

8 LinkedIn Etiquette Mistakes

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Beware These LinkedIn No-No's

If you want to network professionally today, you have to be on LinkedIn. And, just as in face-to-face interactions, there are some specific no-no's when it comes to communication and collaboration on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn hangs its hat on being the most businesslike of the major public social networks, and many people who would never dream of liking something on Facebook or tweeting status updates on Twitter will participate on LinkedIn. Many people, on the other hand, are pros at using social networks and might think of LinkedIn as just one more. That would be a mistake. One of the biggest missteps people make on LinkedIn is treating it like any other social network. Think of it like flip-flops: Would you wear them to a job interview? Probably not. Likewise, you shouldn't do the virtual equivalent of kicking off your shoes on LinkedIn.

Another way in which people sometimes falter on LinkedIn is by taking advantage of their connections. Yes, it's really cool that you are directly connected to the CEO of your company, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you should direct message her on the network. And just because you have, say, 500 connections, it doesn't mean that you should be sending out 500 requests for recommendations. As in real-life business situations, discretion, judiciousness and courtesy should guide your interactions on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn has been making many changes to its interface lately, and some of the features have been met with more enthusiasm than others. Endorsements have been a particularly prickly subject, with many people believing they are meaningless or manipulative. It's important to keep abreast of changes to LinkedIn's platform, and to develop an understanding of how new features are being used and perhaps even abused. You don't want to be the one in breach of some unwritten rule. Two other mistakes people tend to make on LinkedIn are to do too much or to do nothing at all.

In trying to get into the spirit of using LinkedIn, it can be easy to go overboard updating your status, requesting connections and joining groups. But watch out. These activities can be perceived as spamming your connections.

Doing nothing, on the other hand, can be even more problematic because it renders you almost invisible and negates the very purpose of being on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is one of the most powerful networking tools out there, and it grows in power as more people see it as the de facto professional social network. Doing nothing can be the worst LinkedIn no-no of all.

Don't Be Promiscuous With Endorsements

With just a click of a button, you can endorse the skills and expertise of people you are connected to on LinkedIn. But that doesn't mean you should. Have you actually experienced this person's skills and expertise first-hand? For that matter, have you actually ever met the person whose skills and expertise you are endorsing? Do you expect something in return? If you answer no, no and yes to these questions, an endorsement will do you more harm than good.

Don't Ask Everyone And His Brother For A Recommendation

As in the non-LinkedIn world, it should be considered a big deal to ask for a recommendation, and it should be a big deal to be asked to give a recommendation. Don't blanket everyone you are connected to with a request to recommend you. You'll put people who don't know your work well in an awkward position, and the recommendations you do get won't be as meaningful as if you had asked in a more pointed way.

Don't Forget What Social Network You're On

LinkedIn is not Facebook, it's not Twitter, it's not Instagram, it's not ... well, you get the idea. LinkedIn is known for being the professional social network. Members expect professional behavior and professional talk. This is not the place to share pictures of your lunch, best wishes for birthdays, updates on exercise programs, or selfies of you on vacation.

Don't Send Barebones Template Invitations

On LinkedIn, the whole idea is to build a network. It can be hard to build a critical mass of connections, but resist the urge to quickly send out a bunch of connection invites using the LinkedIn template, especially if you are attempting to connect with people you don't know very well if at all. At the very least, change or add to the template text to acknowledge how you know the person, why you would like to connect, or both.

Don't Spam

Yes, you can message your contacts on LinkedIn. No, you shouldn't message early and often and indiscriminately.

Don't Post Indiscriminately

Speaking of being indiscriminate, don't post updates of anything and everything that comes to mind. Remember, this is not Twitter. You should have a good reason for anything and everything that you post on LinkedIn. Sharing a blog post that you wrote on a relevant business topic? Yes. Cluttering your contacts' pages with links to every news story you read online today? No.

Don't Lie About, Or Even Embellish, Your Experience

I can't count the times I've heard someone look at former colleagues' LinkedIn Profiles and guffaw (yes, guffaw) while saying things like, "What!?! He did what at our company?" "Nice of her to take all of the credit for a project that a whole team worked on!" "Since when did he have that title?" You get the picture. Depending on how you look at it, the good and bad thing about LinkedIn is that your experience is out there for all to see. Unlike the old days, when your resume was seen by only a few people, usually outside your own company, you could embellish without too much risk (not that you should have). That's not the case now, and it pays in many ways to be clear and honest in everything that you post.

Don't Do Nothing

Doing anything too much -- whether it's updating or messaging or liking or whatever -- isn't good, but doing nothing at all might be worse, at least when it comes to your career. On LinkedIn, why wouldn't you keep your profile updated, update your status with relevant news and content, connect with people you have met at conferences, and join and participate in industry-specific groups? When it comes to any social network, one of the biggest no-no's is to do nothing at all.

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