

# A Useful Guide to LinkedIn



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# A Useful Guide to LinkedIn

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#### **What isn't in this Useful Guide?**

This isn't a detailed manual, leading you through every menu and screen within LinkedIn. This Useful Guide will lead you through the benefits of using different aspects of the site, highlighting some of the features and the menu options to use.

If you need help and support using particular aspects of the site, use the reference links within each section and listed in the last chapter, for the LinkedIn learning centre, blog and our resources.

#### **When you have worked through this Useful Guide, you will be able to ...**

- Create your strategy for using LinkedIn in combination with other networking and relationship activities
- Maintain the key areas of your profile
- Join groups which are appropriate for you
- Start and join discussions within groups and within the Answers
- Setup groups and invite others to join
- Search through and answer questions from other LinkedIn users
- Invite others to connect and respond to requests
- Maintain your LinkedIn contacts
- Search through other Applications
- Access the online help within LinkedIn

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## Chapter 1 - Dispelling some myths

Having approached LinkedIn, and various other online tools and websites, with some trepidation myself, I know there are many sceptics out there and that some of this scepticism is based on myth. It's not unusual for high profile websites, marketed as "free" and "easy to use" to be surrounded by such myth – after all, there's no such thing as a free lunch and very few pieces of "kit" are actually as easy to use as their publicity suggests. So, let's start with a few of the common myths about LinkedIn ....

- It doesn't work for business – the only way to build relationships is face-to-face
- LinkedIn is for job hunting – and nothing else
- Quality of network is always more important than quantity – only connect with people you've met and know well already
- Conversely, it's only worth doing something online if you build huge numbers of connections
- It takes a lot of time for little return
- If you really want to make the most of it, you need to pay

So, let's dispel those myths.

### **It doesn't work for business – the only way to build relationships is face-to-face**

I started in business for myself in April 2009 and, at that time, I had approximately 30 contacts on LinkedIn. Like many people I talk to, I can't recall who invited me to join, or when, and I had done little except put on a basic profile and accept invitations from people I knew well.

I started to experiment and find out more, but I was still sceptical about how it would REALLY help me. After all, the only way to build relationships is face-to-face. Maybe it would help me find a few ex-colleagues and consultants I'd worked with over the previous years.

For the most part, I continued to connect with people I knew but I started to seek them out – I searched for people who had worked for the same organisation, any time in the previous 21 years. I found many people I knew and quite a few I didn't know – and nearly all accepted the invitations and I received a few from others connected to them.

As I embarked on my new business, I was also finding face-to-face networking events to go to and would connect with people on LinkedIn whom I had met – some of those people I still see regularly and others less so.

In time, I joined groups and discussions and found that I was having regular discussions with some of the people in those groups. I began to send invitations to, and receive invitations from, those I had been in discussion with.

Some of these people I have talked to on the telephone and some I have met – by the time we did so, we knew quite a bit about each other. At least two of the ex-colleagues I've met were people I'd not worked with and one I hadn't met at all. We had connected on LinkedIn, we had joined some discussions or emailed each other and, when we met, we knew what we had in common and what we wanted to find out.

People do business with people and, for many services, this is with people they know, like and trust – by getting to know people on line, when we met, it didn't take long to work out how well we knew each other and how far along the “know, like and trust” line we were on.

### **What has this meant for me?**

One ex-colleague whom I had not seen for some 5 years, had moved onto a senior HR role in another organisation and, until I connected with her, she didn't know I had moved on. We connected and she asked for my help with a project, leading to a two-month assignment.

I am currently in discussion with other ex-colleagues in different roles in different businesses about how we might work together. They probably won't all amount to billable work in the next few months – but they are a lot more likely to than trying to find the same number of fresh contacts in each of these organisations and build the relationships from scratch. We found each other on LinkedIn, having not known where we'd gone after parting company.

Amongst the other current contacts I'm talking to about helping them in their businesses, are people who found me on LinkedIn, through mutual groups and shared discussions, before we met face-to-face.

### **LinkedIn is for job hunting – and nothing else**

Many job hunters and recruiters have made great use of LinkedIn to find that next position, more so in the US than the UK, although it's growing in the UK. The LinkedIn profile allows you to put together a great CV, far richer than anything you'd be likely to submit as part of an application process, with vast amounts of detail and recommendations. Because everyone's profile is



searchable, although you can choose to make some of it less visible, recruiters and potential employers can look at your information easily.

Potential employers can post opportunities and connect with candidates, often without the use of recruitment agencies and recruiters can stretch their networks much further. All this makes it easier for people to look for vacancies and candidates.

But that isn't the whole story. As a business owner, I too have a personal profile which shows my experience and recommendations from people I've worked with. Those doing business with me can look at this information and see who else I am connected to and which groups I'm part of. You can search LinkedIn for roles, keywords, industries and much more. So, if you are looking for a particular type of service, you can find providers based on their profiles. For many small businesses, maintaining their LinkedIn profile becomes a weekly / daily activity, whereas updating their website is a chore, to be undertaken as rarely as possible.

As an example, I was going to visit a potential client in an area I don't know well, and needed accommodation, so I asked someone in my network if they could recommend somewhere to stay nearby. When I was researching a new area and didn't think I knew anyone nearby, I posed a question on LinkedIn, through my status update and in one UK-wide group. In this way, I was able to ask a question of many hundreds of people.

So far, the benefits I've gained from using LinkedIn include ...

- Finding former colleagues and contacts with whom I'd lost touch
  - Some of these have led to introductions to others
  - Some have led to ongoing discussions for services I can offer them
  - One led directly to a two-month contract
- Finding new contacts in the sectors which I mainly work in
- Helping to identify the right contact within a business
- Keeping in touch with people, including building two networking groups enabling a wider group of people to share ideas, discussions and refer business to each other.

Associates of mine have also had work as a direct result of being found on LinkedIn by former colleagues and by people searching for their service.

Others have found the people to resolve complex technical queries.

### **Quality of network is always more important than quantity – only connect with people you've met and know well already**

As I've alluded to above, that's a bit how I (and most others) started and plenty of people maintain this approach. After all, if networking is about building relationships and referring people to each other, you can only do that when you know people well and trust them to work with you / your clients and contacts.

And I agree. But I can't tell you now ...

- Which of my contacts I will get to know over the next year or longer
- How many of my contacts will refer me to other businesses
- Who I will be able to refer work to
- With whom I will collaborate to deliver services
- From whom I will buy services
- To whom I will directly sell my services

I can tell you that some of these contacts will respond to my email / message / phone-call and we will get to know each other better in order to be able to do business in some way and others won't. People being what they are, I can also tell you that I will be surprised by some of those who do respond and some of those who don't. So, as I look at my contacts list today, there are 120 people who used to work at the same firm as I did – the chances of me getting to know them better over the next year are very high and, therefore, most likely to lead to business in some way. If I only kept in touch with those I already knew quite well, the chances are that fewer of these would lead to business.

### **Conversely, it's only worth doing something online if you build huge numbers of connections**

Apart from celebrities, the people who seem to grow very large networks, by that I mean thousands of connections on LinkedIn and tens of thousands of followers on Twitter, are those extolling the benefits of social media. To me, one of the problems with "social media" is the title – it's seen as social not business. Yet, we all do business with people and we much prefer to do business with people we get on with – the social aspects of work are well documented. LinkedIn is part of the mix of Social media as much as Twitter and Facebook and many other sites.

These people are seen to be practising what they preach – i.e. build a large network and sell more services. However, if you have 10,000 connections on LinkedIn, you will be building relationships with only a few of them. What it does allow you to do, though, is reach more people as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level connections.



This can be good for researching other businesses. Apparently, my 1,000+ connections will link me to 8million+ people. This means that if I'm trying to find people within an industry / sector / organisation, there's a much higher chance that I will find someone I am connected to who is connected to the organisation I am researching, than if I have 95 connections, who each have small networks.

As an example, a contact (A) gave me the name of someone who might be useful for me (B), but little other information. When I looked him up on LinkedIn, I found we had 4 common connections – I called the one I know best (C) and asked him how well he knew B and he knew him well enough to tell me more and give me the contact details. Without seeing this connection on LinkedIn, I would not have seen this link nor found the information that I needed. I was better prepared when I phoned B and knew about some of our common connections and interests, even though, at that stage, we had not connected directly.

Finding 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level connections and groups in common is a way of finding out more about someone, before you contact them directly. As more business people put their information on line, the ability to find the "director of XX services at ABC plc" grows; the more connections you have, the likelihood of you finding a connection to that person increases. When a new contact of mine, in a different industry, wanted to find someone to help them out, they found I was an intermediary connection and I was able to forward on a request for them. It would have taken us many hours to go through our mutual address books to find contacts which would have helped each other.

### **It takes a lot of time for little return**

Like anything else you do, you can waste many hours dipping into and out of discussions and get nowhere. You need a strategy and a plan. The following chapters will help you decide on your strategy and your actions and, therefore, the amount of time you want to put in.

Once I knew what I wanted to tell others about me, it took me about 2 hours to set up everything on my profile. Most days I spend about 15 minutes actively looking at Groups and Answers; sometimes a little more and, if there is something which I think is worth my time, maybe even more. What's "worth my time"? Discussions within groups which I have identified are useful to me, with members I want to talk to for whatever reason.

It's a bit like going to a networking event – you plan on the journey time and the meeting time and, sometimes, you stay for a planned meeting and sometimes, when an unplanned conversation seems useful, you stay longer.

I also write a blog [www.suecohen.wordpress.com/](http://www.suecohen.wordpress.com/), which is linked to my profile [uk.linkedin.com/in/suecohen01](http://uk.linkedin.com/in/suecohen01), along with my website [suecohen.co.uk](http://suecohen.co.uk) and I post links to some of the articles in some of the groups and read others' blogs and articles and comment on them.

When I am working at my desk, my email and browser are open for most of the day – as most LinkedIn updates are emailed directly to me as well, I can monitor these every few hours and decide if something is worth looking at during the day. If I've contributed to a discussion, or posted my blog, and there are comments from others, I will look at these and sometimes respond quickly. At other times, I will respond the next day or respond to a few postings at a time.

In the last few weeks, I have followed up two specific people who had followed me as a result of seeing an article I had written, within one of the groups they belong to. One specifically quoted the article he'd read when he sent me an invitation to connect and I asked the other one what had prompted him to do so. If you receive a connection request, and you're not sure why, then check it out. As you find which of your activities are getting you the results you want, you can repeat them. Of these two specific connections, by the end of the first meeting we were discussing services they might be interested in. And, whilst one of them turns out to be a contact of another associate of mine, this process made it easier for us to connect directly; and the other one – we had not established any other common connection.

As you can see from the examples above, the returns vary and they depend on your business and your strategy. You are unlikely to sell most services directly through LinkedIn – you are highly likely to find new suppliers, collaborators, contacts and customers directly or indirectly through LinkedIn often far easier than through their own website or word of mouth.

You can maintain vast parts of your contacts list without having to do anything. Just consider how long it takes to update your contacts list each time someone changes their email address and phone number? Apparently, a quarter of my contacts changed their contact details last year, how much time would it take to amend all their contact details? With LinkedIn, I look them up when I need to send something, outside of a LinkedIn message and use the current data.

Depending on your email system, you can link your LinkedIn contacts to your email address book and to the address book on your handheld – if you want to. As an example, there is a LinkedIn Outlook toolbar, which works with most versions of Outlook and Windows although you need to be careful with your

firewall – my laptop settings just don't get on with the current version of Outlook and LinkedIn together. However, I have the LinkedIn mobile application on my Blackberry and this is linked to my Blackberry contacts.

**Finally, if you really want to make the most of it, you need to pay.**

The simple answer is no, you don't. The features which the majority of people want and need to use are available for free. It is possible that, over time, some of these features will move into premium / paid for accounts but, at the moment, everything covered in this Useful Guide is available to all users for free.

It is your time you need to invest, so you need to consider what you want to achieve and how and plan the time accordingly.

As with many of the Useful Guides, I suggest you start by planning time to read each section, time to implement the suggestions and time to review progress.

## Chapter 2 – Strategy

### An overview of how you can use LinkedIn as part of your business's strategy for networking and building relationships.

The first question is – what is your strategy for networking and building relationships within your business? This should be part of your overall marketing strategy and, therefore, your overall business strategy.

There are many ways of creating your business strategy, and, depending on the type of business you are in and your experience, it will vary in terms of its nature and complexity. Creating an overall business strategy is beyond the scope of what we are doing here and we are going to concentrate on your networking. I'm sure if you speak to a variety of people, they will approach this in different ways, so here are a few questions to get you thinking ...

1	How much of your business is generated from returning customers?	%
2	How much of your business is generated from referrals from existing customers?	%
3	How much of your business is generated from referrals from contacts, who are not your customers?	%
4	What percentage of your network is represented by 1, 2 and 3 above?	%
5	How much more of your business could be generated from returning customers?	%
6	How much more of your business could be generated from referrals from existing customers?	%
7	How much more of your business could be generated from referrals from contacts, who are not your customers?	%
8	How easy is it to stay in contact with people whom you don't see regularly through current business or such things as industry or networking events	Difficult / okay / easy

Many businesses generate the vast majority of their new business through existing customers – returning for repeat or new services – and from referrals from trusted people within their network. However, it is also true that many could generate more, if they could find easier ways of keeping in touch with them. Likewise, many of us spend countless hours, not to mention money, on networking events in order to find new customers, contacts and collaborators and find that the time needed to maintain this ever-growing network can far outweigh the benefits i.e. ultimately more business.

To me, LinkedIn is a great way of moving this along – I can keep in contact with people, in pretty much a light touch way, as well as finding new contacts through the various applications, in particular the discussion groups.

So, the following activities tie in with my strategy ...

- In order to maintain contact with existing customers, suppliers, referrers and collaborators, I look for them within LinkedIn and invite them to connect.
- To maintain and build my credibility, they need to see me “doing” things which are relevant to my business and theirs – such as the discussions I start and join and the status updates I post.
- To find new contacts within my industry, I have joined a number of groups where I can share ideas with others, seek and offer advice, and discuss business issues relevant to our industry. I also maintain contact with a group of people I meet every 6 weeks or so and we share learning and, sometimes, referrals.
- To find other new contacts, I have joined a number of networking groups, some centred around face-to-face groups I am, or have been, a part of. The credibility of the group provides a great link to connect with other people within the group.
- I have also joined groups which are targeted at those in the markets I primarily work in and, again, contribute to, and start discussions as relevant.
- In a wider context, I also write a blog and when a new article is added, I post links to the blog within my status and within some of the discussion groups and invite comments. I read these comments and acknowledge them or respond and continue the discussion, whether people agree or disagree.

- I sometimes comment on others' status comments / links or their profile updates – they can see I am taking an interest in them.

So, think about what you need to do ...

- Find former contacts, colleagues, suppliers, collaborators
- Find new contacts, colleagues, suppliers, collaborators
- What builds credibility in **your** industry / sector?
- What else do you do which is relevant?

### Another story

A contact of mine recently set to work on his profile and his LinkedIn presence including joining a number of groups. In one, he put forward a controversial discussion point and received lots of comments, from which he is building new contacts. He made an offer to one group for a guide to something which he thought would be of interest and received over 100 responses for further details. VERY targeted and focused, which is something marketers will tell you – a niche, special service, clear offering will get a better response than a general, catch-all, “my service is for everyone” offering.



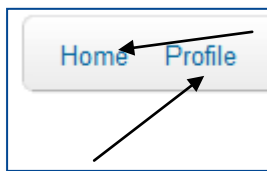
## Chapter 3 – Building your profile

### The different areas and why they are important

There are a number of areas within a LinkedIn profile and they are changed over time, usually for the better. In this chapter, I will talk through the main ones I believe everyone needs to pay attention to and mention a few of the other applications which many people also use.

- The topline - name, image, headline, status updates
- Current role/s; past role/s and education
- Your company - small businesses
- Your company - consistency for larger businesses
- Key links - your website/s, twitter and blog
- Summary
- Giving and asking for recommendations
- Settings and visibility
- Finding and joining groups
- Overview of other applications - events, polls, slideshare and others

### Home screen / view profile



When you go into LinkedIn, your home screen will show your status bar, and a list of recent updates from people in your network.

If you want to see your profile as others see it, you need to go to View Profile, in the Profile menu. When you want to add / amend anything, use Edit Profile, in the Profile menu.

I will start by showing you how my profile appears to others and why the different elements are important. You can edit any part of your profile whenever you want to.

Once you've got a few elements in, I would amend it over time. Remember, each time you do something, those in your network will receive a notification with your name and your activity – joined a group, is connected to someone, your status update, updated a part of your profile. By doing this spread over a

few days, they are more likely to see your name. If you do lots in one day, they get a number of updates one after the other, then nothing for a while.

Some people do get overwhelmed by seeing lots of updates from the same people – either because they are posting many, many updates, possibly with feeds from other programs, or they don't have many connections themselves and most of the rest aren't doing anything.

### The topline - name, image, headline



This is mine, with the status from a little while ago (couldn't resist using this one!)

### Name

As many women will tell you, changing your surname part way through your career can be a pain when it comes to finding people. Some will use their maiden name throughout their professional career, just confusing their friends when they meet in a business context. Whatever you can do to make it easier for people to find and recognise you helps, hence my maiden name is in my profile and appears in brackets.



The blue "you" changes to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> when you are viewing others' profiles, depending on how they are connected to you; the gold "in" shows I'm a premium member and the circle shows I am an open networker. I have to say I am not 100% open to everyone. I read the invitations I receive and check out the other person's profile. If I'm not sure who they are and why they've invited me, then I ask them.

### **Image**

My picture is one I don't cringe too much at when I see it – and it makes me recognisable to people I've not seen for a while or only met once. It also shows that I am open to meeting new people. We are social animals and we put a great deal of store in seeing a face – whether you like it or not (and many discussion groups have included debate on this) a photograph helps people connect with you. If you have a company logo, put that on the company profile.

### **Headline**

150 characters to describe yourself – this description is sometimes the only thing people see about you and usually the first thing they see. Many people repeat their job title – be creative and, every so often, change it.

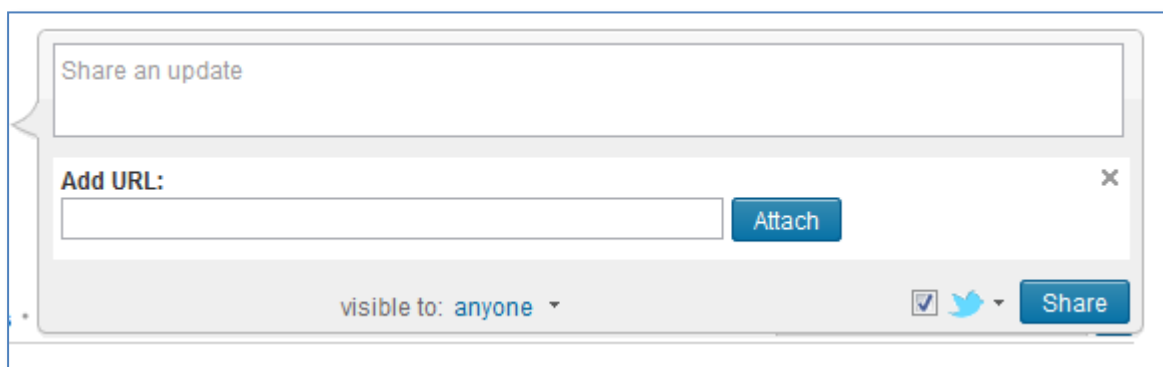
*“Sue Cohen: Learning and development solutions to develop the BEST business owners, leaders and managers”.*

Extra tip: I've repeated my name in full as, if I appear in a search list for someone who is a 3<sup>rd</sup> connection, they will only see Sue C – this way, they can see my full name.

### **Status updates**

You can change this whenever you like – I aim for 2-3 times a week, depending on what is going on. Whilst twitter is limited to 140 characters, the status update on LinkedIn is 300 characters. You can also put a web link in there, add comments to a status update, “like” it and share those with a web link to others in your network and to your groups. You will see mine, above, has a little twitter symbol next to it – I put this update into twitter and, with the #li on the end, this is then posted to LinkedIn as well.

If I go to my Home screen instead, the status box appears in a slightly different format. Click the “Attach a link” and the URL box appears as well.

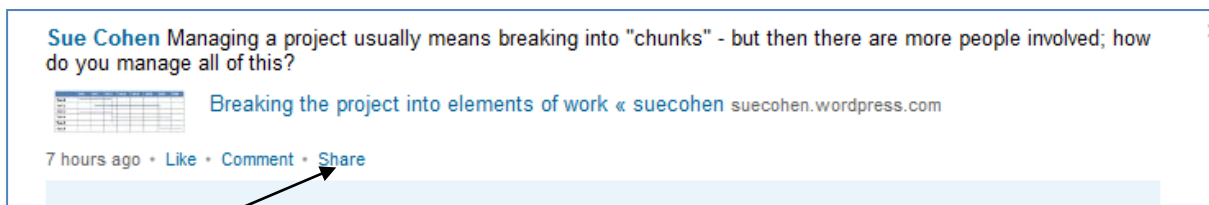


Bottom right of this screen, you can see the twitter logo and a tick – you choose whether or not to post the update to twitter at the same time.

As a word of warning, without going into twitter in great detail, most users expect (prefer maybe) to see occasional updates in LinkedIn and expect far more updates in twitter. You can set them up to link together automatically or each time you put in an update. If you use twitter a lot, I strongly suggest you don't feed everything through from twitter to LinkedIn. It's a personal thing and not everyone will agree with me.

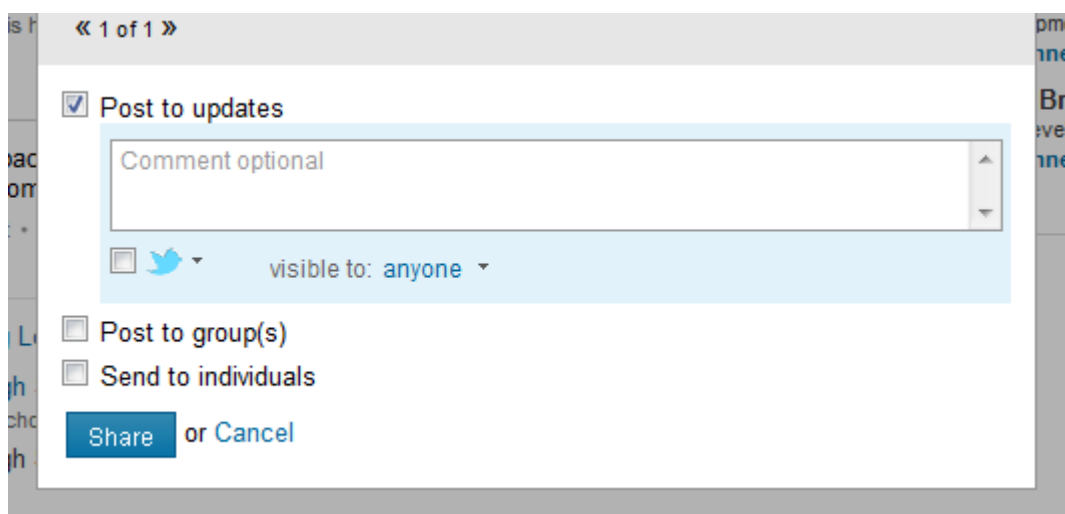
You can select the twitter default settings when you create the twitter link – see [key links](#).

This is a different status of mine, including a link to my blog.



The “Share” link appears when a status update includes a weblink, uploaded in the link box and enables me to share this update directly into a number of my groups. I can select those I wish to include – you don't have to post to all your groups and you can use the same option to share a link from someone else in your network.

Whether the link is yours or someone else's, when you click Share, this dialogue box appears.



“Post to updates” means your status update and you can add further comments; you also choose which group/s and individual/s to send it to. Then click Share.

### **Other information**

The location is picked up from your postcode. Mine starts with WD, although I don't actually live in Watford. If I link it to another address, eg in London, where, say, I might have a temporary office, then I can be seen to be there. The industry is picked up from a drop down list you select in your profile. If you work in a support role within another industry, think about whether you want to be recognised for the role you provide or the industry you work in. If you are an employee, your employer may also have a preference. E.g. a marketing role in a legal firm – do you select “marketing” or “legal” as your industry?

### **Current role(s), past role(s) and education**

You can have many current roles and past roles, as well as education establishments, although only the most recent 3 of each of these will display at the top of the screen. They display with the most recent first – so if you add a new role, it will appear at the top, unless you change the start date to precede other current role/s.

Current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Learning Consultant at Sue Cohen Ltd</b> </li></ul>
Past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Senior Learning Manager at Grant Thornton UK LLP</li><li>• Project manager - Benefits introduction at Grant Thornton UK LLP</li><li>• Project manager - Training and Learning Management System at Grant Thornton UK LLP</li></ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">see all...</a></p>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales</li><li>• City of London Polytechnic</li><li>• West Hatch High School</li></ul>

Many people have more than one current role, maybe a non-exec or charity role, which they want others to know about. Where possible, link the current and past roles to companies on LinkedIn (see below for information on setting your company profile up). This has many benefits but for the purposes of searching for former colleagues, using the company name makes it easier. For current role/s, it is important to see you are all linked to the same organisation.

LinkedIn also displays lists of “people you might know” and much of this is based on connections you already have and the companies you’ve worked for. Similarly, you can search by education establishment.

You can also use the same information to do research on other businesses and others will do the same with you.

### **Research**

I looked at the website for a professional services firm recently and their description of their business is completely different to the description on LinkedIn – so which is the “real business”?

The corporate website includes profiles of the key directors, written in a fairly similar style to each other, all written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, although not all the same. On LinkedIn, some of the directors have almost the same description as the website, written in the 1<sup>st</sup> person, most have less, and a few have a bit more. My overall impression is ... I wonder what they are **really** like?

A contact and I were trying to find a senior person at a very large business – household name – he wanted to know more about. The company was listed on LinkedIn with quite a few of the US employees linked to it. Eventually, after searching on the company name as a description, rather than in Companies, we found one UK employee. We could find little other information.

What impression do **you** want to give to others about you, as an individual, and your business?

### **Plan your profile**

Plan out your profile ...

- Do you have a current head and shoulders picture of yourself to upload?
- How do you want to describe yourself in 150 characters?
- Have you set up the basic information for your company?
- List all your roles and education – unless there is a good reason to exclude any of them.
- Do you have more than one location? Which do you want to use?
- If there are others in your company, what do you want to see which is consistent / different in terms of personal profiles?


### **Your company - small businesses**

Look back at the image above and you see a small flag next to my company name. This shows that it's linked to a company profile. You create the company in Companies menu, then Add a company and, like the personal profile, you can edit and amend it as you wish. Be sure that you know who is responsible for doing this and how often and, as I mentioned above, how much you want it to be the same as your corporate website.



**Overview** Careers Services Analytics

This page was last edited on 03/23/2011 by [Sue Cohen](#)




Sue Cohen Ltd was founded in 2009 to work with p  
as they combine their people and non-technical sk  
skills. The services provided include:  
- Analysing training needs  
- Design, development and delivery of learning solu  
... [more](#)

Your Network (1) [Employee \(1\)](#)

You can add a company logo, distinct from your photograph, a description, specialities, link to a twitter id and a blog feed. So, if you have more than one blog or twitter id within your business, you can each show your own, as well as the corporate ones.

You also add information about the company type, size, website, industry, status and year founded as well as up to 5 locations.

There is a separate tab for services, or products, which can each have their own description, web page and contact details. The Analytics page tells you how many times your company page and the services have been viewed and who is following the company.




### Networking and building relationships

For many suppliers

[Request recommendations](#) • [Share](#)

[Be the first to recommend](#)



### Coaching for inhouse projects

As your and pro

[Request recommendations](#) • [Share](#)

[Be the first to recommend](#)

If you follow other companies you see their updates as you do with other personal status updates.

There is a separate careers tab for paid advertisements for jobs.

So, in the same way as you use the personal profile to describe yourself, use the company profile to describe what the business does – even if it's just you. By adding more services, you add further information which helps others find out about you. The words you use may help others find you and you can get recommendations for a service, as well as an individual.

### Your company - consistency for larger businesses

Setting up a company description for a large business is the same as a small business – just pay attention to the number of administrators (everyone with a valid email address for the domain) or named users only. Be sure that the corporate information is maintained as you want it – the same as your website or different by design, not by accident.

When everyone writes their personal summary (see below), what information about the company do you want them all to include? Is there a particular style you want them all to use?

I looked at a corporate description for a very large business recently and it had been updated by 3 different people in the previous 24 hours and the service descriptions looked like they'd been written by different people. The personal profiles are very inconsistent. What impression does that give you?

### Plan your company description and services

- What is the corporate description you want others to see?
- Which services or products do you want to put in now / add later?

### Key links - your website/s, twitter and blog

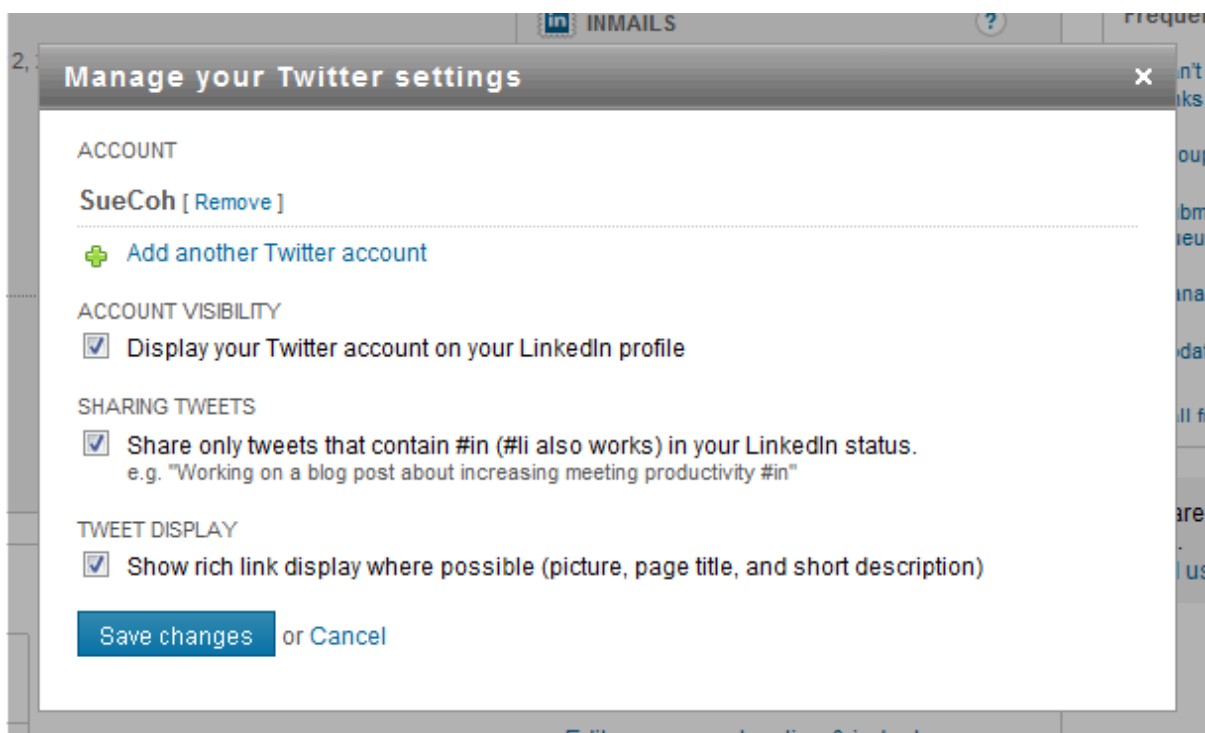
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Sue Cohen Limited</a> Edit</li><li>• <a href="#">Sue's views blog</a> Edit</li><li>• <a href="#">Networking for charity</a> Edit</li></ul>
Twitter	<a href="#">SueCoh</a> Edit
Public Profile	<a href="http://uk.linkedin.com/in/suecohen01">http://uk.linkedin.com/in/suecohen01</a> Edit

You can link up to 3 websites and twitter accounts to your personal profile. The default setting for the websites is "Company Website" and then you put in the address. However, it is more helpful for those looking at your profile, as well as

being more descriptive for search engines, to put in the website name or description.

<b>Websites:</b>	Other: <input type="text"/>	Sue Cohen Limited	http://www.suecohen.co.uk
	Other: <input type="text"/>	Sue's views blog	http://suecohen.wordpress.com
	Other: <input type="text"/>	Networking for charity	http://www.networking4charity.com

To do this, you select "Other" then enter the description, along with the address. I have also put a link to my blog in here, although you can add a blog separately as well, within applications.



For some reason, the twitter settings appear in a different type of dialogue box. Note the "sharing tweets" option – if this is unchecked, all tweets are shared. With this setting adding #in or #li to a tweet will copy it into LinkedIn – see the examples above. As I mentioned I would always go for the second option. Rich link display shows more information.

The other line you can see on the previous page is the Public profile – this is a web address you can give to others to find you. If you want to make it easier for people to find you, then you can change this from the default which will use your first name and surname and a series of letters and numbers. Edit this and put in a description you prefer. Most people use their full name, some people use a company name, or they might add a middle initial or put in a description e.g. jobblogsthecoach. There was already a "suecohen", so I added 01. My business

cards include my LinkedIn address, along with my email and phone number as they are all current contact details. Your Public profile is viewable to anyone, whether or not they have a LinkedIn account, subject to the public settings below.

### Summary

Your summary is one of the first things other users see on your profile. I would aim for about one screen, or a little less. At the moment, LinkedIn limits the number of words in this area but, with paragraph spacing and bullet points, you can end up with quite a lot of information.

Many users find an effective summary contains about 2 to 3 paragraphs about them and about 1 or 2 paragraphs describing the business / company. If you have a number of people in your business, give some thought as to the consistency of these summaries – do you want everyone to have something similar about their experience and hobbies or not? What wording do you want for the company information? Do you prefer 1<sup>st</sup> person or 3<sup>rd</sup> person profiles?

Have a look at some of your connections and see what you prefer when you read about others. Think about the key words you use, just as with a website, which others' might use to search for you. Put these in your summary and your company summary.

Type this up in Word and spell check it. When you post it, your connections will see that you have updated it – if you don't get any comments from anyone, ask them what they think.

### Giving and asking for recommendations

Recommendations are like testimonials on a website, but you can't edit them yourself. You can agree them with by email beforehand, and you don't have to publish them all at once. When you write a recommendation, it appears on both your profiles, so people can see what you say about others, as well as what they say about you.

Although there's no doubt that some people put more store on recommendations than others, they are generally seen as a way of building your credibility. Writing recommendations, particularly before you are asked, is a great way of building relationships with others. Think about whom you ask for such recommendations and what they may say about you in return – business partners, customers and suppliers.

Recommendations are attached to a role within the Experience section – another reason to put as many parts of your experience as possible. If you worked at

one company for many years, as I did, pick out some of the different roles or key projects, and put them in as a separate role in Experience – then ask for recommendations for each of these roles.

LinkedIn encourages you to write recommendations in direct return for those you receive – I would suggest you do this only where appropriate and not immediately. When they first appear on your profile, they look a little odd “Joe recommends Jim” and “Jim recommends Joe” appear on both profiles simultaneously.

I’ve also declined to write recommendations for individuals I’ve barely dealt with, even though I have dealt with others in their company, who don’t have a profile. However, you can now attach recommendations to a company, which would probably be more appropriate.

### Plan your recommendations

- Plan who to ask for recommendations and think about who you’d like to give a recommendation to.
- When you ask for a recommendation, if you have some particular reason for asking them or areas you’d like them to mention, let them know.

### Settings and visibility

On your profile screen, there are two options – Change contact settings and Change public profile settings. Contact settings affect the way other people contact you via Introductions, InMails and OpenLink messages. You can also select which opportunity types you are interested in and a message for others wanting to connect with you.

You will notice some people have hidden their connections and that their profile appears as “this user is not currently open to introductions” etc. There are a number of reasons why people may do this ...

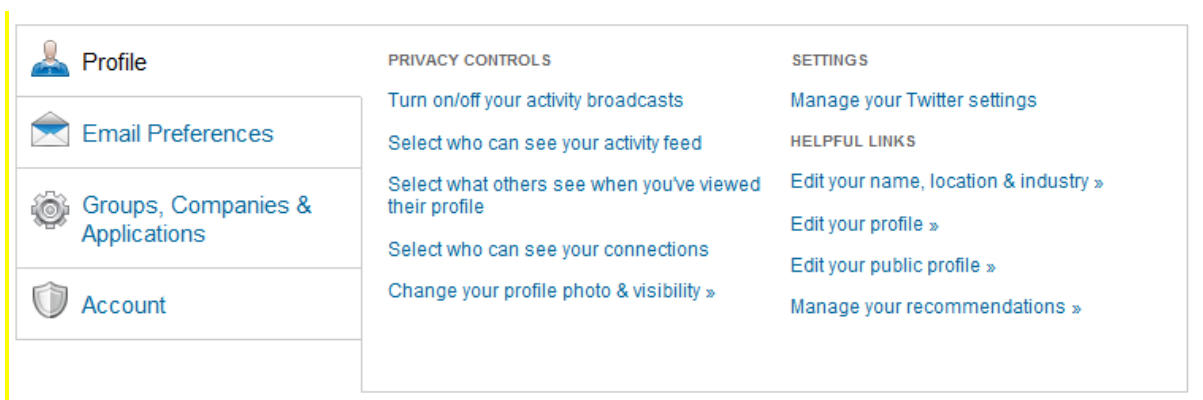
- They aren’t interested in connecting with other users, maybe because they are using LinkedIn primarily to research individuals and companies.
- They are about to change roles and don’t wish to alert current contacts.
- They are actively seeking a role and are connected to a number of recruiters and don’t want others to see this.
- They don’t want contacts and clients to see who they are connected to – maybe they are recruiters or work in a seemingly “cut throat” industry.
- They think they will be “sold to” and targeted.

As mentioned above, your Public profile settings allow you to set your public profile URL and turn on / off all elements of your profile.

Review your settings and visibility and make sure you are happy with them – LinkedIn changes these periodically, so they may not be what you want them to be.

Your public profile is open to all users, including those you are not connected to. Those you are connected to see all parts of your profile, plus your contact details and, unless you block them, your contacts and all your activity.

At the top right of the screen, your name appears in small characters with a drop down arrow – select Settings.



Edit your public profile to change your view to those you are not connected to.

### Finding and joining groups

There are 10s of 1,000s of groups on LinkedIn and you can join a maximum of 50 groups not including open groups or groups you own. So, which groups should you join? There are a number of ways you can look at this but my groups include networking groups, industry groups, key contacts and targets. I own groups – a local networking group, a work alumni group and one for you.

As a way of keeping in touch with others and sharing your ideas and success stories, we have set up a group on LinkedIn. Search for “Useful Guide to LI by Pansophix” and join the group; click the button to send a note to the group manager and mention that you’ve got to page 26 of the Useful Guide. This group is just for those who have purchased the Useful Guides, either singly or in an online [Useful Guide Library](#).

The industry groups I belong to include a regional L&D group, UK groups with specialist or niche areas and an international group.

The networking groups include face-to-face groups which I belong to, or have belonged to and groups of people I keep in touch with online.



As a member of a group, you can use this common interest when inviting others to connect with you. A useful extra feature within discussions is the ability to send a private message to anyone who has contributed to a group discussion, without having to connect to them first. This facility can be disabled by users, so you might occasionally find that your message won't go through.

Many people join groups and don't appear to do anything else – many users receive the weekly or daily email updates and don't read them; many don't get them at all. I'm still not quite sure why some people join groups and then not take part in anything or ignore invitations from fellow group members. Just because you've joined LinkedIn and are active doesn't mean that others will do likewise! I've heard people say things like "they send me an invitation, just because we're in the same group" – these people need more information when you invite them.

When you are looking for groups, consider the following questions ...

- Industry groups ...
  - What keywords describe your industry?
  - How many groups are there?
  - Which will you join?
- What keywords describe your target sectors?
- Face-to-face groups ...
  - Which face-to-face networking groups do you belong to?
  - Do they have active group/s on LinkedIn?
- How else would you describe the groups of people you want to be in contact with?
- Which group/s could you start yourself?

### **Overview of other applications - events, polls, slideshare and others**

There are many applications within LinkedIn and they are added to and amended over time. Find them in the More menu; some are there when you start and others are available within "Get more applications". To a great extent, the applications which are useful to you as an individual, or as part of a corporate, depend on the marketing you wish to do and already do.

## Events

In More ... Events, the first events you see are those which anyone in your network is attending. I have found this a great way of finding out about new events, and I can see a lot of information about the event and who else is going.

If you click "Attend" on an event, you get a calendar note in your profile which others can also see. I know a few people who have found events I'm attending by seeing this in my profile and following the link.

Events include all core information – start and end date and time, venue, overview, keywords for searching, description, organiser as well as price and a web link. This could be to a page on your site or to an event payment site. For free events, seeing who is attending through LinkedIn can be really helpful. However, as an organiser, you cannot contact people who have booked themselves in, if you are not already connected to them.

Events are open – you can share them within groups, or send to individuals, but there is no way to make them private within LinkedIn. If there is a charge, particularly if it needs to be paid beforehand, ensure your description and payment terms are clear.

## Your events

Which events you already attend are on LinkedIn? What else can you find which is useful to you? What events of your own could you add?

## Polls

Like most of the applications in LinkedIn, polls are open to anyone within LinkedIn and you publicise and share them. You can have up to 5 items for users to vote on and separate comments. The results are analysed by user groupings (age, seniority and gender), which often just shows how incomplete many profiles are. You could use a poll to generate interest in a key subject area of yours and then post into a group, to generate further discussion.

## Other applications

Blog – as well as having a link to your blog as one of your websites, you can have the blog feeding directly into your personal profile and your corporate profile.

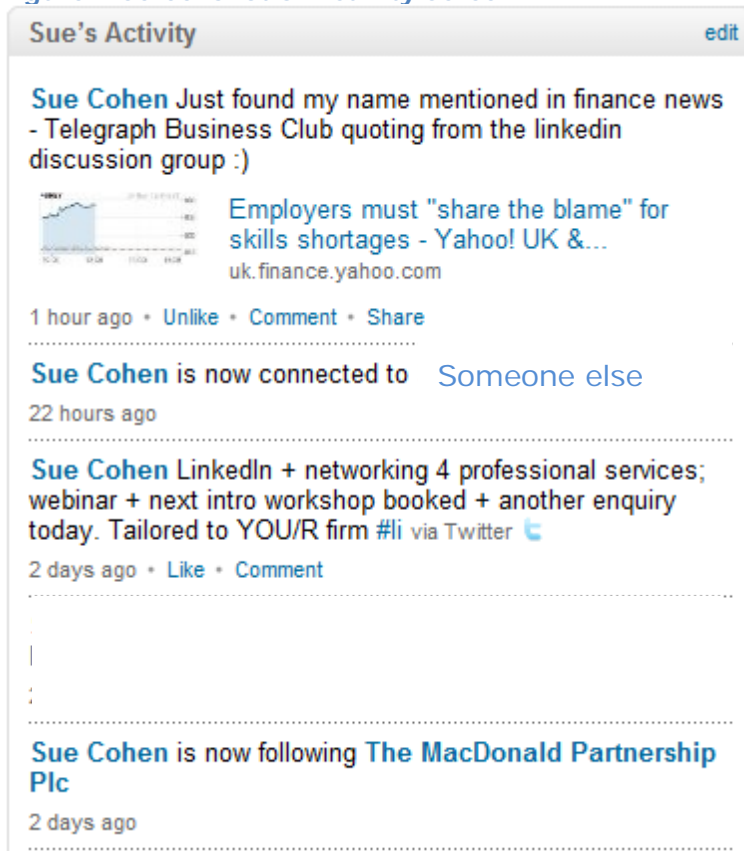
Amongst the more commonly used applications is Slideshare, which lets you upload slideshows and video links to your profile. Others include "My travel" which shows people where you are travelling to, and a "Reading List" to tell others about books you are reading, with your review.

## Chapter 4 - Building your credibility

### Updating your status and using links

I've talked a little about status updates and regularity. Let's have a look at them in a little more detail. When you update your status, everyone in your network will see this activity in their status updates. It depends how many connections they've got and how often they check, as to how much information they will see. It also depends on the way they look at their network updates as to what they see – this is my activity for 27<sup>th</sup> February.

Figure 1 Screenshot of Activity Screen



The first is a status update with a link – you can see the Share button, which only exists with a URL link.

One or other of us accepted the invite.

This status update was posted from twitter.

I'm now following this company.

These are all activities / updates – if I'm looking on a mobile app, I'm most likely to only see the first and third i.e. the status updates, not all the accepted invites, profile and company updates.

Sometimes I post a question and invite comments from others and this might lead to a longer discussion in one of the groups.

### **Commenting on others' status and profile updates**

Anyone can “like” or “comment” on others’ updates and, if there is a link, it can be shared with individuals or groups. It’s another way to show people you have noticed the updates. If you have lots of connections and lots of updates, don’t expect to be able to read them all and don’t expect others to see everything you post. This is why it is important to repeat key messages periodically and to build on activities such as adding services to your company profile over time, rather than all in one go. It is also possible that, if you are doing a lot more on LinkedIn than others in your network, they will see your name a lot and think you are doing “nothing else”. Don’t be put off by those who wonder why or how you do so much – assure them that you spend a few minutes per day and, as you start to see benefits of connecting, you can share the good stories. Here’s another of mine ...

I have recently sent proposals for work to two different people, each after just **one** meeting. By the time we met, we had connected on LinkedIn, because we’d found something in common through discussion, read each others’ profiles and knew what we might want to talk about. By coincidence, I also found common contacts with both of them.

### **Contributing to, and starting, group discussions**

People start and join discussions in order to ...

- Find out information
- Give information
- Meet “like-minded” people
- Stir up controversy
- Tell others about what they do, either as part of a discussion, linking to their website or blog or by using the “promotions” discussions
- Connect with other group members

Remember that you can use common groups as a means of connecting with someone – if you are active in the discussions, it is more likely others will see you and potentially connect with you. It is also worth noting that not everyone will connect with you, just because you’re in the same group. Think about the wording of the invite, to see if you can encourage someone to connect.

When you contribute to a group discussion, your photo appears, with “Follow x” underneath. If you hover over the photo, you will see the headline and job title – see below.



When you make your comment, there is an option pre-selected to follow that discussion, so you can see subsequent comments. You can contribute to the same discussion as many times as you like. If you started the discussion, or have made particular points which others then agree or disagree with, acknowledge them and respond again, as you would if you were having a face-to-face discussion.

As mentioned above, you can also send a private message to anyone who has contributed to a group discussion, without having to connect to them first and this can be a useful way to build relationships or send a particular note which you don't want others to see.

I also think there are many people, maybe it's just a British / English trait, who will connect, seemingly too polite to say No, and then they do not respond or engage with you in any other way.

### Setting up your own group

A great way of establishing credibility and profile is to set up and manage your own group. I own two networking groups with different members and different purposes. If you start to search for groups and there just isn't one that you think would be valuable – then start it yourself. Decide on the rules you'd like and send invitations to others. Keep promoting it and starting discussions and encouraging others to do so as well.

The group settings allow you to describe the group and who it is for and you can then choose not to accept members if necessary. You can invite others to join the group and you can allow members to do this as well. When you set up the group, you choose when to receive the updates as does all group members – many users will look at these updates and then look at the discussions.

If you send an announcement, which you can do up to once a week, this sends a message to each individual. You can also set up templates, such as a welcome email, to go to all members when they join the group.

Go to Groups and Create a group ...

- Upload a logo, give it a name and then choose a type (Alumni, Corporate, Conference, Networking, Nonprofit, Professional, Other).
- Enter a summary / overview of the group, which all users can see before joining the group.
- Then a more detailed description.
- Link the group to a website if appropriate and assign the group owner's email address.
- Access to the group is either automatic (i.e. anyone in LinkedIn can join) or by request and you can allow users to invite others or not.
- There is also an option to create an Open group, which allows the content to be searched on the web, although only group members can post to discussions.

Once you have created the group, those in your network will see an update and you can then invite others, or post updates every so often, as you wish. When you have set the group up, have a look at the Manage tab – there are lots of options on there – consider whether you want to post any group rules, eg to encourage or discourage promotions and advertising.

As you become more comfortable with the groups, review these settings and see if you wish to change anything else.

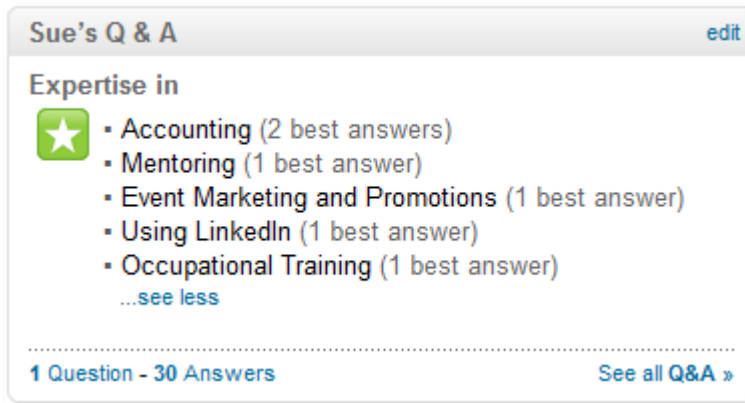
### Answering questions

One “hidden” feature of LinkedIn is the Answers – maybe if it was called Questions and Answers and on a menu option of its own, people would spot it sooner. It is on the More menu.

Anyone on LinkedIn can pose a question and anyone can answer – irrespective of any existing, or non-existing connections. The questions are divided into 22 categories – administration, business operations, business travel, career and education, conferences and event planning, finance and accounting, financial markets, government and non-profit, health, hiring and human resources, international, law and legal, management, marketing and sales, non-profit, personal finance, product management, professional development, startups and small businesses, sustainability, technology, using LinkedIn.

You choose the category/ies when you post the question. When you post or answer a question, this appears as an update on your profile. When you look at the questions, you will see New questions from your network – i.e. questions asked by anyone in your network (1<sup>st</sup> or other connections).

Not only can you establish credibility by answering questions, which anyone can review and find for themselves, but the person who posted the question can select the best answer – this puts a star on your profile so others can see that not only do you know the answer but that you have helped others.



The impact of being open and helpful to others is really useful with some people – sometimes more so than simply your knowledge on a particular subject.



## Chapter 5 - Connecting with others

We've seen that one of the main aims of being on LinkedIn is to find people that are useful for you to connect with.

### Who to connect with and why

Think about the people you already know – current and former colleagues, friends and family in business, members of networking groups you go to. You can be as selective as you wish – it's **your** network. My approach is broadly, unless I have a good reason not to connect with someone (which might include I don't know them and they haven't given me a reason) then I accept connection requests from others and invite people I know or have been introduced to, to connect with me. As I've said before, don't assume that, just because you're connected on LinkedIn, you will be able to establish a conversation with everyone when you want to.

I connect with ...

- People I meet at networking events who I think I would like to keep in touch with, whether or not we are members or guests of the group.
- People I used to work with as colleagues, suppliers or customers – if you've worked successfully with people in the past, they may be able to use your services again or recommend or refer you on to others. Picking up with someone you used to know is easier than trying to get to know new people.
- Those I've had discussions with in groups on LinkedIn – in the same group with some shared interests and have agreed, or possibly disagreed, about something. It's a way of starting the conversation.
- People who've sent me invitations because we've met, or had a shared discussion, or used to work together, or they've read an article or blog of mine – in short, people who give me some reason or clue as to why we should connect.

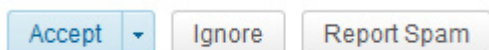
The interesting thing is that we are all on LinkedIn to build business connections whether that is to find a job, find staff, find a supplier, find funding for a business or charity, find new customers. Yet, most of us really do not like being “sold to / at” and we prefer to build relationships in order to meet these business needs.

## Sending invitations - tips and "etiquette"

Just a few thoughts ...

- Add something to the standard wording, or replace it completely – be yourself.
- Give them a reason to accept.
- Nudge just once, if you haven't had a response.
- Send out a few at a time, not hundreds – if too many people say they don't know you, you could get blocked.
- Avoid pulling in your contacts database from elsewhere – this sends the default invitation. Just because someone's on your list, doesn't mean they'll remember where or when you met and you don't get the option to personalise the invitation.

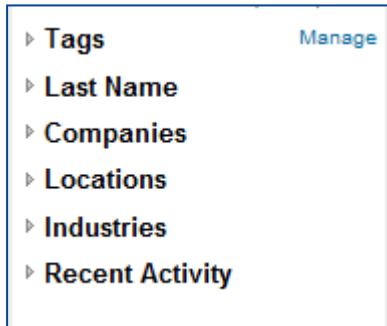
## Responding to invitations - tips and "etiquette" and declining



- Accept whichever ones you want to, for your own reasons, maybe asking yourself "Why shouldn't I connect?" rather than "Why should I?"
- Send a message, either just before or just after accepting saying Thank you, and an introductory message.
- If you really aren't sure who they are or why they want to connect, reply, without accepting (drop down box next to Accept) and ask them.
- If you decide you don't want to accept, then click Ignore and you will be prompted to select "I don't know XXX" or "Report as spam". Only click these, or the Report spam button, if you are really sure that is the case. If a user gets a few of these, their account will be suspended and, whilst you may not want to connect with them, it doesn't mean they are abusing the system.
- If you find you are unable to send invitations, contact LinkedIn help and find out what's happened. Maybe you've sent out lots of requests on the same day and the system thinks you are spamming, or a few users have clicked I don't know or Spam button. Your account will be reinstated, albeit they don't always respond very quickly.
- It may also be that you have already sent an invitation, which hasn't been actioned or they have declined or that you happen to have picked a few

people who are all not open to invitations or have had their account suspended.

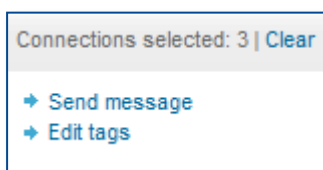
### Using tags in your contacts list



In your contacts list, on the left, you can look at your contacts using Tags – notice the Manage option, last name, companies, locations, industries or recent activity. Click Manage tags to add, change or delete the tags.

When you first connect with someone, the person sending the invitation chooses a category e.g. friend or colleague and these are two of the tags. You can add further tags within your contacts, to group them as you want. Individuals can be in more than one tag and you can edit them when you want to. One of my tags is for the networking group I run and I can then easily see who I am directly connected to who is in this group. Many of them are also tagged as friends or another group we are both part of.

To add / remove people from the tags, select a number of people from the list, by ticking the box next to their image and name.



Then select Edit tags, on the right, and choose from the list to add them. Notice you can also send messages, so this is a useful way to send the same message to a number of people; note the limit of 50 people per message remains.

## Chapter 6 - Time management

### Planning your online time

There is no ideal amount of time to spend on LinkedIn. This is part of your networking and marketing activity and only you can know how much “the right amount of time” is. To start with, you need to have the core information for your profile, most of which you will know but you may wish to tweak from your cv, website or marketing materials.

Once your personal profile is set up, if you are a small business or responsible for the profile in a larger business, you will also setup or amend the company profile. Again, the text should already be there so you won't be starting from scratch.

Let's say it takes you a couple of hours to do all of this at the start. If you already have a number of connections, you might want to space these updates out, so that your connections see your name a number of times over a period of a few days.

Then ...

- Put in a status update 2-3 times a week.
- Send invitations to a few people you've met recently.
- Group discussions – if you have the groups set to weekly emails, then that's a good prompt to have a look at the discussions; if daily, then skim them occasionally. If you are a member of lots of groups, decide which are key for that week and spend a few minutes on each. Start your own discussions as well.
- Answers – look for a few specialist categories that you want to contribute to and review once or twice a week. What questions do you have?

### Other considerations

#### Mobile view

If you have a Blackberry or iPhone, then you may want to download the mobile app for that device. Using my mobile version, I can update my status, see others' status updates, find contacts and the contact details they have on LinkedIn, respond to invitations, review and respond to direct messages. The mobile applications allow different uses depending on their set up.

### **Copies of emails to your inbox**

You can set up more than one email address on LinkedIn if you want to and you could set up a different one for LinkedIn to other emails you receive. I prefer to keep everything in one Inbox and then use the email software Rules to filter them.

I have one folder for all LinkedIn updates – it depends how many you get and how much you want to break it down. I put everything into one folder and review it 2-3 times a day, depending on what else I am working on. The group update emails and the discussion updates are all sent by email, not to the LinkedIn Inbox, so that is how you can keep up to date. If you really don't want to read all the updates, you can turn them off and unfollow discussions.

## Chapter 7 - Getting further help

### LinkedIn learning centre and blog

One of the categories in Answers is Using LinkedIn and, as the responses are from users, they are usually easy to understand and find, although not always the correct answer first. The LinkedIn learning centre is in the More menu and takes you to a separate site [learn.linkedin.com/](https://learn.linkedin.com/)

The information is split into Overviews, Site features and User guides with links to further information and video clips. The newest features are usually announced in the blog [blog.linkedin.com](https://blog.linkedin.com) with screen clips, short video guides and descriptions.

Changes are often made, seemingly without anyone knowing, so have a look at the blog and see what is new.

### Our discussion group

If you haven't already done so, please join our discussion group "Useful Guide to LI by Pansophix".

This group will be useful for networking and sharing ideas and discussing anything you think is relevant to others. We will also highlight LinkedIn updates and changes and where to find further information in the learning centre and blog.

Please also feel free to send an invitation to me – [uk.linkedin.com/in/suecohen01](https://uk.linkedin.com/in/suecohen01) and mention this Useful Guide in your invitation.

### Telephone coaching

I am delighted to be able to offer you extra support in the form of telephone coaching. Wherever you are, we can arrange sessions at your convenience, dealing with your personal and corporate profile and **your** business needs.

Sessions are usually ...

- ½ to 1 hour at a time
- Once or twice a week
- Telephone discussion, with hands-on use of LinkedIn.

As a special offer to Useful Guide readers, these sessions are offered at a special price of £50 per half hour. Please contact me on 07971 400653 or [sue@suecohen.co.uk](mailto:sue@suecohen.co.uk) and quote Useful Guide page 39.

## Feedback

As we are always trying to improve our Useful Guides we would appreciate any feedback you can give us on A Useful Guide to LinkedIn. Please click on the link below to access our online feedback form ...

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If we use your feedback to improve A Useful Guide to Linked we will email you a copy of the updated version.

You can access lots of free tips and tools at [247freetips.com](http://247freetips.com).



## Sue Cohen



Sue Cohen has more than 20 years experience in Learning and Development.

She started her working life as an accountant and moved into training accountancy and other technical skills, before moving into skills and management training.

Over the last 20 years, she has helped many middle and senior managers to develop their management and personal

skills including teamwork and leadership, performance management, networking and collaboration skills.

For a number of years, she was the senior manager within an in-house training team for a large firm of accountants, managing a team of trainers and the budgets, along with various firm-wide projects.

She now works as an independent learning consultant, largely with professional services firms.

Outside of work, Sue is a busy family person and relaxes with Sudoku puzzles and knitting.

### Links

[www.suecohen.co.uk](http://www.suecohen.co.uk)

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