

Sue Thompson's BeExceptional

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LINKEDIN FOR SUCCESS

A couple of years ago, I worked on a project for an organization that had me combing through LinkedIn pages. Alternately impressed, appalled, and bored, I very early came to the conclusion that if you are using LinkedIn and want to be perceived as credible—particularly if you use it as an aid in the search for a job—you must consider this: just as your clothing and demeanor tells people what you're about and how you expect to be treated, your profile on LinkedIn sends a message. *What do you want that message to be?* Do you really want to put that picture of your dog in place as your profile photograph? Do you want that image of you half-clothed on your boat last summer to be the identifier of your professional capabilities? By the same token, the dull photo that looks remarkably like a police mugshot doesn't help when you want to grab the attention of those you need to impress.

When you put the bare minimum of information about yourself on LinkedIn, you relegate yourself to the thousands of boring, lifeless profiles that tell a potential employer very little about what you have to offer. To top it off, I'm always surprised by how many people note, "Contact me by email!" and *provide no visible email address*.

Make LinkedIn work for you. Consider these important features:

1. **Get a nice, upbeat, professional photograph taken for your profile.** No investment required—we all know the great product today's cameras produce. Put on a suit jacket and have a friend take a well-lit photo of you against a neutral background. But first, get to a salon and update your hairstyle. Women, wear a little makeup, if for nothing else than photographic purposes. Smile, for goodness' sake. Get an image consultant (or a pal who really has

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some style) to help you project the look of an upbeat, youthful, friendly person—not a angry old grandfather ready for an afternoon nap. If you are looking for a job, this is not the time for the picture of you coaching the girls' soccer team, or lounging with your children, or vacationing in Hawaii with your boyfriend.

2. **Write a strong value proposition for your intro.** If you aren't using LinkedIn for your job search toolbox, just entering your title and position is fine. But if you are, write something that stands out and tells a potential employer what you have to give them: "Highly organized marketing manager with a passion for non-profits and the ability to bring in big donors." Have a little fun with it to make it interesting; for example, change "highly organized" to "insanely organized." If you can't write, call on that friend or colleague who *can* put together some good copy to help you. Put your personality into it! Share your strengths and talents.

3. **Use the categories to expand upon your work, skills, and talents.** Nothing in LinkedIn prevents you from writing a lot of interesting detail about what you've done and what you're doing and how you came to be so brilliant. Write something worth reading for the "Summary," and put some meat in your descriptions under "Experience." Note articles you've written or projects to which you've contributed. In the "Interests" box under "Additional Information," write even more about yourself and what you've done and what specific things you have to bring to a company. Stand out! Write of yourself confidently. Tell people your strengths, your character, the talents you've honed and how you've put them to use. What do you want them to know about you? This is the place to lay it all out. Make them want to read.

4. **Maintain your information.** Those of you who have changed jobs—please update your company website addresses! And take note: your personal website is different from your company website. There are a lot of great sites on which you can easily create a clean, basic personal website with your resume and all the relevant information you want an employer to know, so do that, but don't note your company website as your personal site. As well, *don't* insert as your personal website something

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you like, such as the fan site for Lady Gaga. Seriously—personal website links have directed me to pages that are clearly sexual in nature, or something in a foreign language that looks pretty scary. Do you really want to tell your possible employer contacts that you hand out free needles to drug addicts? If you're looking for a job in public health, maybe. If not, why broadcast that right off the bat? As well, if you are entering a link for a blog, make it a link for a *blog*.

5. **Note your email address somewhere.** You are seeking to be contacted, right? Make it easy for people to contact you! Don't make the recruiter send you a message through LinkedIn. It adds a layer of distance. You're not some clandestine agent. Get yourself a free email address through Gmail or Yahoo! or some other service if you don't want to list your longtime personal email address. Put your address right up there in your introduction or in your summary; if not in those spots, then certainly in the "Contact me for" box.

6. **Proper spelling and punctuation, please.** Can this be said enough? Spell properly. Punctuate properly. Put apostrophes in the right place. Show recruiters you can put a sentence together. Again, surely you must know someone who writes well; ask them to proofread. When an employer has 100 people to search through, he or she will dump a resume or a profile for the smallest reason just to cull some of the volume, and the obvious ones go first. Can't spell—*out*. Can't write—*out*. (Also: scary or really dull or ridiculous photo—*out*. NO PHOTO AT ALL—*out*.)

Keep this in mind: no employer is going to LinkedIn specifically looking for someone like you; they're going to LinkedIn to verify who you are, particularly if you've noted your LinkedIn address in your correspondence or you've applied for a job through LinkedIn. So show them something worth looking at! Just as with your personality, demeanor, and appearance, leave them saying to themselves, "I want to know more!" *

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YOUR

Click here listen to interesting people talk about their character strengths!

CHARACTER

Is SHOWING



If you have anything really valuable to contribute to the world it will come through the expression of your own personality, that single spark of divinity that sets you off and makes you different from every other living creature.

—Bruce Barton

Every cask smells of the wine it contains.

—Spanish proverb

Life is too short to be small.

—Benjamin Disraeli

Professionalism is like love: it is made up of the constant flow of little bits of proof that testify to devotion and care. Everything else is pretension or incompetence.

—Tomislav Šola

About Sue

Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her presentation skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

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