



**LinkedIn Planner that
Will Get You More
Clients**



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LINKEDIN PLANNER

It might just be the most valuable, least talked about—and let’s face it, underused—social network available to you.

We’re talking about LinkedIn, of course, and if you’re not using it to find new clients, you’re missing out.

Since 2003, LinkedIn has been bringing business owners and employees together in a way that’s simply not possible with traditional networking. By connecting you with colleagues, industry leaders, and brands, LinkedIn provides a new way for those seeking employment to meet—and be hired by—the companies seeking new talent.

But it didn’t stop with the employee/employer relationship. In 2006, with the launch of public profiles, LinkedIn firmly staked its claim as an online database of professionals from all over the globe and in every industry you could imagine.

By 2013, LinkedIn boasted 225 million members, with new signups coming in at a rate of 2 per second, and by the end of 2015 that number had grown to more than 332 million users.

As you can see, that creates a lot of opportunity for coaches and service providers to find new clients. In fact, information product sellers, event producers, software sellers, and just about anyone who conducts business online will find LinkedIn to be helpful in finding and reaching new customers.

You just have to know where to look.

STEP 1: SET UP YOUR ACCOUNT

Like any social media platform, LinkedIn provides you with a profile page designed to show the world what’s special and unique about you—and why they should get to know you better.

Your first decision—and you can change your mind later—is whether to go with a free or a paid account.

With a free account, you’ll have access to nearly all of the features that make LinkedIn so powerful, such as connecting with others in your industry, sharing content, creating and participating in groups, and publishing on LinkedIn Pulse. Even with all those features, though, there are still two things you cannot do with a free account:

- See everyone who viewed your profile
- Send “InMail” (LinkedIn’s version of a private message)

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If you do decide to go with a paid account, there are several options to choose from, ranging in price from \$29.99 to \$47.99 per month, and each featuring varying amounts of InMail privileges, profile searches and other perks.

Regardless of the plan you choose, however, there are several basic setup steps you'll need to take to be sure your profile is doing its job for you.

Your Photo: Ideally, you'll want to choose a professional headshot if you have one. Unlike Facebook, where you might be forgiven for using a fun photo, or one with your family or kids in it, LinkedIn is a different culture, and you'll likely have better results if you use a photo that's both on brand and if not professionally shot, at least not a selfie.

Headline: Probably the most important piece of your profile, the headline lets everyone know at a glance exactly what you do—and for whom. Once reserved for a simple job title (think “Software Engineer”), the headline is now a space where you can really sell yourself and your services. Instead of “Health Coach,” consider “Health coach for busy mums who want to look better, feel better, and have it all...naturally.” Now readers will know instantly if you are a good fit for them (dads need not apply), what you can help with (natural health) and what they stand to gain (looking better).

Keep in mind that you do need to be concise. You have only 120 characters to get your point across.

Summary: This is where you can go into more detail about what you do and where your specialties lie. You can also include pictures, video, links and even documents you'd like to share with your connections.

This section is completely optional—as are most others on LinkedIn—and can be left blank if you feel more detail is unnecessary. But as we'll see in the next step, it can be helpful for optimizing your profile for search.

Experience & Education: The remainder of your profile reads much like a traditional CV. Include everything that's relevant to your audience, but feel free to leave out anything that is outside your industry. After all, someone looking for a health coach probably won't care about that year you spent as an office manager.

Exercise: Choose Your Photo & Create Your Headline

Choose a headshot that best represents you and your brand. Photos should be square, and at least 300 x 300 pixels for best results.

Your headline is limited to 120 characters, and should include your job title, your ideal client, and the biggest benefit they'll get from working with you.

Job title: _____

Ideal client: _____

Benefits: _____

Finished title:

STEP 2: OPTIMIZE YOUR PROFILE FOR SEARCH

LinkedIn boasts a sophisticated search algorithm that allows users to find the professionals best suited for any job. It's closely aligned with Google's own algorithm, so a well-optimized profile will not only rank well on LinkedIn, but it will inevitably show up when others Google your name.

Here's what's unique about a LinkedIn search, though: results are limited to "3 degrees of separation." That means if you do a search for "health coach" you will only be shown those profiles who are 3 links or less from you. You will not see random strangers with no connection.

This is why it's critical to grow your network. The more connections you have on LinkedIn, the more frequently you'll be found in a search.

Before you can do that, though, you need to be sure your profile is well optimized, and that means knowing—and using—good keywords.

A tool such as Google's Keyword Planner, WordTracker, or Moz.com's Keyword Explorer will be helpful in determining keywords which:

- Are frequently searched
- Indicate buying intent (not just a freebie seeker)
- Highly relevant to your industry and niche

If you've previously done keyword research for your blog or website, the top-ranking keywords you found are a great place to start with your LinkedIn profile optimization. Choose the top two or three and optimize your profile around those.

You will use your keywords in multiple places:

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- Your headline
- Your summary
- Your vanity URL
- Your experience

If you wrote your headline in Step 1, it's time to take another look, keeping your primary keywords in mind. How can you include your best keyword(s) without making your headline difficult to read? That can be a challenge, and it may take several tries to get it right. Just like a sales page headline, though, this is a critical element that keeps readers engaged, so don't rush it.

Your summary is a bit easier, but still important. Be sure to use your keywords strategically.

If you don't already have a vanity URL, now is the time to grab yours. With 300 million users, it can be tough to snag your name alone any more, but don't settle for a generic /sallysmith7786 either. Instead, use your best keyword to craft a meaningful URL such as /sallysmithhealthcoach or /coachsallysmith.

Exercise: Use Your Keywords

My Top Keywords

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Using the keywords you've identified as the most important/relevant to your niche, rework your title and summary to include them.

Title:

Summary:

If you haven't done so already, choose your custom URL at this time as well, and include keywords if they are:

- Necessary (meaning your name alone is not available)
- Short (you are limited to 30 characters, letters and numbers only)

STEP 3: FIND AND CONNECT WITH YOUR IDEAL CLIENTS

Connections are the key to ranking better in a LinkedIn search. No matter how relevant or well-chosen your keywords are, if you're not connected to a lot of people, your search ranking will be limited.

The good news is, unlike Facebook, LinkedIn gives you a lot of room to grow. Every LinkedIn profile has a maximum of 30,000 connections, so you don't need to worry too much about running out of space.

However, you are limited to only 3,000 invitations. That means you can't simply extend a connection request to every profile you come across...nor should you.

In fact, it's a good strategy to keep your LinkedIn connections laser focused on your target market, for several reasons:

- Targeted connections result in more targeted searches (and more targeted connections, and so on)
- Ignored invitations may be detrimental to your search results, and a random invitation is much more likely to be ignored or deleted

So how do you find that targeted audience of ideal clients? You search for them, of course. (And in Step 4, you'll meet them where they hang out. More on that later.)

Start with your keywords and see who shows up. Remember, the more connections you have, the better your results. Have a list of prospects? It's time to begin sending invitations to connect.

LinkedIn gives you one-click simplicity here, and while that's tempting, you'll have far better results if you spend a few seconds customizing your message. After all, how compelling is "I'd like to add you to my network on LinkedIn"? Sure, it's direct and to the point, but it also doesn't tell the recipient anything about you, or why they should connect.

Instead, take a minute or two to customize your message with a note about who you are and why you'd like to connect, like this:

Dear Sally,

I'm a health coach specializing in helping new mum's look and feel great. I really enjoyed your article about breastfeeding vs. formula. There's so much misinformation out there, it was great to read such a well-researched piece. I'd love to stay in touch.

Best,

Heather Montrose

By taking the time to personalize your approach, you'll not only make a more quality connection, but you'll also be off to a great start with that all-important relationship building.

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NOTE: Your personal message is limited to 300 characters, so again, be concise but informative.

Exercise: Search for and Identify Potential Connections

Keywords to Search	Other Searches (Google, etc.)

Exercise: Create an Invitation Template

When inviting others to connect with you, it can be helpful to offer more than the standard LinkedIn note. But it's time consuming to craft a personal note each time, so templates can help you save time. Create 3 to 4 templates for use in different situations, and keep them handy for when you are sending invitations.

Send To	Template Text
Fellow Coach	<i>Dear [NAME], I'm [YOUR NAME] and I [YOUR JOB TITLE/EXPERTISE]. I noticed you [SOMETHING HE/SHE DID OR POSTED OR EXCELS AT], and I just wanted to let you know how much that [INSPIRED ME/MADE ME THINK/CHANGED MY PERSPECTIVE]. I'd love to connect here so we can stay in touch.</i>

Potential Client	
Industry Leader	
Other	
Other	

STEP 4: FIND, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN RELEVANT GROUPS

One of the best ways to connect with your ideal client on LinkedIn is to join relevant groups. You'll gain valuable insight into what's important to your audience, plus you'll have a chance to share your expertise and build relationships.

You can search for groups related to your industry by using the search box at the top of the page when you're logged in. Be sure to click the dropdown on the left, and choose "groups" before searching, to help narrow your results.

Your results list will include the group name, a brief description, and the number of members. You'll also see a "join" button. Since 2015, LinkedIn no longer offers open groups, so you will need to be a member in order to view the conversations.

Don't make the mistake of joining dozens of groups, though. Unlike Facebook, LinkedIn does put a limit on the number of groups you can belong to: 50. So just like when building your connections, it pays to be discerning. Join only those groups which are:

- Active
- Populated
- Relevant

The good news is, if you've got a few duds in your groups list, it's just as easy to leave as it is to join. Just click the "leave group" button and free up that space for a more active, relevant group.

Once you join a group, take a minute to change your notification settings.

Do you want to receive an email every time someone posts a new thread?

Can moderators and admins send you an email once each week?

Can other members send you a LinkedIn private message?

You'll find these settings and more by clicking on the gear icon next to the group name in your groups list, then clicking "group settings."

Since you're probably not logged into LinkedIn all the time as you are on Facebook, it might make sense to receive at least a daily digest of group activity—especially in groups which are highly targeted to your niche. This will serve as a reminder to pop in and share your thoughts.

Before you begin posting, though, be sure to take the time to read (and understand) the group rules, if they are posted. Each group will have its own culture and expectations, and you'll undoubtedly learn and benefit more if you get to know the dynamics before diving in.

Exercise: Find and Join Relevant Groups in Your Niche

Potential Group	What's Unique About It, and How Will it Benefit Me?

STEP 5: CREATE YOUR OWN LINKEDIN GROUP

Now that you've joined several relevant groups, you might be thinking, "I'd get a lot more out of this if I owned the group, rather than just being a member." And you'd be right. LinkedIn group owners can:

- Make their own rules about promotions and content sharing. Just like on Facebook, you're building your very own private audience, and it's yours to use as you wish. You can encourage discussion among the members, or restrict posting new threads only to admins. You can allow promotions within the group or not. You can even create a secret, by invitation only group, which can be useful as a part of a paid program.
- Send one group announcement (via email) to members each week. While your space here is limited to 4000 characters, this is still a powerful tool you can use to connect with all of your group members—or at least with those who have not turned off this option.

But before you jump in and click that "create group" button though (and LinkedIn makes it so easy with their incredibly simple 5-step setup), you want to be sure you can answer one critical question:

"What will make my group unique?"

Consider this: LinkedIn has more than 2 million groups. That's a lot of competition for your new group to face, so you want to have a solid USP (unique selling proposition) to encourage members to join.

Group USPs can be:

- **Access to you.** If you already have a large following and you intend to be active in the group on a daily basis, this can be a compelling reason to join.
- **Access to exclusive content.** If you'll be providing training or industry insights via your group, this can be a strong incentive as well.
- **Access to a targeted group.** Networking and masterminding is important for all industries, and groups can be a great place to meet like-minded people in your niche.
- **Private, safe space.** This can work particularly well with small, intimate groups, especially those that are included with a paid product or program. LinkedIn lends itself well to this USP because group content is not viewable by anyone outside the membership.

Exercise: Determine Your Group's USP

Given what you know about your ideal client and target audience, brainstorm some ways you can offer something unique in a group.

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Start by identifying the benefits your group members will enjoy:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

With your benefits in mind, brainstorm your groups Unique Selling Proposition:

My Group USP

STEP 6: SHARE VALUABLE CONTENT

Becoming a thought leader in your niche and establishing yourself as the “go to” person for up-to-date info is a great way to grow any business—especially coaching and service work. When you’re seen as the expert in your field, you automatically open up a host of opportunities for:

- Speaking
- JV partnerships
- Interviews
- Guest blogging
- Webinar presentations

And, of course, clients.

You can—and should—establish your expertise by creating your own content on your blog, through your podcast, in products, and even in books. But one often overlooked way to quickly become a resource to your audience is simply by sharing content others have created.

By acting as a “filter” for the information you share, you’re effectively saying, “I’ve read/watched/listened to this, and I found it to be valuable. You will, too.” You’re telling your followers that you value their time, and that you have vetted the content and determined it’s of high value for them.

We do this every day on Facebook and Twitter by sharing and re-tweeting, and you can do the same on LinkedIn, with a couple of big advantages:

1. **Less noise.** Unlike Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn status updates are far less frequent. That means your message has a lot less competition and is more likely to be seen and consumed than a Tweet.
2. **Better targeting.** On Facebook you’re “friends” with everyone—your Uncle George, your former boss, your daughter’s teacher—not just your ideal client. Twitter is worse, with its totally random followers. LinkedIn, on the other hand, gives you a much more focused audience, so your updates are more likely to hit the sweet spot.

Make no mistake, though. The LinkedIn home-page feed is controlled by an algorithm of their making, so your followers are unlikely to see everything you post. That’s why it’s critical that you carefully select content that is most relevant to your connections, and that contains insights they won’t find everywhere else.

On Facebook and Twitter, you can get away with sharing funny memes, viral videos, and photos of your dinner. On LinkedIn, professionalism rules. Your updates and shares should be:

- **Top quality.** Don’t share 10 thin articles when you could dig a little deeper to find one in-depth, well-researched post that contains real substance.
- **Highly relevant.** You know exactly what your ideal client needs and wants. Don’t waste their time with fluff.

Exercise: Find and Share Relevant, High-Quality Content

Create a saved Google search or bookmark your favourite blogs and other sources of content. Make it a weekly habit to browse for new shareable content to add to your social media posting app.

Resist the urge to just click the share button, however. Your status update will be far more compelling if you take the time to write a short note about why you’re sharing.

Status Update	Link to Share
<i>Planning to add video to your content marketing system? This will help.</i>	<i>http://www.the-digital-duchess.thinkific.com/courses/live-video</i>

STEP 7: PUBLISH ON LINKEDIN PULSE

What to do when you have more to say than a status update will accommodate? Publish on Pulse, LinkedIn’s newish publishing platform.

Call it blogging, article marketing, or simply content marketing, one thing is certain: If you’ve not used LinkedIn Pulse yet, you’re missing out on a fantastic opportunity to reach a much wider audience.

There are those who will tell you that LinkedIn Pulse has lost its way since opening the doors to everyone. Complaints of thin content, spammy promotions, and other “noise” do have some merit, but—depending on your niche—there’s still plenty of treasures to be found.

And if you’re going to post on Pulse, you should definitely aim to be one of the treasures. For seasoned content marketers, it’s not difficult to do:

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- Post original content. Pulse is not the place to copy and paste your latest blog post. Those you can share with a status update. Instead, take the time to create thoughtful, original content for Pulse, and you'll soon gain a following of those who value quality.
- Avoid the hard sell. It should be clear by now that LinkedIn users don't appreciate constant promotions. Give them value in the form of solid information, and they'll check out what you have to offer. Hammer them with endless promotions, and you'll quickly lose your credibility.
- Include a strong call to action. Just because you're not being pushy doesn't mean being coy. Offer a clear call to action in all your content, and your results will improve greatly.

How often to publish? Well, that's up to you and your content creation schedule, but as with most content marketing, more is generally better...to a point. Keep in mind that your connections will receive a notification about your new post in real time, so it's best not to publish several posts in a single day. On the other hand, you don't want to be too quiet either.

Much like your own blog, LinkedIn Pulse best practices dictate that you post frequently and consistently. In other words, pick a schedule that works for you, and stick to it.

When you create your articles on LinkedIn, you'll notice that you have the option to upload a featured image, plus you have a full WYSIWYG editor to take advantage of. Featured images should be a minimum of 700 x 400 pixels, and can include text (think title, logo, and URL).

As with your profile, you'll want to make good use of keywords to help attract a wider audience. All the rules of SEO apply, so use your keywords in your article title, in sub-headlines, and in the content itself.

Exercise: Brainstorm Content Ideas for LinkedIn Pulse

As you're creating your editorial calendar, add a section for regular LinkedIn Pulse articles as well.

Topic	Keyword	Notes/Call to Action

STEP 8: PROMOTE YOUR BEST PRODUCTS & PROGRAMS

So far we've created and optimized your profile, participated in and launched groups, and published content on LinkedIn. What we haven't done—at least not much—is promote.

As mentioned in Step 7, LinkedIn users might not necessarily be anti-promotion, but they're not as receptive (or as accustomed) to sales pitches as are users on other platforms. After all, LinkedIn started life as a place for professionals to connect and network, and users still expect a higher quality of content and engagement than they routinely see on other social networks.

But that doesn't mean you can't pitch—it just means it shouldn't be your sole reason for being on LinkedIn.

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The key to promoting your products and programs on LinkedIn is this: a perfectly timed and matched offer. That means the shotgun approach (such as you might try on Twitter) won't work. Instead, you'll want to carefully consider your products and programs and choose the one or two that will most likely resonate with your LinkedIn audience, and then share them strategically.

And don't discount the power of free. Rather than always promoting a paid product, use your growing LinkedIn influence to increase your mailing list size by occasionally promoting your free funnels as well.

Exercise: Choose Products and Create Promotions for LinkedIn

Product	Link	Promote To (Status update, group, privately, etc.)