

Saint Xavier University Career Services LinkedIn Student Guide

LinkedIn is a social media site for professional networking. Unlike most social media sites, it is not a forum for sharing your thoughts on relationships, politics, and entertainment, and it is not a showroom for posting your photos of vacations, social gatherings, and savory food items. Instead, it is an arena where you can connect with professionals who can aid you in career-related matters such as deciding on an occupational path, securing internships, and landing career opportunities.

The following are some ideas for getting the best use out of LinkedIn:

PROFILE

Post a professional-looking headshot on your page. Make your profile picture one with only you in the frame. Wear a conservative-looking shirt with a collar for the photo.

Create a profile that is succinct yet thorough. Generate a headline that concisely states who you are and what you are pursuing (e.g., Junior Marketing Major Seeking Public Relations Internships). Your summary should be similar to an elevator pitch, highlighting the keys skills and experiences you possess, especially those that are pertinent to your desired position (e.g., If you were pursuing a public relations internship, it would be a good idea to mention that your experience with your student club includes writing press releases, creating webpages, and producing promotional materials for all its events). Essentially, these elements are the pieces that make up your personal branding.

Complete sections for your education, skills, honors, activities, and experience, much like you would for your resume. You do not have list as much detail as you might on your resume, but you do not want your information to be too basic or vague either. So, make certain to provide at least some detail about your work experiences, volunteer experiences, field experiences, activities, etc. You can then attach the full version of your resume to the site.

If you have a personal webpage that features some of your work samples, post the link to it. Make certain that the work samples are high-quality pieces that showcase your skills effectively.

Ask at least three professionals to write a recommendation paragraph for you. They do not have to be full-blown recommendation letters. These should be from individuals who can objectively write about your skills and qualities. They can be from professionals such as work supervisors, student club advisors, and professors. It is okay to receive the one-click endorsements from others that are featured on the site, but those are not as effective as recommendations for marketing your strengths.

INDIVIDUAL CONNECTIONS

Connect with classmates, co-workers, professors, and professionals with whom you would like to converse on career-related topics. Concern yourself more with quality than quantity. Simply connecting to everybody you know is not going to draw you any closer to attaining your career goals. Try to reach out to individuals with whom you can have some meaningful discussions about careers. Try to connect with some professionals whom you feel can be valuable mentors.

Search for professionals who are working in your desired career field. Perhaps start with looking for individuals you know personally, then people with whom you have some remote relation, then SXU alums you may not know, and then others with whom you have no relation. Remember, you are searching for professionals who are serving in the career path you are pursuing.

If one of your contacts knows someone with whom you wish to connect, ask them to act as a referral for you. In return, you should be willing to serve as a conduit for others who might benefit from connecting with one of your contacts.

When introducing yourself to connect with someone, avoid using the generic default message that is provided on the system. Instead of the standard introduction (I'd like to include you in my LinkedIn network), you should provide a more personalized message that indicates the reason you wish to establish the connection (e.g., Hi, Chris. I am interested in a career in human resources. Given your experience, I believe that you have valuable insight to offer about the profession. Therefore, I would like to connect with you on LinkedIn. Thank you for your time and consideration. – *or* – Hi, Chris. We recently met at the SHRM Conference in Oak Brook. I am interested in a career in human resources. Based on your experience and our brief conversation, I believe that you have valuable insight to offer about the profession. Therefore, I would like to connect with you on LinkedIn. Thank you for your time and consideration.)

Initiate follow-up with your mentors. Update them on the status of your career exploration, the experiences you are completing, and your internship/job search. Ask them questions. Express gratitude for their guidance.

GROUP CONNECTIONS

Join professional groups. Search for groups that are affiliated with your occupational path, academic major, and student organizations. Most of them feature forums for exchanging ideas and gaining perspective about career-related topics.

Offer input on questions or professional topics on group discussion boards. It is a way to demonstrate that you have a keen interest in and knowledge about your desired field. It can help you establish a reputable online image.

MISCELLANEOUS

Search through the internship and career opportunities listings that are featured on the site. You can even arrange your settings so that you receive an e-mail notification anytime a job is posted that matches your preferred criteria.

Keep your communication professional. This does not mean that it has to be mechanical and non-creative. However, your grammar and punctuation should be solid. You should not write sentences as if they are text messages abundant with abbreviations. You should also be tactful and positive. This is not an appropriate forum for criticizing others or expressing frustration.

With the right approach, LinkedIn can serve as a valuable resource in helping you to attain your career aspirations.

Saint Xavier University Career Services

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