LinkedIn for Professionals

a tactical guide

Prepared by Social Media AOK

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LinkedIn - a tactical guide to get you from Connection, to Coffee, to Business in 5 steps

Social media shouldn't change the way we do business.

If you've been in business awhile, you'll have developed a certain way of attracting new clients and interacting with your existing clients that works for you. Social media just adds a couple of strings to your communications bow and allows you other ways to communicate.

I've been interested in social media since the outset. I don't really know why, but as a natural communicator I've felt drawn to the new and rapidly changing world of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat and others.

From here, I started helping out a few of my friends with their social media needs and found that not only was I enjoying it, but I was getting great results for them. So I left my management role to become my own boss. Five years later I have a team of 6 helping clients around the country achieve success in their businesses using social media.

Of the major social platforms available, LinkedIn seems to be the most misunderstood and underutilised. At every networking event I attend someone will say *"Oh I've had LinkedIn for ages, it hasn't done anything for me though..."* or *"I have heaps of connections but I just don't rate it."*

So I decided to write this guide to help more people understand what they are missing and what small steps can be taken to improve their output from LinkedIn, and get a return on their valuable investment of time.

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Getting the most out of LinkedIn

To get the most out of LinkedIn, you need to treat it like any other part of your business. Most successful businesses will have 90 day and 12 month plans for their business broken down by key areas that are critical for their success.

If you're about to start your business or have just done so recently, develop a plan, then come back and read this guide.

Otherwise, develop your LinkedIn strategy in the same what that you develop your overall Marketing, Sales, Human Resource, Cash Flow or Operations strategy. This isn't about developing a 30-page document that outlines every possible action that is needed, but instead a plan to crystallise your thoughts and intentions into a written format to give you a living document to start from.

My 90-day LinkedIn strategy is 2x A4 pages that live on my desk with actions and timelines that have been scrawled all over it. A living, breathing document that gets you set for success. Once you have that, your LinkedIn strategy becomes pretty easy to put together as you will see in Section One.

LinkedIn when used well can become a fantastic growth tool not only for your business but for your personal brand with opportunities finding you instead of you seeking them out. The well-known adage "A poor workman blames his tools" is very apt here. In order to be successful in LinkedIn you need to get to know it and use it.

I recommend to all my clients that they allocate at a minimum of 30 minutes, three times a week to use the platform and implement and refine their strategy. The returns they have achieved speak for themselves.

I've broken this guide into the following five sections:

1. Start with a Plan/Strategy and do your Research
2. Set the Stage (Fill out your Plan)
3. Send the Request
4. Coffee
5. Getting from Coffee to Business *(this is optional reading but a great reminder for all of us)*

Section One – Start with a plan and do your research

If you don't know what you want to achieve then it is probably not going to happen. Just as this is true in life, it's true when it comes to LinkedIn.

So what is the plan? Let's keep it simple, and review your top level business goals. Like all strategies, your LinkedIn strategy needs be in line with your top line business goals or why are you doing it?

So ask yourself the question, *what* are you trying to achieve in your business in the next 12 months?

To give you an example let's have a look at this –

Catering company X has sat down to complete their annual review and has decided on the following goals.

1. Profit increase of $80 000 for the calendar year
2. Property – Acquire two new vehicles and have them branded
3. Promotion – Be the first choice for corporate catering in Adelaide CBD
4. Product – Launch their event management service
5. People – recruit an Operations Manager for the business so the owners can take one step back.

So now the question becomes how can LinkedIn support your business in achieving your top line goals?

A simple version of catering company X's LinkedIn strategy may look like:

1. Profit – Boost our online profile and find three new clients
2. Property – Include branding and publicise
3. Promotion – Strengthen contacts in the corporate catering world
4. Product – Publicise launch of new event management service
5. People – Search for potential Operations Manager for the business.

The question now is how do we achieve our LinkedIn strategy?

The start of the answer is **research** in 4 key areas. This should all be done without taking any action at this point except to begin compiling the action plan.

1. Start with your competition

   Who are the top competitors in your space and what are they doing on LinkedIn? Complete a basic "SWOT" analysis on their LinkedIn profile. What are they doing well? What grabs your attention on their profiles and company page. What kinds of things are they talking about?

2. Next Look at your target clients.

   Which companies would you like to work with? What Industry sectors are they in? Who are the decision makers within these companies that are crucial to your success? LinkedIn's search functionality allows for you to really drill down and find out specific people in organisations so start compiling your leads list.

3. Don’t forget Groups

There are so many amazing groups on LinkedIn, some that allow you to connect with your target clients quickly and effectively and others that allow you to demonstrate your ongoing professional development and interests. Both are equally useful in constructing your company’s digital persona and your own personal brand. Start a list of at least 10 groups under each umbrella.

4. Review your existing network

Who is connected to who, what existing relationships do you need to focus on in order to achieve your business goals.

Your research will obviously need to be targeted at how to achieve your LinkedIn strategy. Collating all of this information and getting it down into a one or two page document will help form the beginnings of your LinkedIn action plan.

Section Two – Set the stage

In business we all know that it is all about being seen “a certain way”. Before LinkedIn you would have done your research as best you could, made sure you had rehearsed your phone script and the run the gauntlet attempting to get past the gatekeeper.

Thankfully, whether LinkedIn intended to or not, they have made cold calling and initial contact much easier, but we still have to do the work!

Whilst this will take some time it is definitely worth doing in terms of the return you stand to gain from the time you invest.

This is really the nuts and bolts of your plan. The below items will help you to develop a list of activities that will help ensure you achieve your LinkedIn strategy.

So let’s start from the beginning.

Just as before you meet someone for the first time, you make sure your tie is straight or your skirt is flattened out, you need to ensure that your LinkedIn profile is well crafted.

Crafting your LinkedIn profile is something that should be done with a clear strategic focus. Your LinkedIn profile should be updated, always keeping in mind that you are a “brand ambassador” for your company. This is the first step towards attracting three new clients.

Your Profile

1. Your profile picture should include a professional photo that is recent and presents you in a way that is congruent with the company that you represent.
2. Your headline is searchable and should be worded in line with the prospects you are trying to develop relationships with. For example, catering company X could use “specialist caterers in the not-for-profit and corporate sectors – insert position title, insert company name” The reasoning behind this is when people are looking for a caterer they don’t type in owner, manager or sales manager.
3. Ensure that your contact details are current and that you have added the company website, office address, phone number and twitter accounts if relevant. There is nothing worse than finding the profile of someone you want to do business with only to find it impossible to contact them because their details are not readily available.
4. Set your vanity URL; make it simple and easy for people to find you. Mine is http://www.linkedin.com/in/simonedouglassocialmediaaok
5. Is your profile summary geared towards your target client group? Most people make the mistake of writing a novel on everything that they have done instead of using 70 percent of it to highlight or showcase their key successes in that industry sector. Remember that you can also upload files, images and videos to your summary to give it a visual kick.
6. Have you filled in your existing position in the same vein with attention to your company’s key points of difference in the marketplace instead of a list of all the things you do?
7. With previous positions listed on your profile are you highlighting the skills and attributes relevant to your current target market or is it just a role description of your previous employment.
8. Have you listed all of the relevant certifications that you or the company you represent hold?
9. What associations do you have membership or affiliations with?
10. Have you written any articles or blogs that have been published on other sites? If not, now would be a great time to write some again geared towards your target market/client.
11. Have you added any relevant projects to your different roles which highlight your capacity to be the best solution for your potential clients? Projects are a great way to be seen to be actively involved in key industries.
12. Do you have recommendations on your profile from happy clients relevant to the services you currently provide?

Once you have health checked all of this, get someone else to look over your profile and critique it. Most importantly get them to check for spelling and grammatical errors; the last thing you want a potential client to do is shake their head over an obvious spelling mistake. Also get them to check that all the links to websites, twitter accounts and any other links are live and working.

Follow the right companies

Using your previous research, now that your profile is fully fleshed out and ready for viewing it is time to make sure that you are seen to be keeping tabs on all the right people or in this case the right companies.

LinkedIn Company pages are a great way to work out who works where and what roles they are in. To go back to the catering company example, they would want to be following all of the not-for-profit organisations in their local area as well as key potential corporate clients that have been identified.

From here, use your sales strategy and plan for who to target, for example the marketing, events or fundraising managers and start to compile a list of exactly who to try and contact.

Note: This is not the time to start sending connection requests.

Join the right groups

Given that you know now who it is you want to be speaking too, it is time to review their profiles and see which groups they are members of on LinkedIn. Take a look at those groups and join some of the ones that are most relevant to you or your company.

Start to get a feel for the types of conversations that are happening in these groups and how you could contribute effectively to the discussion. This will speed up the connection process we start next.

Health check your own company page

Your company page demonstrates the professionalism of your firm to the world so before you use LinkedIn to try and solicit new work, ensure that you have a page that follows similar guidelines to your profile.

1. Complete your company overview – take the time again to ensure that it highlights more about the pain points you alleviate for your client and less about you and how good you are.
2. List all your products and services – LinkedIn company pages are fantastic for this. Not only is it easy to set them up clearly and concisely, you can also set specialties for each product or service, effectively tagging key search terms. I would also recommend taking the time to craft specific action landing pages on your website for each specific product so that you can add a specific url link. This makes it easier to track traffic for your products and will boost your enquiry conversion rate.

Once you have all this covered you are actually ready to take the field so to speak. Having spent the time to create a specific and suitable digital persona for yourself and your company it is time to play.

Section Three – Send the request

But wait before you hit that send request button. Using LinkedIn as a relationship development tool requires a degree of finesse and complexity so I recommend you start with a prospect sheet that asks and answers the following questions:

1. Company Name
2. Person Name
3. Position or Title within Company.
4. What is the objective you are working on or goal you hope to achieve with this connection?
5. Have you followed the company on LinkedIn? This is going to allow you to see how active the company itself is as well as keep track of announcements that may support you in developing your relationship over time.
6. Have you reviewed the person's profile to see what mutual connections you have? Sometimes this is the easiest way to begin the conversation as it allows you to request an introduction through a third party known to both of you. If you are going to go down this path though pick up the phone first and explain to the third party what you are asking for and why. There is nothing worse than being asked to introduce someone when you either don't know the person that well or you don't know the benefits for your contact. Using the phone is a much simpler way to avoids confusion when you aren't that familiar with the third party.
7. Have you joined at least two groups that they are members of? This is another way to simplify the connection process depending on the person's settings. You can usually work out what groups they are a member of by reviewing their profile.
8. Are your last three status updates relevant to them or their industry in some way? When you send someone a connection request most people are going to look at your profile to work out if they want to connect with you or not. Ensuring that you have a pattern of activity that is pertinent and relevant to your potential client is going to increase the likelihood of them accepting your request.
9. Have you commented on at least three discussions in the two common groups and started a discussion of your own in the last three days? When you send the connection request and say that you are a member of a common group it is likely that the person you are requesting the connection with is going to look you up and see if there has been any activity on the group lately.
10. What were their last three status updates? Is there an opportunity to pass comment on an article or point of interest or if it was a link to a specific article can you replicate their update with your own commentary, as corny as it seems like attracts like.

Once you have completed the prospect sheet it is time to send the request or if you have upgraded to the premium version send them an InMail (LinkedIn's version of direct marketing).

Here are a few clues when requesting connection with someone you have never met:

1. Be honest – There is absolutely no point in going in for the hard sell and banging on about yourself or your company. There is every point in saying something like "you came up on LinkedIn as someone I might know and even though we haven't actually met having looked at your profile I feel you would be a great addition to my professional network."
2. Keep it simple; here is an example of a connection request I sent when I was headed to Darwin to run some training. "Hi there, I am sending this request as I will be in Darwin at the end of October and will be running some social media training, if this is of interest to you or your connections please accept this connection request" Simple, straight forward and to the point. A wise woman once told me you will always get 100% of what you don't ask for. Not surprisingly it is usually apathy that gets in the way of most people turning LinkedIn into a successful sales tool.
3. Don't go in for the kill – if you do you are bound to fail. This is not a sales call or a sales presentation. Going in hard and fast will result in the dreaded IDK "I don't know them". This is just the beginning of a conversation, the "Hello" at the start of a phone call.
4. If you are sending them an Inmail be specific but remember this is the beginning of what you hope will be a very important client relationship, again keep it simple.

Section 4 - Coffee

Now comes the fun part, I really love getting to know new people and extending my network so it makes my day when I get an email notification telling me that someone has approved my connection request because it is the beginning of a new relationship and is extending my network. So guess what I do when I get the email in my inbox? Absolutely nothing! Here's why, most people who are active on LinkedIn receive between 2-20 requests a day for connections. Lots of these connection requests once approved are followed up with a standard template letter; I know this because I get a lot of them.

So let me paint a picture for you, you are at a business networking function and you inadvertently run into a hard core, old school salesman. The conversation goes something like this " Hi I'm Joe from company Y, here's my card, we specialise in blah, blah, blah, great to meet you" and they are gone.

Sending a new connection your sales spiel is pretty much the same thing; after all, that connection doesn't really know you yet or what you are about, they certainly don't have a relationship with you and they are probably not going to give you their money unless they have an immediate need (but even then it is unlikely).

So for two weeks, this is what I do

1. Watch their activity on LinkedIn, you need to get to know them first and get a feel for who they are and what they are about.
2. Like or provide useful commentary on their status updates or discussions in groups that you have in common. It is important that you are in their peripheral vision, front of mind but not

in their face. Popping up in group digest emails or on discussions they are following is a good way to do this.

3. Continue to post your own status updates that hint at what you do or link to relevant articles for them. This helps to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of their industry as well as your own.

Then send them a message again keeping it simple, the fact is that it needs to be conversational and use a tone that is congruent with who you are. Someone else's template isn't going to work, but since it always helps to see an example of what this looks like here is one I prepared earlier.

> *"Hi Sarah*
>
> *I hope you are well. I have been going through my network and was looking over your LinkedIn profile today. I wondered if you wanted to catch up for a coffee in the next couple of weeks as I would like to learn more about you and your company in case I can use your services or be of assistance in some way in the future.*
>
> *Let me know what days / times work for you or give me a call on insert mobile here*
>
> *Talk soon*
>
> *Cheers Simone"*

I have about an 80% success rate on getting to coffee and I think part of that is that I genuinely want to get to know them better. I am not necessarily expecting to or trying to close a deal. The other thing that works well often if coffee isn't, is asking someone if they want to grab a sandwich.

The fact is all of us are ridiculously busy so whilst I am a keen proponent of catching up for lunch we don't always have time for this. But if you say to me can we grab a sandwich together in my head it's a quick chat; even better if you are bringing the sandwich to me because then I don't have to think about lunch.

Section 5 - Getting from Coffee to Business

Now this is the bit that requires seriously good active listening and attention skills. But here are my tips for the very first coffee and where to go from there. Even though technically you have leapt of LinkedIn now into the real world this is often where everyone goes completely wrong or fails to grow the relationship.

If you are already awesome at this part feel free to ignore the advice:

1. It is all about them so shut up. Letting people talk about themselves and taking an active interest is the best way to begin a relationship. If you aren't worrying about what you will say about you, then it is easy to pick up on the cues that will be there in regards to your own business.
2. Find out more about why they working where they are, what they love about it and what kind of challenges, or issues they are currently dealing with. Again this is giving you background info that will come in handy down the track.

3. Ask them if they have found LinkedIn useful for developing a broader network why/why not. It's common ground and they will invariably give you clues about what they like or don't like about the platform which will generate for you a list of do's and don'ts when interacting with them in the future.
4. Ask them if you came across a good referral for them what would that look like? Are there any sectors they are trying to break into
5. Ask how you can help them this puts the ball in their court. This also opens up an opportunity to talk a little bit about what you do.

The fact is that in our society good manners dictate that if someone is interested in you and asking you lots of questions and taking notes it behoves you to do the same. Just remember this is not your invitation to launch into a sales spiel. Share some of who you are, what interests you, how you network what you love about the company you work for or own.

So after that first coffee or sandwich what do you do? Here are some rough guidelines that I follow dependent on the situation:

1. If it turned out in the conversation that they had an immediate need for your product or service set a date to have a business meeting at their office.
2. If not send them a follow up email saying thanks and covering off on why you enjoyed the catch up and what your takeaways from the discussion were.
3. If relevant invite them to write a guest blog for your website on what they feel is important from a service provider in your field for their industry. It is an acknowledgement of them and will help to position your company as a specialist in that field simply because you have plenty of related reading material on your site. It also generates great content for your social media channels and will help with your organic search engine optimisation.
4. Invite them to attend a business event with you; whether it is a breakfast (my personal preference), lunch, dinner or a networking event introducing them to people from your wider network who can help support them in their goals positions you as a connector and puts you firmly front of mind which is where you want to be.

The truth of the matter is that the way that we do business hasn't really changed with the advent of Social Media. The various platforms are purely an opportunity to start a conversation with people you want and need to talk to. The rest is up to you and how good you are at building ongoing relationships.

I have had people I met six and 12 months ago call me up out of the blue because they need some of our services or because they are referring a friend, colleague or associate to us, so you never know where a coffee will lead. Just remember, it will go nowhere if you spend the entire time telling your connection who you are and what you do and why they should use you.

So to Review

1. Make your profile client focused

The first thing you do when you join LinkedIn is to create a profile. And since LinkedIn has slots for your previous job roles, qualifications, etc. there's an almost overwhelming temptation to make your profile look like your CV.

Resist that temptation.

When you first meet potential clients you don't rattle off a huge list of companies you've worked for and the responsibilities you've had – that would bore the pants off them. So don't do the same on LinkedIn.

Most effective introductions focus on who you help, and what problems you help them solve or results you help them achieve. Then if asked more, you say a bit more about what you do – perhaps giving a little backstory as to why you are uniquely qualified to help, or an example of the work you do.

LinkedIn is for making connections – and for the majority of professionals that means clients and business partners, not recruiters.

You need to design your profile to have the impact you want on those connections. Treat it like your introduction at a networking meeting.

Think about the impression you want to make on your potential clients. What will get them interested enough to read your profile? Probably something telling them you work with people just like them and deal with the sort of challenges they have.

What will make them read on? Probably some interesting examples that spell out and "prove" the results they could get by working with you.

What would make them contact you? Well, at minimum a call to action with details of how – a website, phone number or email address.

Whatever you do, don't just stick your CV details in there.

2. Get connecting – but…

LinkedIn works on connections. The most powerful use of LinkedIn is to find new clients and business partners through the search function or directly via your contacts' connections. The more direct connections you have, the more opportunities you have to connect. I still see people who've made all the effort to set up their LinkedIn profile – but who have so few connections that they don't get any benefit.

The LinkedIn toolbar for Outlook provides an easy way of inviting the your Outlook contacts and people you email regularly to connect with you.

However, there's a catch…

3…Choose your connection strategy carefully

There are two very different strategies to connecting on LinkedIn: “Open Networking” and “Trusted Partner Networking”.

In business networking generally, the value you get from your network is a product of the size of your network, and your ability to “convert” connections into productive business (work, a referral, etc.). You can grow the value of your network by getting more connections, or deepening the strength of each connection (getting to know people better, helping them out, etc.)

On LinkedIn, one strategy for getting value is to be an “Open Networker” or LION (LinkedIn Open Networker). Open Networkers focus on growing the size of their network by initiating and accepting connection requests from as many people as possible. Open Networkers typically have many thousands of connections. This means that when they search for useful relationships (potential clients or business partners), for example looking for contacts in specific companies, or geographies or with specific interests or job titles – they are much more likely to find them (exponentially more likely because of the way LinkedIn connections work).

The downside of this strategy is that with thousands of connections they don’t know many of them particularly well, if at all. They’re essentially using LinkedIn as a giant Rolodex or telephone directory rather than as a way of making deeper connections. That’s neither good nor bad – it just means that if they find someone they want to connect with through one of these “shallow” connections, they’re unlikely to get a strong referral to them – they’ll still have to initiate a relatively cold contact.

The other strategy is to have fewer but deeper connections – a “Trusted Partner” strategy. Here you only connect to people you already know and trust. Most likely from face-to-face interaction, but possibly from online interaction too.

With this strategy you have less chance of finding someone via a search because you have less connections. But if you do find someone, it’ll be through someone who knows and trusts you – and they’ll be able to give a strong referral to you and put you in touch with the person you’re interested in connecting with.

The downside to the “Trusted Partner” strategy is that it’s a bit like going to a face to face networking event and only speaking to the people you already know. You deepen your relationship with them – but you don’t build any new relationships.

Personally, I take a “middle ground” and I recommend you do the same.

I don’t actively go out and connect with huge numbers of people. But if someone wants to connect with me, and their profile looks interesting – then I’m very happy to connect with them, even if I don’t know them. If they do turn out to be a “spammer” (I’ve only had this happen once with over 1,000 connections) then I can always disconnect.

This way, my network expands significantly. I meet new people who may turn out to be helpful to me, and I may be helpful to them.

I always try to take the time when people connect with me to send them a message to start a conversation rather than just accept the connection but never speak to them. That way we find out more about each other and it may lead to interesting and valuable discussions. At minimum, it means that if I want to ask a favour later, we’ll actually have interacted before.

4. Use Search to find potential clients and business partners

Many people get going on LinkedIn but fail to use it to help their business. Absolutely the most effective way I've found to gain business value from LinkedIn is to find potential clients and business partners. One of the things I do in my consulting practice is to help clients get more referrals for their business. And one of the key things I teach them is to be very specific in who they ask to be referred to.

LinkedIn allows the ultimate in specificity. You can search for exactly who you want to be referred to – by company, by geography, by name, by job title, etc. And you can search across your entire network at once. Or you can look at the contact list of an individual to see if there's anyone you'd like to be connected to.

Almost everyone I've taught to do this has been staggered by just how many people their contacts know that they'd love an introduction to. Yet before using LinkedIn they had no idea that they were connected.

Once you've identified people you'd like to be introduced or referred to, rather than try to connect them directly, give your mutual connection a call and ask them if they can connect you. That's much more polite than going directly, and it's much more likely to be successful.

5. Give recommendations and endorsements to get them

Recommendations are very helpful to have on your profile. They're a clear indication of the quality of your work and the relationships you form.

But begging for a recommendation isn't a great strategy.

If you want to get recommendations, use LinkedIn to give them to people you've worked with and who have done a great job for you. LinkedIn will show them the recommendation to approve, then ask them if they want to reciprocate. They probably will.

Similarly with the new Endorsement feature, if you endorse someone, they'll be notified and you're likely to get a reciprocal endorsement in return. if you get an impressive number of endorsements you can move them up in your profile to just under your summary. So the first thing people see after finding about you is that lots of people think you're great.

6. Have a helpful Professional Headline

When people find you in searches on LinkedIn, the initial thing they see is a little box with your name, photo, and your "professional headline". What most people have in their headline is their job title. "Owner at XYZ Company" or "Principal consultant at ABC Ltd". By default, unless you change it manually, LinkedIn takes the headline from your last job title.

Unfortunately, this doesn't give people a clue as to whether you might be able to help them, or might be interesting to connect to.

You should treat your headline like your introduction when networking. Focus on what you can do to help people.

My headline, for example is “Social media specialist, trainer, keynote speaker and strategist | CEO Social Media AOK” . It’s much more useful in telling people what I actually do than using an “official” job title like Managing Director. That will get more people to click through to my profile and maybe begin to interact with me.

You can edit your Headline via the Edit My Profile option.

7. Join LinkedIn Groups to connect and interact (but be careful)

LinkedIn groups are essentially discussion forums for specific interest groups. They allow you to find out the latest news, and to join in debates on topics of interest. You can join groups both of interest to you professionally, and the groups where your potential clients “hang out”.

Some people have reported great success in meeting potential clients and building their credibility by being helpful and answering questions on LinkedIn Groups. But be careful. My own experience is that far more people end up wasting hours of time in fairly idle chatter, or in trying to sound clever but with very little impact.

Before you join a group, click on the link to check out the group statistics and look at the activity stats. What you want to see is a lot more comments than discussions started every week. Lots of comments means members are actively engaging with each other. Lots of discussions with few comments means people are just posting their stuff and no one is reading or engaging with it.

8. Use Status Updates to subtly remind your contacts of what you do

LinkedIn status updates are a nice way of helping to stay top of mind with contacts. If you were to call or email all your contacts any time you did something small but interesting, it would quickly become seen as pushy or spammy. But updating your status is a non-intrusive way of getting a gentle reminder out.

Depending on their settings, your contacts will get a regular email with a summary of the status updates of their contacts. And they will see the updates on their LinkedIn homepage. Mostly it will just be “so and so updated their profile” type messages. So if your status update has something interesting in it (“Ian has just run a seminar on consultative selling skills”) it will remind them of the sort of thing you do and may even trigger them into action.

Recently, for example, I put up a status update saying I’d run a training course on Marketing for Consultants for the Institute of Business Consulting. That prompted one of my old colleagues to get back in touch and we came to an arrangement about sharing training material.

You can also share your latest blog post and other useful resources. Be careful through: LinkedIn isn’t Twitter and your connections won’t appreciate you making dozens of updates a day as it will mean they can’t won’t anything from their other contacts.

9. Watch others’ status updates to initiate contact

Keep an eye on status updates from others – it can be a good opportunity to get back in touch – especially if they’ve changed jobs or have set out on a new venture. Even small status changes can help give you something to start a conversation – the sort of smalltalk needed to keep dialogues and relationships going in between more meaty topics.

These days many CRM systems like Salesforce and Highrise offer “Social CRM” features. They make it easy to find your contacts on LinkedIn (and Facebook and Twitter) and track their activity on their profile page on the CRM.

10. Keep your use of LinkedIn in balance

This is less a tip about using LinkedIn, and more a tip about not using LinkedIn.

Do bear in mind that LinkedIn is just a tool. And it’s one that’s very easy to spend too much time on. Endlessly tweaking your profile to make it just that little bit more perfect isn’t going to bring you any new business. Nor is chatting away on a discussion group to buddies you already know.

Be judicious in your use of LinkedIn.

Get a good profile.

Make sure you’re connected to people you know would recommend you, then harness that network to get introductions to potential clients.