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LinkedIn and Building a Career

 Throughout the years, the internet has continued to evolve, and so has social networking. Facebook and MySpace were the two biggest players. Now, social networking has evolved with the evolution of Tumblr, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. LinkedIn has become a major player in creating a career network. It is almost like an interactive business card, where you can build networks of employers, groups, and school connections. Joining LinkedIn can become very challenging for many people because it is hard to know where to start, how to make increase connections, and how to find employers. Thus, I will delve into 3 specific topics that should help anyone create a strong LinkedIn profile that can help them with their future career. First, I will be discussing how to build a proper LinkedIn profile, including what is appropriate and not appropriate to include. Secondly, I will discuss how to research employers and job opportunities on the site. Finally, it is important to know how to professionally network online and how to turn connections into opportunities.

 Building a LinkedIn profile can be confusing, and time consuming to do,but it is well worth it. Most employers today are on LinkedIn and actively analyzing prospective employers profiles. Thus, I will display an outline of steps to take when creating a professional LinkedIn profile. The first thing someone will see on your LinkedIn profile is your headline. Having a headline that sticks in an employer or connections head is an important. It should be short, sweet and memorable. Another element connections will first see is your photo. One of the most important things people miss, is that there needs to be an appropriate photograph on your LinkedIn profile. A professional photo, that is not showing someone at a party or a picture of Pikachu from Pokemon. These first two elements give the first impression, and makes the person looking at your profile think “should I continue to read?”. A good first impression is key to build connections. One of the key elements that potential employers look at is education. A good LinkedIn profile shows off all elements of education including institutions, relevant coursework, any social and educational activities, GPA, and honors and awards (Linked Intelligence). The more merits you have in your education, the more appealing you will be to employers. Also, any relevant internships, volunteering, or other positions that you have had that are relevant, include them! Another element of your LinkedIn profile is the specialties section, where students can put anything that someone would want to see as skill that you possess. With all the things listed above, your profile can stand out and have someone want to be your connection, but what happens after your connected to a potential employer? (The CV Center)

 Even if your profile were to be completely brilliant, sitting and doing nothing with your LinkedIn will make connections quickly forget about you. LinkedIn gives the ability to posts statuses. Posting intellectual and relevant statuses keeps potential connections more interested in your profile. Joining groups is a great way to connect and interact with connections and people who may not yet be connections yet (Desautels). Make sure to join groups that are relevant to work, school, and social interests. Finally, it is important to show connections what you can do in the workplace. It is important to add work samples including projects, writing samples, or even designs. You never know when you have a project or sample that is relevant to something an employer is looking for an employer.

 By following all these steps, employers and connections will be more attracted to your profile. However, it is not just the employers that are going to be looking for you, it is important for people, especially students, to do extensive research on employers and search for them. For example, if I were to get followed by Apple, it is very important that I go to their profile and do research on the company before I would be contacted by them. There are important steps to take in order to make sure you are well versed in companies that follow you and you follow. Go to their profile and read their general information. Look at job postings and recent statuses, see what the company is about (Linked Intelligence.). Go outside LinkedIn to find a variety of information about the company including recent news stories, their website, etc. Also, its important to find events on LinkedIn. As you join groups, many of them will have events or certain companies that follow you have events or career fairs, which are important to get a face to face initiative going with that company. It is very important for a college student to be well versed in what that company is about, and they want to see the research that has been done on the company. If they have not done the research, then they will probably waste their time by even going to the event.

 So as students conduct research on their potential employers, the most important element of this whole LinkedIn site is how to network professionally. Now, I will take you through steps on how to network professionally online in an effective matter, so you can continue to grow and gain influence on LinkedIn. The world we live in today is one that forces us to be connected to each other, thus we need to adjust in order to be the most fit in this social networking environment (IPwatchdog.com).

 First, students need to make sure that their LinkedIn profile is completely filled out and nothing is missing. The more that is on your profile, the more of a chance that you have to get noticed. Actually, it has been shown according to LinkedIn that a profile that is completely filled is 40% more likely to be noticed than a profile that is not completely filled out, that is a big difference. LinkedIn allows their users to have an inbox where they can exchange messages with their connections. It is important to use this and keep connections with people like internship co-workers, friends, relatives, and professionals that you have encountered throughout your life. It is important that you are not afraid to send messages, ask questions related to jobs, or just genuinely keeping in constant contact and keeping these people close to you. Also, if you someone decides to connect with you or you connect with someone else, send a message mentioning how you appreciate them adding you or you would appreciate adding them as a friend, it is just a necessary common courtesy and a great point to start out to make those connections stronger.

 As mentioned previously, joining groups is an essential part of LinkedIn, but it is necessary to participate in these groups. Joining in on discussions is a great way to interact with professionals in the industry, classmates, or faculty at your school. Plus, as these discussions are seen by other professionals, it can lead to even more connections on your LinkedIn profile. However, knowledge is important, make sure that you have new and relevant information in discussions on LinkedIn so you can stand out (Desautels). Question any and everything that you can and bring some fresh ideas to the table. Also, there is a section on LinkedIn that is called Answers. Similar to Yahoo Answers, people post questions for answers. Be as active as possible in the Answers segment of the website so that you can show people that you have what it takes to answer questions, and as said before question other peoples’ answers (Desautels).

 Finally, the last important aspect of connecting on LinkedIn is not connecting on LinkedIn. What? That does not make any sense right? Wrong. Connections on LinkedIn can only go so far. Making sure that these connections end up in real world contact is important. Try to set up phone conferences, create events, and attend live events. This way, you can create the strongest connection someone can have, which is a human connection. When establishing these human connections, make that connection as strong as possible, build a friendship and have deep conversations with people. Finally, make sure you are connected on LinkedIn if you are not already, as well as get a phone number and another point of contact.

 By taking all of these steps in creating an effective profile, doing research on companies, and making sure that you are well connecting online through LinkedIn, there is a much higher chance of getting a position after college and growing your career. By increasing all of your connections, you are increasing your potential opportunities in your career, and no one can ever complain about that.

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