

Are You Making These Mistakes on Your LinkedIn Profile?"

By Kelly Parkinson

<http://copylicious.com/2008/03/are-you-making-these-mistakes-on-your-linkedin-profile/>

If you're feeling lost in LinkedIn, you're not alone. The web application keeps getting better—or more complicated—depending on your perspective. Maybe you're afraid to make the leap because you're not sure where to start. Having used LinkedIn to get 6 new clients over the past year, I'm definitely a fan. LinkedIn is one of the most effective (and cost-effective) ways I know to build your business. Increasing numbers of people seem to be recognizing its value. I know this because lately I've been getting approached for help writing LinkedIn and Facebook bios.

But why hire a copywriter when you can do it yourself? This post will help you create a compelling, engaging LinkedIn bio you can use to build your business.

But first, about you. Most independent professionals I speak with fall into one of three camps:

- Thinking about LinkedIn but not quite sure how it works and don't want to sign up for something that won't generate business results.
- Signed up for LinkedIn a while ago but haven't used it much or gotten results.
- Just posted your profile 5 minutes ago using copy pasted from your resume or website.

If any of these sounds like you, here's a quick summary on how you can make the most of LinkedIn:

1) Follow up with people you meet networking—and stay in touch. Sometimes I'm super organized. But mostly I'm not. I often forget to add people to my CRM. They may forget to add me, too. LinkedIn is an easy way for us slackers to stay in touch. If someone asks me if I know a good elephant trainer, I can flip through my LinkedIn network and find a match. You can stay in touch with clients and prospects this way, too. And get their testimonials to display on your profile, so you can...

2) Get business. I've gotten several clients by sending a quick note to prospects I find through a simple search on LinkedIn. I've literally gotten clients by typing "clean tech marketing director" and sending notes to whomever comes up. That's how clients find me, as well. It's surprisingly, almost mind-blowingly, effective. Sign up for one of LinkedIn's monthly accounts. Your emails are guaranteed to get a response or you get that email credited back. What do you have to lose?

Demonstrate subject matter expertise through Q&A. Too busy to blog or to publish a monthly newsletter? Mine the Q&A fields for tantalizing questions. You don't need to log into LinkedIn every day to do this. Simply subscribe to the topics' RSS feeds and answer the questions you like. I do this whenever I'm feeling lonely. Your answers appear on your profile, and you get a star if the questioner selects your answer as the best. Your responses also appear on your contacts' pages when they log in—a virtual e-newsletter, without the trouble of writing an entire article.

3) Boost your search engine rankings. Outbound links to your website boost your website's ranking, and they also help boost your personal ranking, a major plus if, like me, you share a name with a convicted felon.

So, given the uses for LinkedIn, how do you write a LinkedIn bio—the paragraph that appears in your profile's "Summary" section—that stands out, engages, doesn't bore, and doesn't make you sound like a braggadocio?

Here's a list of do's and don't's...

DO:

1) Recognize LinkedIn is its own medium. It's not a resume and it's not a website and it's not a speaker bio. It's a direct, personal opportunity for you to summarize yourself in a way that can't be expressed in a simple bullet-pointed list of accomplishments and past employers. Your LinkedIn summary is really just a hybrid of what you'd tell someone at a networking event and what appears in your bio.

2) The usual copywriting strategy to "consider your audience" may feel irrelevant when your audience is the entire LinkedIn universe, and when you have no idea who may be reading your profile. So, pick the audience you care most about. Do you want your profile to sing to the interior designer you met at the grocery store? The senior VP of engineering at Oracle? The computer founder who dated Kathy Griffith? You can't wow all of these people at once. So, get narrow. Narrow down so much you almost scare yourself. Envision your ideal client—and write to that person.

3) Make your bio sound as little about you as you can, and as much about your ideal clients as you can.

4) Speak in the first-person. ("I" and "me," not "we," "he," or "she.") Everyone knows your profile is about you, so give yourself permission to write about yourself—without losing focus of your target audience.

5) Answer the question, "Who cares?" Establish your credentials in relation to the problem you help solve. "I help x do y."

6) Are you a real person with a sense of humor? Show them this.

- 7) Summarize the results they can expect from working with you.
- 8) Give a couple examples of others you have helped, perhaps a quick client list.
- 9) Ask the who a good client or referral for them would be.
- 10) Ask them what's the best way to get in touch with them.
- 11) Include a clear call to action. What do you want them to do next? Visit your website? Subscribe to your blog's RSS feed? Invite them to do just that.

DON'T:

- 1) Speak of yourself in the third person as a company, entity, or celebrity.
- 2) Paste copy from your website bio or resume. This is boring and makes you seem small, like you're incapable of writing a few original sentences beyond your website or resume.
- 3) Be too conversational or unprofessional. That's what Facebook is for.

For some real-life examples of good LinkedIn profiles, click on the following. (Full disclosure: I know these people. They're in my LinkedIn Contacts!):

Jess Sand: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/roughstockstudios>

Vanessa Stimac: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/2/35/69> (click on "View Full Profile)

Ilise Benun: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/ilisebenun>

Diana Losch: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/1/1b4/91> (click "View Full Profile)

Dani Nordin: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/thezenkitchen>

Betsy Kimak: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/kimak>

If you're an independent professional, I also hear great things about Biznik. I'm about to jump on that train.