

# Social with a Necktie

How to showcase your company through LinkedIn profiles. *by Don Kreski*



WITH ALMOST 100 MILLION active users in the United States and a 100 percent annual growth rate, LinkedIn is beginning to make Facebook look second rate for business-to-business marketers.

LinkedIn demographics are much more favorable, too. Its users tend to be older (about 40 on average), better educated (more than half have been to graduate school), and white collar. Users do spend a lot more time on Facebook than on LinkedIn, but time spent on LinkedIn is more purposeful and focused. It seems obvious that LinkedIn users are far more likely to be decision makers in an A/V system purchase than Facebook users.

The platform is valuable in at least four ways:

- › LinkedIn is a great reference to potential clients and employees — and a great place for potential clients to learn about you.
- › LinkedIn groups allow individuals to get involved in almost any industry to build their reputations and, through them, the reputations of their companies.
- › Like Facebook, LinkedIn has a news feed that you can use to disseminate information to potential clients.
- › LinkedIn is an ideal platform for recruiting since the site was originally designed with career-related networking as its goal.

Naysayers may argue that any website that is set up for job hunting is not a place to send employees.

Not so, says Kelly Perkins, marketing

and communications manager at Vaddio. “You have to have a certain confidence that you can retain your people,” she explains. The reality is that you can’t keep unhappy employees away from the platform, but embracing it can help you show potential clients how qualified your people, and your company, really are.

**Your LinkedIn photo can present a very good or very bad first impression.**

### Building Individual Profiles

The first place to start in any LinkedIn campaign is the individual profile. The A/V marketing people I spoke to about this all told me they encourage employees to become active on the site and to build up their profiles.

The profile photo is the first thing potential clients will see. As such, it can present a very good or a very bad first impression of an individual and of his or her company. A good, clear image can also save a client embarrassment, as many LinkedIn users go to profile pages before a meeting to make sure they recognize everyone.

Given its importance, I strongly suggest you invest in a professional portrait for yourself and for each of your employ-

ees. Once you have your new photo, simply click ‘edit profile’ and click again on the camera icon that will appear over the photo. You can also make changes to other areas of your profile from this screen or add new sections from a list that appears on the right.

You’ll want to include a summary section to quickly tell potential clients what they need to know about you or your staff members. There are any number of ways to write these summaries, but it’s best to start out with a strong first line, then follow with your most important skills and experience. ‘Systems engineer with 10 years designing and programming pro audio systems...’ or ‘A technically oriented business leader offering professional A/V systems integration to clients in hotels and conference centers.’

If you’re seeking new clients with a LinkedIn profile, the summary section should end with a brief call to action including your phone number. This is especially important given that the ‘Contact Information’ section of LinkedIn is not part of your public profile. That is to say, only those with whom you are already connected will be able to see your address, phone or email, unless you include it in another section.

**Experience.** I suggest you include current and past positions with at least some detail about the expertise you or your staff member demonstrated or your key accomplishments at each position. When you’re adding material to a LinkedIn profile, be mindful that it is

a web page like any other. The words and phrases you use will be indexed by Google and Bing as well as the LinkedIn search engine. That being said, potential clients using LinkedIn will be most likely to key in company names, job titles and job skills, so it can be beneficial to fill out the Experience section fully.

**Certifications.** Here's the place to list your CTS or vendor-specific certifications. Prove your qualifications as much as possible rather than simply list them.

**Projects.** Highlighting a few high-profile jobs you have worked on can go a long way toward proving the quality of your work. Ideally each project listing should include a two- to four-sentence description plus a 'project URL' linking to the client's website, to a news story or to a case history about the project.

**Publications, honors and awards** can help prove your qualifications as well and should be included if they apply.

**Volunteering & causes** can show something of your integrity via your commit-

## LINKEDIN AND FACEBOOK COMPARED

Active Users (May 2013)	Facebook	LinkedIn
Worldwide	1.11 billion	200 million
U.S.	159 million	100 million
Monthly growth in users	1.67%	6.5%
Average time on site/month	405 minutes	18 minutes

SOURCE: SPROUT INSIGHTS, WIKIPEDIA, TECHCRUNCH, BUSINESS INSIDER

*Popularity of LinkedIn is growing faster than that of Facebook.*

ment to your community.

The marketing managers I spoke to, for the most part, leave employees alone to create their LinkedIn profiles. An exception is Jim Gist at JBA Consulting Engineers. Whenever JBA creates a case

history about a project (for their website or in-house magazine), Gist will offer staff members who worked on that project summary versions to include on their profile pages.

**Privacy settings.** I strongly suggest you encourage everyone on your staff to share their public profiles with anyone trying to learn about them or your company. To do so for your own profile, roll your mouse over your name in the top menu, go to Settings and, under Helpful Links, 'Edit your public profile.' Once there, you'll find privacy settings on the right. Choose 'Make my public profile visible to everyone.'

While you're in that section, it's a good idea to create a custom URL (e.g. [linkedin.com/in/donkreski](http://linkedin.com/in/donkreski)). Doing so makes it much easier to direct people to a specific profile. **CI**

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