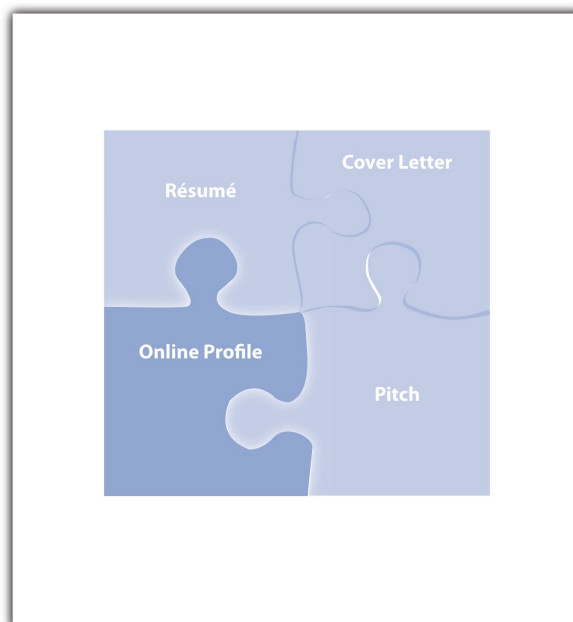


## 5.2 The Online Profile

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn why an online profile can help your job search.
2. Be knowledgeable about all aspects of having an online presence.



Your online profile is the third component of a compelling marketing campaign. An online profile serves two functions:

1. It's a marketing tool for the passive job search because the majority of recruiters use online profiles to find qualified candidates.
2. It's a great networking tool because you can connect with friends, family, former coworkers, and current schoolmates and stay in touch with them easily regardless of where you or they live or work.

### Digital Dirt

Various social networking sites allow you to post anything you would like in cyberspace. Twitter, Facebook, and Second Life are a few examples. Four hundred million individuals have a Facebook presence, which enables them to connect and reconnect with current and past friends. Facebook allows you to post pictures of yourself, your friends, your animals, your vacation, and anything else you would like to include. You can post your birthday, your relationship status, your taste in music, and your interests and hobbies. Most employers look to LinkedIn for professional information because LinkedIn is often described as the professional version of Facebook, but employers still will look at your Facebook profile. When three candidates seem equally suited for a position, researching the candidates on Facebook may provide information that becomes the deciding factor. A word to the wise: Ensure that information on your Facebook page can only help your job search. Foul language and inappropriate pictures of social parties and activities will hurt your ability to land the job you are seeking. Do not rely on privacy settings that you think filter individuals from viewing your information because those settings have often failed

job search candidates. Facebook remains a wonderful tool for social networking, however, once something is in cyberspace, it's virtually impossible to delete, so proceed with caution!

## Overview of LinkedIn

More than 100 million people are on LinkedIn, the leading online network for professional profiles, and that number grows every day. LinkedIn is different from Facebook because it's intended only for professional use and to focus on your career. To get started with initial online marketing efforts, LinkedIn is a great first step.

Visit LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com> and follow the tutorial to learn aspects about the site and create an account. Use a thumbnail sketch of your résumé for your profile. Create a summary section, and bear in mind that this is a great place to include specific keywords on which recruiters and employers may search (e.g., specific technical skills, languages, brand-name companies, industry knowledge).

## Who Can You Link To?

Think of ten to twenty people you'd like to connect to, such as peers from past jobs, friends and family, and peers at school. Go line by line through your résumé and think of all the people you know from each stage in your career. You can use the LinkedIn search function to search by school, organization name, or other keyword. As you populate your profile, LinkedIn makes recommendations for people you may know based on the names and keywords you enter. This gives you additional ideas for connections.

Send an invitation to the ten to twenty people you'd like to connect to. Write a personalized request to connect that reminds them how you know them, rather than using the generic templates that LinkedIn provides. With LinkedIn, all the people connected to a profile are visible to people who view that profile (you can shut off this feature, but it is helpful for networking, so most people do not). This means that for your connections, you can see their connections. This also means that the more people you are connected to, the more profiles you can view and the more your profile can be viewed. Increasing your connections improves your marketing reach.

On a regular basis, think of another ten to twenty individuals you can connect to and invite them. You can also upload some contact databases and e-mail accounts, such as Outlook, Yahoo!, and Gmail, into LinkedIn so that you can invite your entire existing network in one effort. Some **open networkers** will link to anyone who requests a link, or they will reach out to a variety of individuals they don't know and ask to link to them. Either way is acceptable and whether you link only with people you know well or are willing to link with people you barely know or don't know depends on your comfort level.

Having your résumé details in your LinkedIn profile and connecting to people is the bare minimum for an online profile. To have a profile that is a comprehensive marketing platform, you should consider the next sections, which detail additional options.

## Include a Professional Picture or Head Shot

Professional photos are helpful as you start meeting more and more people because some people may remember your face more easily than your name or background.

## Add a Summary to Your Thumbnail Sketch

Your LinkedIn profile is basically a thumbnail sketch of your résumé. It's important for you to include a short, succinct summary of your background and where you are now in your career. You should also include each school you've attended, along with the years. Include each work experience you've been a part of, again, along with the years, in a professional and formal format. This will allow individuals to identify how they have known you in the past.

## **Include Recommendations**

Include recommendations from two or three individuals who know your work. You must be connected to people to request they provide a recommendation. Recommendations help your marketing because they add a dimension to your profile that is not included in your résumé.

## **Join Groups**

Join groups with which you share a common interest. Groups are formed from common associations, such as college alumni groups (be sure to join your school's alumni group, even if you've yet to graduate), industry groups, and mutual goal groups, such as people interested in finding employment. Groups enable you to connect to more people, translating into even more people who will see your profile. You can join approximately fifty groups, and you can also elect to have your group memberships displayed or not displayed on your profile. Tailor your groups to reflect specific professional interests as another way to market yourself as being involved with that area.

## **Use Applications**

Use LinkedIn applications such as reading lists and presentation or blog sharing. With a paper résumé, it is unwieldy to include a lot of attachments, such as a **portfolio** of your work. An online profile allows you to link to an online collection of your work and create a comprehensive view of everything you offer. You can share a list of what you are reading with the Amazon reading list application. Listing books related to your career targets shows that you are staying current about your target industries and functions and are committed to training and development. You can use the SlideShare application to post PowerPoint presentations you have created. Perhaps as part of a class assignment, you have done a group project that is relevant to prospective employers. If you have a blog and your blog showcases examples of your work, your LinkedIn profile can be set to update with samples of your work whenever you post to your blog. While this level of detail seems onerous for a paper résumé, when online it is easy to page through and access as much data as you'd like, so you can offer the reader (in this case, recruiters and employers) much more information.

## **Maintain Your Profile**

Remember that it is important to maintain your online profile. Continually update your LinkedIn profile because as your career grows and changes, so should your LinkedIn profile. Link to new people you meet. Update your summary and experience. LinkedIn also has a status section for more frequent updates that are broadcast to your connections. In this way, you can market your activity on an ongoing basis.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Social networking sites have both benefits and disadvantages. Make sure

anything you put in cyberspace only supports your job search efforts.

- Take special care to ensure your Facebook presence gives a positive impression to anyone who may view it.
- LinkedIn is an online network with over 100 million users worldwide and provides specific connections for career-related and professional networking.
- Recruiters and employers use LinkedIn to search for candidates, making it a key marketing tool for a passive job search.
- At a minimum, you should have your résumé details online and start connecting with people.
- For a comprehensive campaign, you should also include a professional photo, recommendations, group memberships and the resulting connections and applications, such as reading lists, presentations, or blogs, that demonstrate your expertise.

## EXERCISES

1. Look up five or six individuals on <http://www.linkedin.com> who are employed in the industry you are most interested in joining. What have you learned from their profiles?
2. Create an account on LinkedIn (if you don't already have one).
3. Connect with ten to twenty individuals.
4. Think of one or more additional features on LinkedIn you will add to your marketing campaign.