

DON'T IMPROVE... - PROVE



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A LinkedIn Guide for Students by Students

So you want to have a LinkedIn profile but don't know where to start?

No problem ... Let's go through it step by step! I've used my profile as a possible example. Here are the things I think are important when constructing your LinkedIn profile:

First Things First ... Your Profile Heading

1. Ian Leonard (Profile picture)

2. Ian Leonard (Profile picture)

3. 112 connections (Connections count)

4. ie.linkedin.com/in/ianleonard/ (Profile URL)

International Business MSc at University of Birmingham
Ireland | Higher Education

Current: Careers Network - University of Birmingham, Trinity College School of Business

Previous Education: Walsh's Pub, Corkscrew, The Big Issue
University of Birmingham

Complete your profile | Edit | 112 connections | Contact Info

1. The right name would help a lot! But under your name, I think it's quite wise to put a quick note about "**WHAT YOU DO AND WHERE YOU DO IT**" ... So here's me: My name is Ian Leonard and I am an International Business MSc at the University of Birmingham ... Already you've given someone enough information that they could be enticed to read on!
2. Now here is an extremely important part of your profile: **THE PROFILE PICTURE!** This is the first thing anybody is going to see and judge about you and your profile. Try and have it as professional as you would like to be conveyed ... Unfortunately this does mean no selfies, no Instagram pics of your food, and no cat memes ... Basically, have a photo that you would be happy to have showcased as the description of you as a professional. A headshot is also a bit more preferable to a full-body shot.
3. **CONNECTIONS!** ... One of the main activities of LinkedIn is to increase your professional network of contacts. As students, we may not think we have a lot of professional contacts to connect with but you'll be surprised about the amount of people you can justifiably call a "connection" ... A high number of

connections is the goal here (**BUT DON'T JUST GO ON A "CONNECTING SPREE"!**). Always connect with people you actually know ... Start off small: connect with your fellow coursemates or people you know through university; connect with people like your friends and family; connect with previous colleagues you have through part-time jobs or work experience ... You'll start to get so used to connecting with people, you start to think about in so many different situations. It's all just about expanding your professional network! LinkedIn allows you to send a personal message along with your connection request. Depending on the connection, make sure to avail of this **PERSONAL TOUCH!**

4. What I really find useful is that LinkedIn allows you to create your own **PERSONAL WEBLINK** ... So whenever you're looking to send your LinkedIn profile to someone, instead of a long, boring, impersonal, full-of-random-numbers weblink, you can create one that relates to you ... The best thing to use is your name, or some variation of it ... It's also perfect for a link to add to your CV!

Your Summary ... It's Time To Talk About Y-O-U!

The LinkedIn summary is the tool you use to tell everybody who visits your profile exactly what you want them to know! I've structured it into four specific sections:

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn summary page with the following content and numbered callouts:

- Summary** (Icon: document with a list)
- 5** I am a university graduate currently studying for my MSc in International Business. I have experience in both social media roles and in marketing and communications, having aided in promotions, events and campaigns for a number of major businesses, start-ups, charities and government organisations. I also have an interest in opportunities to aid businesses with general consulting matters.
- 6** I am a self-motivated and reliable worker with excellent organisational skills, competent at managing time and prioritising tasks. Having grown up in the surroundings of a local customer-oriented family business, I feel that I have great interpersonal skills, where I can efficiently and successfully work both in teams or as an individual. Extremely people-oriented, I also admire opportunities to learn and participate in the cultures of the many societies and nations across the globe.
- 7** I am a supporter of what I like to call the "informal professionalism" work etiquette. Hard work and meeting your targets is of most importance, but can be achieved through an atmosphere and culture of originality, teamwork, fun, and promoting self-actualisation.
- 8** If you ever feel the need to contact me, please do not hesitate to get in touch through email. Email: eoinolionard@gmail.com

5. I've used the first paragraph to give a short account of what I am **CURRENTLY DOING** at the moment, followed by a description of some of the **AREAS AND EXPERTISE** I have gained throughout my work experiences ... For a person already employed, this paragraph would include their current position and their duties in that role. But because we're students, our current position is **#STUDYING**, so we have to rely on past experience to show people the professional skills we have previously been entrusted with.
6. The next paragraph gives a description of the **SOFT SKILLS** that I feel I possess ... It probably seems a very wishy-washy paragraph where you'll see words like *people-person* or *excellent organiser* or *team player*, but how exactly it's written might give the person reading it an insight into your personality or the type of person you are.
7. The third paragraph is really for every specific person to fill. I like to call it the **STAND OUT** paragraph, because I feel it should include sentences that somewhat make you stand out from the crowd ... My third paragraph is all about "informal professionalism" (I'm currently in the process of thinking of a better name for it!) because this is something I feel strongly about in relation to my working environment

... In essence, have something in this paragraph that makes you different to the majority of other people. It doesn't have to be anything major, just something perhaps interesting and different ... Not too peculiar though. Writing "I'm a supporter of 'Wear Your Socks and Sandals To Work Day'" will not go down well!

8. The final paragraph essentially gives people the possibility to reach out and **CONTACT YOU** if they would like to. It's an easy sentence, and I also thinks it aids in showing people that you are quite approachable!

Your Experience ... Emphasising Your Previous Roles

Experience

Postgraduate Social Media Assistant 9
Careers Network - University of Birmingham
October 2014 – Present (1 month) | Birmingham, United Kingdom

- Working alongside the Careers Network staff as part of the Student Engagement Team (SET) with the responsibility for promoting events and services among postgraduate students through a variety of social media and promotional methods
- Providing assistance at Careers Network events including presentations, skills workshops and careers fairs

Specific roles include:
Updating social media; Live tweeting; Preparing and distributing promotional material; Writing blog posts and media content on employability and Careers Network events; Participating in focus groups;
Assisting in the communications evaluation process

10

11

RE: Invite to interview
"Outside-The-Box" Job Applications

9. Each experience will be summarised by an **EXPERIENCE HEADING** ... Please don't follow the student who as a joke described himself as the "Patron Saint of Academic Studying" ... Try to fill in as much of the information as possible:
 - a. The job title
 - b. The company or organisation you worked for
 - c. The date (normally the month and year will suffice) you started and finished
 - d. The place your company was (city and country)
10. Include the **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** you were entrusted with during your work experience. If you've ever received a job description from your employer, that's a great place to start as it describes exactly what the company expects from your position ... It will also be quite useful if you ever ask for a recommendation from a previous employer, as hopefully your description will complement what your employer says!
11. If you have any **MEDIA** (*documents, images, videos, etc.*) that supports the work you've been doing, make sure to add it to your profile ... People respond much more to things they can interact with instead of having to read through paragraphs and paragraphs and paragraphs and paragraphs and paragraphs and paragraphs of text!

Your Projects ... Bulking Up Your Abilities For Employers

Projects are great for highlighting specific parts of your job that are worth that extra bit of info! They are attached to the relevant work experience on your profile and lets people know that you have gone that extra mile to describe your ability to work on specific tasks either by yourself or with other people in teams.

- Perhaps leave the “Made My Sandwich For Lunch” project and its collaborators for another profile.

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn project profile. At the top, there is a 'Projects' tab with a red circular badge containing the number '12'. Below the tab, the project title is 'We Don't Beg - Digital Marketing Concept Creation' with a start date of 'June 2014 – July 2014'. A text box contains the following description: 'As a team, we were tasked with creating a concept for a digital marketing campaign for the Big Issue South West in the United Kingdom.' A red circular badge with the number '13' is overlaid on this text. Below the text, another text box states: 'Working from a zero budget, minimal media resources and given a limited timeframe, we produced both video and visual materials for the Big Issue to further develop and use in future digital marketing ventures.' A red circular badge with the number '14' is overlaid on this text. A third text box contains: 'The foundation of our marketing campaign was to highlight the work of Big Issue vendors in attempting to make a living for themselves. They are not simply begging at the side of the street. Instead, they are taking initiative and trying to get themselves back on their own two feet. In essence, they are independent businesspeople trying to earn a living for themselves ... They have to organise and buy their stock. They have to interact with the general public as they try and sell that stock. Basically, they are working hard during the day with the hope of supporting themselves. They are not beggars. They do not beg.' A red circular badge with the number '15' is overlaid on this text. At the bottom, it says '3 team members' and shows two profile pictures: 'Ian Leonard' and 'Luke Week'. A red circular badge with the number '16' is overlaid on the bottom right of the profile area.

12. Give your project a **NAME!** Even if you never used a name for what you were doing, try and summarise your work in a specific heading. It gives people looking at your profile an outline of the work done, and may push them to read on. Also remember to include the duration of the project (*start date and end date*).
13. It is a good idea to begin your description of your project with the **EXACT OBJECTIVE** that you were tasked with doing. If you were provided with a project brief, look to that for what exactly was being asked for. It is important for employers to know that the end-result complements the exact project purpose.
14. Then give a **SUMMARY** of what you did ... the resources used ... the timeframe intended ... the actions taken ... etc.
15. Flesh out your project with **WHY** exactly you chose to go in a **SPECIFIC DIRECTION** ... No philosophical reasons please, more along the lines of strategic decision-making ... Give the main point or objective of your project, and then what exactly you were hoping to convey or achieve.
16. A great aspect of LinkedIn's PROJECTS tab is that it allows you to highlight your **OTHER LINKEDIN COLLEAGUES** that aided you in the project development. While you may think this is quite trivial, it does give you that extra opportunity to highlight how you can be a team player ... Which is very important for some employers to know.

Your Education ... Hit The Books!

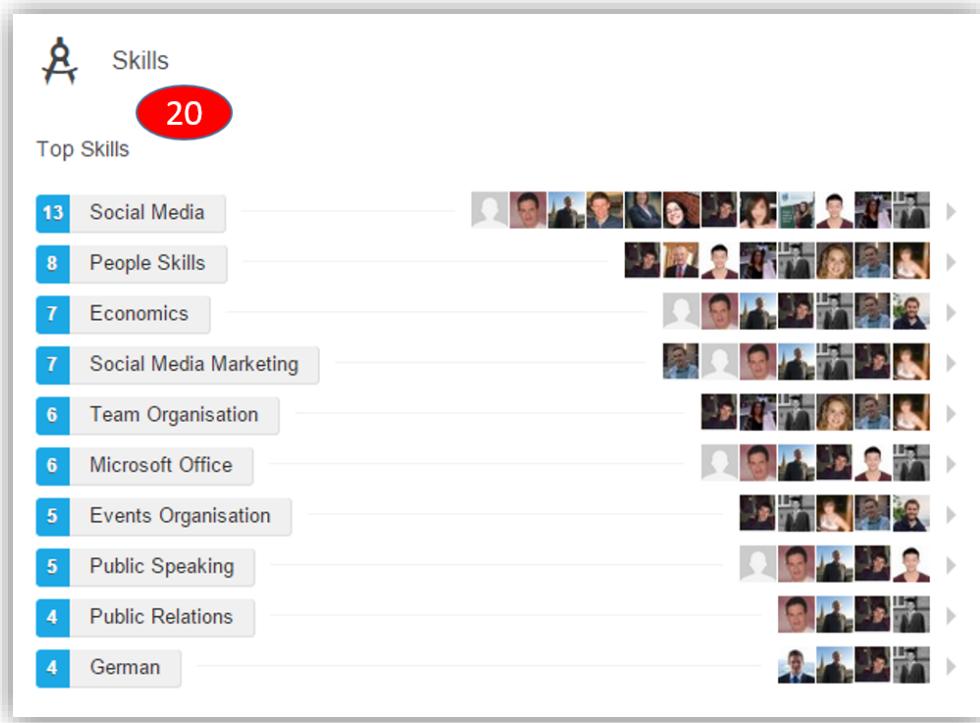
As a student, this section may be the only information you can provide, as your work experience may not be fully developed at the specific time you decide to set up a LinkedIn account. Therefore it is very important to include as much information here as deemed appropriate.

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn profile with an 'Education' section. It lists two university experiences:

- University of Birmingham** (17)
Master of Science (M.Sc.), International Business
2014 – 2015 (expected)
Semester 1 Modules: The Global Shift; Issues in Management; International Accounting and Finance; International Marketing; Research Methods in International Business
Activities and Societies: Careers Network (19)
- Trinity College, Dublin** (17)
Bachelor of Arts (BA), Business, Economics & Social Studies, II.1
2010 – 2014
Junior Freshman Modules (Year 1): Introduction to Economics; Mathematics and Statistics; Introduction to Sociology; Introduction to Organisation and Management; Introduction to Political Science; German Language 1
Senior Freshman Modules (Year 2): Intermediate Economics; Economy of Ireland; Mathematical and Statistical Methods; Organisational Behaviour; Principles of Marketing; Introduction to Accounting; Financial Analysis; Business German 2
Senior Sophister Modules (Year 4): International Business and the Global Economy; Exploring Organisational Experiences; International Economics; Economic Theory
Co-Founder and Lead Coordinator of the TCD Buddy System
- an integration programme for international students in Trinity College. It involved incorporating international students into Trinity life, and giving them opportunities to meet Irish people and experience Irish culture by organising weekly events in and outside of university.
Activities and Societies: TCD Buddy Sys (19)

17. Hopefully everybody will know where exactly they attend university! ... Use its full official name as well, no “Uni of Brum” or “Old Joe’s Study Parlour” ... LinkedIn has a brilliant application whereby once you say you attend a specific university, you automatically become a member of their network. This provides a powerful opportunity to connect with any number of university alumni that could aid you in progressing on your career path! Fill in your **UNIVERSITY INFORMATION** as correctly as possible:
 - a. The exact degree you will achieve ... e.g. BA / BSc / MA / MSc / MBA / PhD
 - b. The exact name of your course or degree
 - c. Your years of university attendance ... If still a student, put your expected graduation date
 - d. Your final result / grade
18. LinkedIn allows you to enter in your **SUBJECT MODULES** in a COURSES section, but what I like to do is type them out in the information section of EDUCATION. It keeps all of the information in one place. Simply list out your modules for each year of university ... If you like, you can also attach each year’s grade, but that’s not entirely necessary.
19. Make sure to add in information about any **ACTIVITIES OR SOCIETIES** that you have been taking part in during university. Give a brief description of the activity and the roles or duties that you had as a member of this activity ... From Class Rep to Society Head to Sports Team Water Distributor, it all helps!

Your Skills ... Get Those Endorsements!



The screenshot shows the LinkedIn Skills section. At the top, there is a Skills icon and a red circle with the number '20'. Below this, the heading 'Top Skills' is displayed. A list of ten skills is shown, each with a blue box containing a rank and the skill name, followed by a small profile icon and a grid of user icons representing endorsements. The skills listed are: 13 Social Media, 8 People Skills, 7 Economics, 7 Social Media Marketing, 6 Team Organisation, 6 Microsoft Office, 5 Events Organisation, 5 Public Speaking, 4 Public Relations, and 4 German.

Rank	Skill	Endorsements
13	Social Media	13
8	People Skills	8
7	Economics	7
7	Social Media Marketing	7
6	Team Organisation	6
6	Microsoft Office	6
5	Events Organisation	5
5	Public Speaking	5
4	Public Relations	4
4	German	4

20. The SKILLS section is a useful opportunity to highlight what you feel are some of the **HARD AND SOFT ATTRIBUTES** that you have as a professional ... *e.g. People Skills / Microsoft Office / Public Speaking ...* However, what you need to know is that all of these skills rely on your connections' endorsement of them. So while you may add certain skills to your profile, how they appear or what is seen as most related to you relies on what your connections think of you.

Your Languages ... Hello / Bonjour / Guten Tag / Hola / Dia Duit

21. If you are lucky enough to know a few languages that grace this world, be sure to highlight it on your profile! Add them in the **LANGUAGES** section on LinkedIn. There are also a variety of standards of language proficiency, so even if you only know a few words, add in any learning you have done.

Your Volunteering And Causes ... Stand Out With Stories

22. Employers aren't always interested just in your business achievements and experience. If you have any stories about volunteering activities or causes you believe in, make sure to add them to your profile in the **VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES AND CAUSES** section! These are the things that can make you that bit more interesting compared to all other students ... Actions, activities and experiences that make you **YOU!**

Your Groups And Followings ... A Network Of Opportunities

23. LinkedIn allows you to join a number of groups and follow specific trends, news, influencers, companies and schools. The **GROUPS** are particularly useful as platforms to connect with career areas that may be of particular interest to you, while the **FOLLOWINGS** sort of act as a news source for specific specialties (*e.g. Entrepreneurship and Innovation / Engineering / Finance*) ... I would say it's wise to join groups and follow items of interest, because to get the most out of LinkedIn, it's not just about having a profile, it's also about engaging with it as a professional social network.

AND THAT'S IT!

- WELL, TO START
OFF WITH



THE VERY BEST OF LUCK WITH YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE!
I HOPE THIS GUIDE IS USEFUL IN SOME WAY.

THANKS,
IAN