as the team of customers and partners.
- **Anticipate needs both externally and inside your organization...** stay ahead of the game and be a productive team player. (Waypoint #3: Always have a next contact to make... ALWAYS, for the rest of your career!)
- **Track startups...** You can see people in your network who are initiating new startups by doing an advanced search for a range of keywords such as "stealth" or "new startup." Apply the "Sort By" filter to "Degrees away from you" in order to see the people closest to you first.
- **Seek 'expert' advice when needed...** LinkedIn's "Answers," under the MORE Tab, allows you to broadcast your business-related questions to both your network and the greater LinkedIn network.
- **Give 'expert advice' as appropriate...** LinkedIn's "Answers" allows you to broadcast your business-related knowledge, by answering questions in your field of expertise, to both your network and the greater LinkedIn network. The premise is that you will get more high-value responses from the people in your network than more open forums.



ABOUT DFWCareerpilot... A FREE, WEEKLY WORKSHOP event with a regular rotation of topical material covering a 12-Step Process **M.A.P. (MAHER Associates Process)** that will accelerate your job search success. Bob's presentation style is highly engaging and interactive, so never be shy with questions and/or supportive anecdotes.

BE PREPARED for Bob's two philosophies: Learn to Embrace The OTHER Job Market... and, fully optimize your efforts with a high tech/high touch approach!

1. His public Group on LinkedIn: **DFWCareerpilot**
2. **GO TO: [www.dfwcareerpilot.com](http://www.dfwcareerpilot.com)** and **FOLLOW** (register for) it to receive regular updates
3. Follow **DFWCareerpilot** on Twitter!



*Bob Maher created his online presence, [www.careerpilot.com](http://www.careerpilot.com), in 1994. He has over thirty years of successful experience in Corporate Recruitment, performance management and Career Management Services. He is an entrepreneur and innovator in the use of information technology in the recruitment and employment process.*

*On the Founder's Council of the Association of Career Professionals - International and quite active in their Professional Development, Technology and Chapter Growth initiatives--a frequent speaker at industry conferences and seminars. The Institute of Career Certification-International has him reviewing the portfolios of incoming applicants. Bob was presented with the prestigious LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT award by The Association in 2006.*