

## Chapter 14

# WRITING a LINKEDIN PROFILE to get FOUND by RECRUITERS

by Lisa Rangel

Recruiters use LinkedIn prolifically to search for talent. Therefore, the best way to optimize a LinkedIn profile is to start thinking from the perspective of the corporate or search firm recruiter doing the hire.

A Jobvite 2013 survey found 94 per cent of recruiters use LinkedIn to find candidates for their open positions. With that staggering number, it is imperative that job seekers not only to be on LinkedIn, but that they *reverse-engineer* the search and recruitment process to increase the likelihood of their profiles being found by recruiters. This article will explain that process and much more.

### **How Does A Recruiter Find Candidates Using LinkedIn?**

Recruiters start a search in LinkedIn by focusing on the unique parameters of an open position to serve as core common denominators between viable candidates' profiles and the job requisition requirements. For example, for a Director of Finance candidate search, the recruiter can focus on the fact that the position is a Director of Finance based in Atlanta, Georgia, working on an Oracle financial module platform. The common denominators could be <Oracle, Atlanta-GA, and Director of Finance> to start that search, using the Advanced Search function to identify viable candidates. Many additional parameters can and should be added to this search to fine-tune the results and generate the specific findings – the ideal job candidate.

Keywords and keyword phrases are critical to a recruiter's search. Job seekers can pepper their profile content naturally with these keywords and phrases to increase their placement in search results. For instance, if the job seeker is pursuing a Marketing Director role within the pharmaceutical industry, the word *pharmaceutical* will need to be naturally blended into the headline, summary, employment sections, and possibly skills area of the profile. Without this keyword, there is little likelihood the job seeker will show up in searches for candidates having this specific industry background.

### **Identifying Keywords and Keyword Phrases**

Finding core and secondary keywords and keyword phrases is the crucial first step in building a LinkedIn profile that can be found by recruiters.

The job seeker needs to identify keywords and keyword phrases that the recruiter may use when sourcing for the jobs the candidate wants. To begin, find descriptions for jobs the candidate is targeting via job boards and company websites.

Once two or three viable job descriptions are located, consider using an online *word cloud* function to zero in on keywords that are relevant to searches for that position. The best known word cloud tool is Wordle.com, but a recent blog article listed nine others (Smitty, 2013). Making word clouds is very easy – copy and paste the content, click, and it's done!

In identifying keywords, first define those that recruiters are most likely to use to find a specific talent or skill. Then, as you examine various job descriptions, focus on geography, titles, and unique skills not found in other roles or companies.

These keyword phrases – derived from a combination of the job function (e.g., Marketing or Finance), job-level (e.g., Associate, Director, or CFO), location (e.g., Atlanta-GA or Tri State NYC area), and required and preferred skills (i.e. Oracle, ecommerce marketing, customer services) – are the foundation for optimizing a LinkedIn profile so recruiters will find your clients.

### **Optimizing LinkedIn Profiles**

There is more to optimizing a LinkedIn profile than just having the right keywords, although keyword optimization is a very crucial part of the process as mentioned above. This section of the article addresses the other components of profile optimization that should be employed in conjunction with identifying and incorporating the right keywords.

Have a cropped, professional headshot for the profile picture. According to a ***Wall Street Journal*** article (2011), having a proper picture increases the likelihood a recruiter will open a LinkedIn profile by 7 times versus if no picture is present. It is paramount the right picture is placed on the LinkedIn profile to complement all of the keyword optimization and content writing efforts made by the job seeker or resume writer.

Be sure to incorporate the keywords and keyword phrases identified from the earlier steps into the headline – the 120-character section found under the name on the LinkedIn profile. For instance, a controller in Seattle who has experience using Hyperion within the advertising industry may want to have a tagline such as, *Hyperion Financial System Expert & Controller | Marketing & Advertising Industry | Seattle Metro*. This tagline is under the 120-character limit and uses the job function, title, location, and skill keywords pertinent to a search a recruiter would use to find these types of candidates.

Create a LinkedIn vanity URL (job seeker's name) to improve the optimization within LinkedIn. Remove the series of random letters and numbers from the assigned, default URL given to the member by LinkedIn. Change the URL to be a version of the candidate's name as demonstrated in this example: <http://www/linkedin.com/in/lisarangel>.

Take those same keywords and phrases and integrate them into the accomplishment-focused content throughout the summary section that outlines the candidate's value proposition and differentiating factors. This will keep the recruiter's eye on the profile once it has been opened from the search result summary. You have up to 2000 characters (letters, numbers, spaces, etc.) for the summary section, so it should be filled with valuable information.

Write achievement-rich content using the keywords in the employment section. This will show the recruiter how the experience is related to the position he is filling. Ensure that both the title and description clearly communicate how the candidate succeeded at various job responsibilities, while staying within the 2000-character limit given by LinkedIn for this section as well.

Finally, to maximize LinkedIn profile optimization and recruiter attention, showcase skills and topical areas of expertise by using additional keywords and keyword phrases to populate the skills section of each profile.

### **Inspire Recruiters To Connect With Vibrant Profile Content**

The strategy behind the profile – what each person writes and why – will vary according to the unique circumstances of each individual. Strategies and tactics for someone who is gainfully employed might be different from those used by someone who is in between positions. A staff-level employee might use different writing tactics to position himself in his profile as compared to an established corporate executive or business owner.

### **Questions your clients can ask themselves in determining their LinkedIn profile strategy are:**

- Who is the audience that will be seeking out my profile using my name?
- Who is the audience that will be stumbling upon my profile through a search? (This can be a different audience than #1.)
- What is the main purpose of my profile? (Is it to attract recruiters, to market a business, to promote services, or to enhance online reputation?)

- What negative consequences do I want to avoid that could result from creating a LinkedIn profile?

The content for the summary and employment sections of the profile can be crafted to meet the answers given to those strategy questions. Knowing the strategy – before you begin to write – will help align content with the LinkedIn profile’s purpose, target audience, and sought-after result.

Once the strategy is outlined, write content in short sections such as 2–3 line paragraphs, single lines of text, and short bullet points, and surround the content with white space. Your goal is to avoid large blocks of text and keep the reader’s eyes moving through the profile, thus increasing understanding and engagement and leading to a call, email, and/or interview with the recruiter.

Write the accomplishment-laden profile content in first person, but still in a professional tone. Incorporating aspects of a candidate’s personality in the profile is preferred on social media, and LinkedIn is no exception. However, refrain from focusing so much on personality that hard and soft employment skills are minimized or not included, adversely affecting the purpose of the profile. LinkedIn is *not* Facebook!

### **Endorse and Be Endorsed – Recommend and Be Recommended**

LinkedIn endorsements and LinkedIn recommendations are not the same thing and serve different purposes in the context of LinkedIn profiles. A recommendation is a written reference from a manager, peer, subordinate, client, vendor, or professional connection that supports one’s work product, work ethic, skills, and character. Conversely, endorsements are a listing of relevant skills that can be affirmed by other LinkedIn users by clicking on the skill, similar to Facebook’s <like> button.

LinkedIn recommendations are more valued by hiring managers and recruiters. When done properly, they are a qualitative testament to a LinkedIn connection’s experience with that particular job seeker. Third-party testimonials are always powerful in job search.

LinkedIn endorsements are very easy to give any person, whether or not the person is a connection. The value is questioned by hiring managers and recruiters, but it is unknown how endorsements are valued by the LinkedIn algorithm in ranking profiles in search results. Until more is known, do not ignore either.

In addition to receiving these testimonials, it is valuable to give recommendations and endorsements, because the person giving the recommendation or endorsement now appears on the other person’s profile. This is another opportunity for exposure.

## **Participate In LinkedIn Groups Where Recruiters Discover Candidates**

LinkedIn groups offer a plethora of opportunities for candidates to network among colleagues, prospective hiring managers, vendors, clients, former co-workers, and new connections in a segmented, common interest-based manner. LinkedIn users can join up to 50 groups. These groups number in the hundreds of thousands and are segmented by location, profession, industry, hobby, cause, mission, corporate/school alumni, and many other special interests.

With regard to being discovered by recruiters, the value for job-seeking candidates to join and engage in groups is three-fold:

By joining groups, job seekers increase their reach exponentially beyond their three degrees of connections. This enables candidates to show up in the search results of many more people, since the job seeker is now a part of more connection webs.

By contributing questions, articles, and answers to the group via the group's feed, a candidate's profile becomes repeatedly more visible to group members. Recruiters see the job seeker offering expertise and helpful assistance to group members in a proactive manner – a very desirable trait for hiring entities.

By volunteering to assist with group moderation, a job seeker gains exposure while showing leadership and coordination skills in the digital arena – skills that can be sought after for many positions regardless of discipline, level, or industry.

It is essential for the job seeker to realize LinkedIn groups are an outlet to network and increase contacts. The goal is to make connections and take the conversations offline to begin nurturing a symbiotic, fruitful business relationship, just as one would with an in-person networking event, conference, or convention. LinkedIn Groups is a tool to be optimized to yield more targeted contacts.

### **Share Updates via the LinkedIn Activity Feed**

The LinkedIn activity feed, which resides on the home page when a LinkedIn user logs into her account, is a treasure trove of information from her connections and companies she follows. Posting information to the activity feed via the update function is a great way for a LinkedIn user/job seeker to stay top of mind with her connections. Hiring managers and recruiters within the user's contact web start to see the person as a generous, knowledgeable resource to reach out to for referrals and inquiries when open roles are available.

### **Information to consider posting includes:**

- Congratulations to others on job changes and other achievements
- Promotions received and new projects awarded
- Topics needing advice and insight
- Announcements on accolades, testimonials, and awards received
- Conferences, conventions, and networking events attended
- Informational materials (videos, publications, podcasts, slides, white papers)
- Articles written by others that the job seeker finds interesting
- Interesting information posted in others' activity feeds
- Comments on others' posts and responses to comments on own posts

Engagement is highly valued by LinkedIn, but exactly how it is measured and weighted is unknown. Sharing information via these types of informational posts will cross-pollinate one's profile to generate more and more exposure well beyond the first degree of connections. Increased activity boosts the likelihood of recruiters and hiring managers finding the candidate's profile and will push the profile higher in search results due to the engagement and common connections.

### **Search Powerfully Using LinkedIn's Advanced Search to Find Recruiters**

While optimizing LinkedIn to be found by recruiters is a crucial component of a job search strategy, it is equally as important to use LinkedIn to reach out to recruiters and hiring managers to generate opportunities. LinkedIn's advanced search feature can help job seekers generate job leads for themselves and find recruiters with whom to connect in a proactive manner. There are myriads of ways to do this, but a few proven tactics that can be used repeatedly to produce new information to act on are outlined in the next paragraphs. To find the advanced search feature on LinkedIn, click on the word *Advanced* to the right of the search box located at the very top of the LinkedIn Home Page. A screen with a series of search fields will appear. Certain fields can be accessed only with a higher-level (paid) membership, but the free version will work well for many job seekers. Job seekers can consider upgrading if they find they need to access information that is reserved for premium members. To specifically find recruiters who cater to the expertise of a candidate, put the keywords *recruiter*, *recruiting*, or *recruitment manager* in the keyword or title field of the LinkedIn advanced search screen. The initial list generated includes recruiters who are within the job seeker's three degrees and group membership lists. To fine-tune the search, the user can enter into the keyword field any word describing the niche or specialty, such as *marketing* or *finance*, that when coupled with the recruiting keywords will find a recruiter who works specifically in that field. To find a list of recruitment companies, search *companies* in the LinkedIn search

function (from the drop-down menu to the left of the search box at the top of the LinkedIn main screen). Use the same keywords employed to find individual recruiters (e.g., Technology Recruiters or Finance Recruiting) to produce a list of niche recruiting companies. The user then can search through his three-degree connections to find a connection to the recruiting company. Additionally, the user can follow the company for more information through its status updates.

### **Conclusion**

Job seekers who take the time to understand the sourcing and recruitment process, determine how LinkedIn is a major tool in that process, and follow the thread backwards to start their job-seeking efforts from the recruiter's perspective, will soon discover that they're the ones being found and hired!

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### **About the Author**

**Lisa Rangel** is the Managing Director of ChameleonResumes.com, which has been recently named one of Forbes.com Top 100 Career Websites. She is a Certified Professional Resume Writer, Moderator for LinkedIn's Premium Job Seeker Group, a former search firm recruiter, and holder of six additional resume, profile, and job search certifications. As a former recruiting manager for more than 13 years, she knows firsthand which resumes and LinkedIn profiles garner the attention from recruiters, filter through Applicant Tracking Systems, and land interviews. She has reviewed thousands of resumes and LinkedIn profiles to identify talent for premier organizations as a recruiter and now draws from that hands-on hiring expertise as a leading global executive resume and profile writer. She has been featured on BBC, Investor's Business Daily, Forbes.com, LinkedIn, About.com, Monster, US News & World Report, Fox Business News, and Good Morning America. She is an author of five ebooks, contributor to two career books, produced numerous webinars, and is the Career Services Partner for eCornell. She earned the Bachelor's degree at Cornell University. Contact her as follows: [lisa.rangel@chameleonresumes.com](mailto:lisa.rangel@chameleonresumes.com)

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