**Ten Mistakes That Are Killing Your LinkedIn Profile**

Your LinkedIn profile is your online billboard. Before LinkedIn arrived on the scene in 2003, a lot of people built and maintained personal websites that showcased their professional accomplishments. We don’t need personal websites anymore because you can use LinkedIn for the same purpose. Who would ever find your personal website?

Everyone can find you on LinkedIn! The more connections you have, the more visible your profile will be. The more followers you have on LinkedIn, ditto. Here are 10 brand-damaging mistakes that will kill your LinkedIn profile’s effectiveness whether you are job-hunting, looking to build your business or just looking to grow your network and your credibility.

[7 Ways to Make LinkedIn Help You Find A Job](http://www.forbes.com/pictures/fmlm45ehegk/make-linkedin-help-you-f/)

**Your LinkedIn Profile Photo**

You don’t need to pay a photographer to take a photo of you that you’ll use for your LinkedIn profile, but you have to have that photo! When the space where your photo should be is left blank, the rest of us instantly see you in our mind’s eye looking like the Jason from “Halloween” or the Phantom of the Opera.

We wonder why you took the time to create a LinkedIn profile and then neglected to upload a photo to it. Get a pleasant head-and-shoulders photo in your LinkedIn profile pronto if you want anyone to stay on your page for more than one second.

**Your LinkedIn Headline**

In  many ways the most important element in your LinkedIn profile is the combination of your name, your LinkedIn headline and your profile photo.

These three items are the only parts of your LinkedIn profile that a user will be able to see when he or she conducts a search on the vast LinkedIn member database and your profile turns up as a search result. It’s important to compose a LinkedIn “headline” that represents you in the best possible way — the way you want people to see you.

“Experienced Business Professional” is not the best way to brand yourself, no matter what you do professionally. It’s a say-nothing phrase that will make LinkedIn visitors scurry away to view somebody else’s profile.

The same goes for “Savvy, Strategic Leader” (Who says?) and any other zombietastic, done-to-death shards of jargon that may be gumming up your LinkedIn headline now.

Tell us what function you perform and one more thing (your industry or your current goal, for instance) to set your headline apart. Here are two examples:

• Marketing/PR Manager for Wireless Devices

• Executive Administrator (Bilingual) Seeking My Next Challenge

Should the bilingual Executive Administrator mention his or her two languages right in the headline? No need to — most people who are looking for an Executive Administrator will click through to this LinkedIn user’s full profile to learn which two languages he or she speaks, if for no other reason.

Make your LinkedIn headline count!

**Your LinkedIn Profile Summary**

Your Summary is your story — the story of your career and whatever else you want the world to know about you. Don’t write your LinkedIn Summary in the third person, like this: “Mr. Smith is the Vice President and General Manager of Yada Yada Industries.”

We all know you wrote your own Summary. Who else should write it — your PR person? It’s you speaking to us. Why would you want to create a wall between yourself and the rest of the world? You can use the third person in the bio on your website. On LinkedIn, you don’t need to talk about yourself from somebody else’s vantage point.

**Your Current And Past Job Descriptions**

There is a story in your career path so far and it will interest people, but only when you see what’s interesting in your story. Until you figure that out,  your career history will just be a boring list of company names and job titles. Why should anyone care? In your descriptions of each of the jobs you’ve held, tell a little bit of your story, like this:

I came to Angry Chocolates through its acquisition of Love Bug Lollipops. I took on National Accounts Support for the combined company and then moved into Product Management.

When you tell us your story, we see you in it. We see you rocking the house in National Accounts and we see your boss walking up to you and saying, “You need to be in Product Management.” Your picture is right there on the same page. Now you are starring in a movie, but the setting is reality and the time is the present day. We see you in the movie. That’s what you want from your LinkedIn profile!

**Your Recommendations**

The best way to get recommendations from your first-degree connections is to leave them recommendations first. Only your first-degree homies can recommend you. You can leave one recommendation per day for one of the many amazing people you’ve worked with or volunteered with or gone to school with.

You can drop a recommendation on them when they least expect it and make them say “Oh, that is so kind. I so appreciate that. I needed that boost today. Thank you!” A lot of your friends will leave you LinkedIn recommendations back. You don’t have to ask for them.

Here is a sample recommendation:

I got to work with Marjorie when I was an intern at Acme Explosives and she was the East Coast Sales Coordinator. I learned everything I know about organizing a sales order desk from Marjorie.

She taught me how to schedule orders, work with shippers around the world, create sales and inventory reports and manage my time as well as how to work with people under pressure and in all time zones. Marjorie is a tremendous teacher, mentor and coach and I hope I get to work with her again.

Be specific in the recommendations you write. They are one of the best things about LinkedIn because they are personal. They talk about a time and place where two people relied on one another.

The best LinkedIn recommendations express gratitude for the chance to have shared time, sweat and ideas with another person and to have created a little spark or glue between the two of you. That spark is what powers the business world and human activities in general.

We don’t talk as much as we should about friendship, trust and the human sides of work, but the good energy between and among people is the only thing that powers any enterprise.

**Your LinkedIn Activity**

If you create a LinkedIn profile and then leave it to languish, that will be evident to everyone who visits your profile page. That’s not to say that you have to dutifully log in to LinkedIn and do something every day so that people know you’re around, but you do  have to decide how you’re going to use LinkedIn and to keep in mind that spending time on LinkedIn is  like planting and tending a garden. Old-fashioned face-to-face networking works the same way.

You have to stick with it and you have to interact with people to cultivate and reinforce your network on LinkedIn. That could mean joining one or more LinkedIn Groups and participating in the conversations, reading and commenting on other LinkedIn users’ blog posts and/or writing your own; reading and responding to Status Updates or writing your own; and so on.

My kids call LinkedIn “Facebook for old people.” There is a lot to do apart from creating a profile and setting it loose to change your life on its own. That’s not going to happen. LinkedIn is a tool, like a hammer. You have to use the tool to get anything out of it.

**Your Network**

Your actual network — the people you are connected to on LinkedIn — is a big part of your LinkedIn brand or persona. That doesn’t mean that you have to have a huge LinkedIn network. It’s up to you. Some people create LinkedIn connections carefully.

They don’t accept connection invitations from strangers, and how can we blame them for that? Other people see LinkedIn as a place where everybody who wants to can make gazillions of connections. That’s fine too. Think about how you want to use the connecting part of LinkedIn, one of LinkedIn’s strongest capabilities.

You can get introductions, make introductions and request introductions to folks you don’t know personally if your LinkedIn friends know those people. That’s why it’s important to choose your first-degree connections with care. You could be spammed with introduction requests otherwise.

Not everyone has learned how to be a polite online networker. Many people are coming up the curve. Be careful not to lean too heavily on your connections for introductions. There is a value involved. There is an “ask” in any request for an introduction. Take your friends’ relationships seriously and they will extend the same courtesy to you.

**Your LinkedIn Inbox**

Your LinkedIn inbox is the way LinkedIn users can reach you. If you can try to stay on top of your inbox, you will find your LinkedIn adventures more successful and gratifying. You can set up your LinkedIn inbox to email you when something new hits the inbox. That way you don’t have to log in to LinkedIn to see if you have new mail.

**Your Brand**

You have a brand, whether you want to have one or not. You can say, “I don’t want to have a brand” but that is like saying that when you go out in the sun, you don’t want to cast a shadow. You’re going to cast a shadow on a sunny day and you’re going to have a reputation, so why not use LinkedIn to declare yourself?

Your stories, your profile enhancements like images, videos and PowerPoint presentations and the other elements in your LinkedIn profile give the reader a cohesive picture of a person on a mission. We want to know about the mission, not just the stops along the way!

**Your Voice**

Your voice is unique, just like your story. No one else can speak with your voice. Let us hear your voice in your LinkedIn profile. It’s a new day, and the Human Workplace is already here.

Step into your power by using your LinkedIn profile to come out from behind your resume and tell us about your path and your mission. Your profile will be more powerful, more honest and more like you when it sounds like you. In your LinkedIn profile, speak with your own voice!

*Liz Ryan is the CEO and founder of Human Workplace. Follow her on*[*Twitter*](http://www.twitter.com/humanworkplace)*and read the rest of her Forbes.com*[*columns here*](http://www.forbes.com/sites/lizryan/)*.*