THE 7 BIGGEST MISTAKES THAT BUSINESSES MAKE ON LINKEDIN

BrainstormDigital

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Can you afford to neglect LinkedIn?

With around 225 million users, LinkedIn is a relatively small network compared to Facebook (around a billion users) and Twitter (around 500 million users).

LinkedIn has the highest visitor-to-lead conversion rate of any social network[2]. At 2.74%, it is almost 3 times higher than both Twitter (0.69%) and Facebook (0.77%).

It's not surprising: LinkedIn has a higher concentration of business-focused people who don't have time to waste, so they cut to the chase. You'll find little in the way of chit-chat here.

Most importantly, LinkedIn generates results quicker than other social networks. With a proactive lead-generation programme, you can open the floodgates to a rush of leads within minutes.

Many companies squander this opportunity through making basic LinkedIn mistakes. In this booklet, I outline the seven biggest – and show you how to avoid them.

None of these steps will cost you any money and they won't even take up a lot of your time. But by following them, you will have a headstart on your competitors in achieving LinkedIn success.

Happy linking!

Danny Bermant

[1]Figures from early 2013
[2]According to research by Hubspot

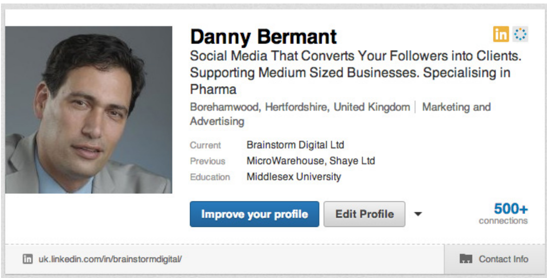
1 HAVING AN EMPTY LINKEDIN PROFILE

If you're a really busy person and don't have time to read the rest of this e-book, this is the one you really can't afford to skip.

Users spend more time looking at LinkedIn profiles than anything else. So at the very least, you need to make sure your profile is complete and up-to-date.

Research has found that no matter how rigorous the preparation, the key decisions about a candidate are made within the first **15 seconds** of an interview. A similar thing can be said about LinkedIn.

You have only a few seconds to convince someone viewing your profile that you are worth doing business with before they go elsewhere. The first thing people are going to see when they view your LinkedIn profile is your headshot and basic details:



Be honest with yourself. Look at the top of your LinkedIn profile. Would you hire this person?

If you're to pass the 15 second test, these are three of the steps you need to take:

1

Get a professional headshot! You wouldn't walk into a client meeting with a paper bag over your head, yet creating a profile that has no headshot has precisely the same effect! No employer or client will be interested in someone they can't see.

And don't just take a photo on your camera phone. Go to a corporate photographer and get it done professionally. It makes a huge difference to how clients see you.

Make sure it focuses on your head and shoulders rather than your whole body, and it goes without saying: no photos of pets, or of your kids. This is all about your professional image!

1 HAVING AN EMPTY LINKEDIN PROFILE

2

Be specific about what you do. Your professional headline is the heading that appears directly under your name. Most LinkedIn users mistakenly see this as the place to put their job title.

But that's a waste. It's your main opportunity to explain to clients how you can help them.

If you look at my profile, you'll see that I've said 'Social media that converts your followers into clients. Supporting medium sized businesses. Specialising in pharma."

My title isn't given until much lower down. Instead, I've been very specific about what service I offer, who to, and what my clients get out of it.

Professional headlines also matter because they help you get found on LinkedIn's search engine. If someone searches for a lawyer specialising in intellectual property and you include that in your professional headline, not only will you appear higher in the search results, you will also stand out from all the other competitors who have simply said 'Lawyer" in their headline.

3

Contact information. Make sure you list your email address, phone number, web address, Twitter handle and even Skype address so that those looking for you can easily contact you.

Then customise your LinkedIn address to something short and memorable, e.g. **uk.linkedin.com/in/yourname/** This will also make it easier to include your LinkedIn information on your business card!

I was once running a LinkedIn training seminar and started by asking each of the delegates what they did. One said she was a 'lawyer".

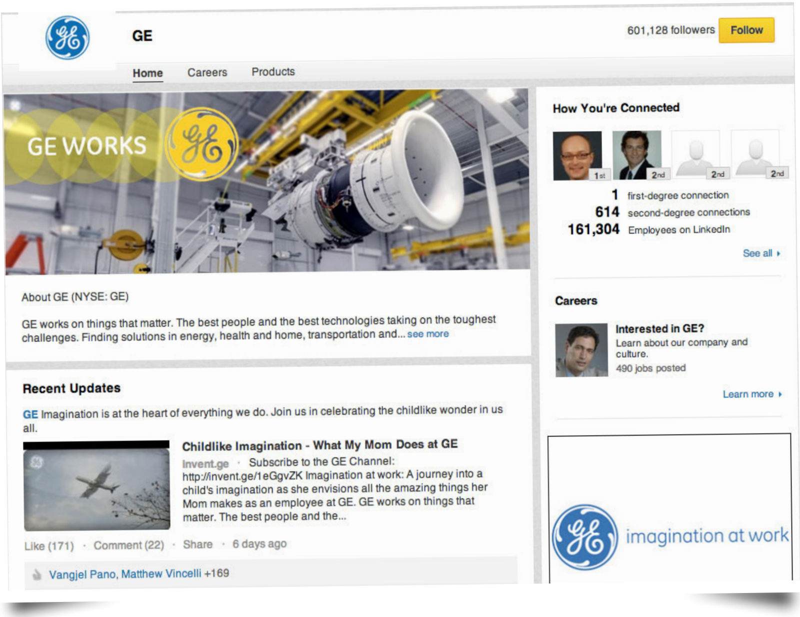
When I pushed her to elaborate, she said she was a lawyer specialising the property market. But that still wasn't specific enough. There are likely to be hundreds of lawyers specialising in property.

Finally she explained that she helps property owners who have been denied planning permission to appeal against the decision...

So which sounds more attractive to you? 'Lawyer"? Or 'Enabling home owners to receive planning consent to extend their properties"?

HAVING A BLANK COMPANY PAGE (OR WORSE, NO PAGE AT ALL!)

To get new business on LinkedIn, it's not enough to have a personal LinkedIn account. You need a company page as well.



Most businesses don't have one – or at best, keep it very basic. But without a company page, it's very hard for potential clients on your LinkedIn profile to find out more about your business. Particularly if your brand is not well known, how are they going to understand who you work for, what your company does and why they need to do business with you?

Sure, they can Google your corporate website, or find their way to it through your profile, but they are most likely to click on the company name prominently listed to the right of your picture. This links to the company page.

At the very least, this should include all basic company information including your history, location, size, product / service range, recent news stories and PR.

2 HAVING A BLANK COMPANY PAGE (OR WORSE, NO PAGE AT ALL!)

Here are 5 ways to ensure your company page is set up properly:

1. Make your page mirror your website in look and feel to enforce your brand identity. You can upload a banner (like on your Facebook company page) as well as pictures and video. You can even create a sub page where you can list your products and services (if appropriate).

2. Like Facebook, you can post status updates where you can share content that will be of interest to your audience. Always ensure that updates include visuals as these will have a far higher rate of engagement than simple text updates.

3. Employees who are on LinkedIn should be listed on your company page, allowing visitors to connect to them as well. Your employees should share your company's status updates on their own profiles, allowing your messages to reach a much wider audience.

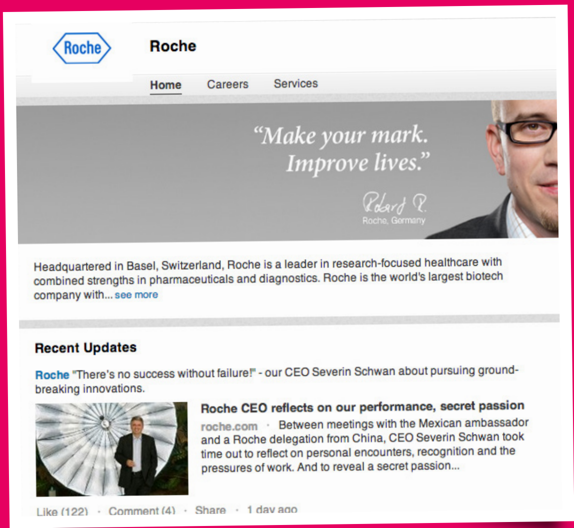
4. Have a strong call to action that drives enquiries and closer interaction with your company. Think carefully about the next step you want visitors to your company page to take: Connect with you personally? Visit your website? Sign up for an event? Then make that step clear!

5. Finally, it's not good enough to simply set a page up, you need to drive followers to it. Consider using "sponsored updates" to attract a wider audience. LinkedIn's paid service enables you to broadcast your status updates to a targeted audience who would not otherwise know about you. E.g. chief executives in the gaming industry aged 35-55 based in London.

Remember, if you don't have a company page, your company is invisible on LinkedIn.

HAVING A BLANK COMPANY PAGE (OR WORSE, NO PAGE AT ALL!)

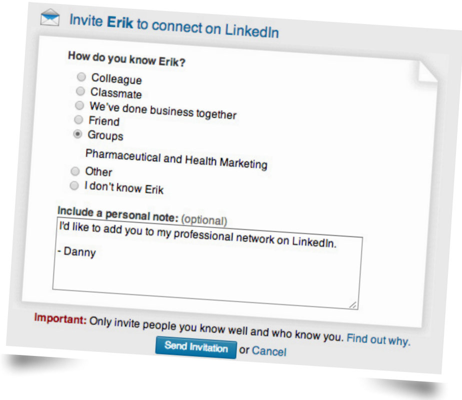
Roche are a fine example of a company that does their LinkedIn company page well



1. Roche has an active presence, with status updates shared on a daily basis
2. It promotes its brand with personal stories from both staff and patients
3. It has built up an engaged audience who regularly like and comment on their updates
4. Its page is visually attractive, with terrific use of images
5. It uses its page for recruitment by profiling key staff at the company
6. Its page includes a careers section where you can find out more about what it's like to work at Roche

3 SENDING BLANK CONNECTION REQUESTS

I recently received a standard invitation to connect with someone I had met at a conference. I didn't remember her but she remembered me. Fortunately I messaged her back to ask if I could help her and she then reminded me where we'd met. We went on to cooperate on a pitch and won business together.



I have also had LinkedIn invites from people my customers recommended contact me, but again, because the invite was blank – that is, just followed the standard template and text (right) - I didn't know anything about them.

What both these examples emphasise is that you need to remind people or explain to them why you want to connect with them. They may have no idea who you are or why they should accept.

To avoid being ignored – and reported for spam, which could have potentially serious consequences for your LinkedIn presence – tailor the personal note to the circumstances.

Here are three basic rules to follow:

1. Remind people how you met and in what context, e.g. at a software developers conference where you were introduced by a mutual business associate.

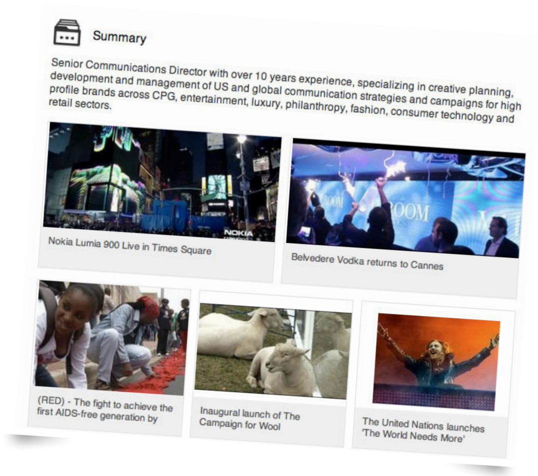
2. If you are interacting in order to get a person's input, expertise or feedback, say so upfront. People like it when they're valued and when the person asking for their contribution is honest and open about what they are looking for.

3. If you're connecting to a complete stranger because of a possible business opportunity, it's fine to say that you have interests or groups in common.

Bonus tip: Once someone has accepted your connection request, send a short note telling them how much you appreciate the connection and directing them to find out more about your business on your company page.

4 FAILING TO INCLUDE PHOTOS AND VIDEO IN YOUR PROFILE

- Are you a commercial director or regional business manager?
- Do you work in Human Resources?
- Maybe you're responsible for bringing a product to market?



Up until recently, if you created videos, reports or presentations, LinkedIn would be the last place on your list to showcase them: it was impossible to do without using third party apps. Annoying !

Now this has all changed. LinkedIn has rolled out a new feature that allows you to display images and video on your profile. And it's not just helpful to creative types.

The new LinkedIn feature allows you to:

- Upload or share slideshows or PowerPoint presentations
- Share YouTube videos
- Upload graphics or link to graphics on your website
- Link to more profile shots of you

Which in turn allows you to share your ideas, your creativity and your personality.

4 FAILING TO INCLUDE PHOTOS AND VIDEO IN YOUR PROFILE

Even if you work in a non-creative environment such as law or accountancy, you don't have to be dull. True, your products may not be particularly visual, but there are so many other ways that you can bring your profile to life.

Here are just three suggestions of how to take advantage of this feature:

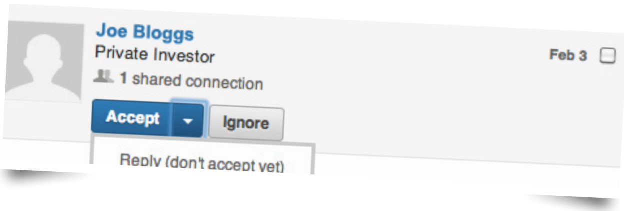
1. Share video testimonials of satisfied clients. So much more convincing than a paragraph of text.
2. Share a video of you speaking at a conference. If they can see you and hear you, visitors to your profile will begin to feel they know you – and feel much more confident about connecting to you, and ultimately, doing business with you.
3. Create an infographic from stats about your company, for your company page. Focus on your successes! Again, so much more compelling than a dry list of facts.

Does your company have presentations, reports, photos and video? This is a good time to check with your marketing and communications departments and see if there's any visual material that will help tell a story about you and your company.

Remember, visuals speak louder than words!

5 IGNORING CONNECTION REQUESTS

One of the most frequent questions I get asked is what to do when strangers request to connect with you on LinkedIn.



Although I generally advise not to accept, there are exceptions. People trying to connect with you are not necessarily trying to sell to you (and even if they are, maybe you want their service?). They may actually need your help, or they may want to work collaboratively with you.

My advice is to ask that person what they're looking for. Under the request, you'll see an 'Accept" button and next to this, an arrow. If you click on it, you will see an option 'Reply (don't accept yet)".

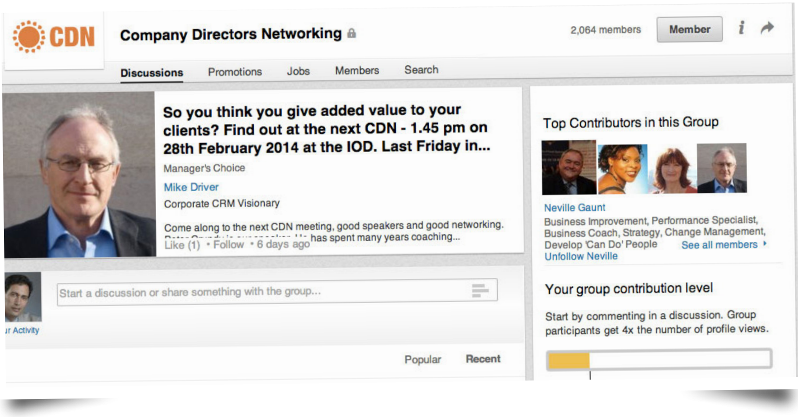
This gives you an opportunity to contact the person before you accept their connection request. I would say:

> Dear x,
>
> Thank you for your connection request, is there anything I can help you with?
>
> Best regards,
>
> Danny

You're being friendly but also direct, inviting them to reply but also asking them to get straight to the point. If the person has something to discuss, they will respond quickly and tell you what they're looking for. You'll know if the connection request is from a spammer as they won't respond to you. If you haven't heard anything after a couple of weeks, ignore the request.

But remember: there's no point in connecting with someone for the sake of having more connections. For LinkedIn to work, the majority of your connections have to be people you know, whose recommendations you trust. So before accepting connection requests from strangers, make sure they will be genuinely useful to you!

6 NOT BEING ACTIVE ON LINKEDIN GROUPS



Having a completed profile is great, but if you don't interact with other users, you're missing a major opportunity!

LinkedIn has numerous groups where you can engage with others working In your industry or with potential clients. This is a great way to forge a more personal connection to influential people, who may be good business partners or able to connect you to them; to display thought leadership and attract the attention of valuable prospects; to get a great feel for the issues that are concerning your peers; and to genuinely learn from others.

Most importantly, those who participate in group discussions have four times as many profile views as those who are not part of groups.[1]

So how can you make the most of LinkedIn groups? First of all, join the right ones! Here are four tips you can implement today:

1. **Think about what you want to get out of the groups. Are you looking for information, to deepen your understanding of certain trends, or are you purely after business leads?** This will affect the type of group you want to join.

   There are official groups representing professional associations and trade bodies as well as unofficial groups comprised of professionals who work in the same field as you. In order not to waste time, pick carefully.

2. **Size is not everything.** Big groups are not necessarily the best – some groups can have thousands of members, yet never produce any discussions. You want groups that are active.

6 NOT BEING ACTIVE ON LINKEDIN GROUPS

3 **Follow your clients.** Check out which groups your top clients belong to (you'll see this information at the bottom of their profile). Not only will these groups contain similar businesses, it will also help you stay in touch with people you already do business with.

4 **Go for closed groups.** Some groups are open to everyone; they are called 'open groups'. With others, you need to wait for approval from the group administrator in order to join. These closed groups are generally preferable as they have better quality control: Spammers are kept out and discussions are moderated to ensure they're not promotions.

Most importantly, once you've joined a few groups, you need to be active. Ensure that you regularly monitor them to see what sort of comments or discussions are being posted. If they're relevant to you, respond if possible. Initiate discussions yourself and if people join in, always answer them. Doing this not only raises your profile but enables you to share your expertise and thus gain credibility.

Finally, if you really want to draw attention to yourself and your company, **be interesting!** The more engaging and relevant your discussions, the more intrigue it will create about who you are and what you do.

Over 2 million groups to choose from

Did you know there are over 2 million groups on LinkedIn with more than 200 conversations taking place every minute? Here are just some of the largest...

- **Job Openings, Job Leads and Job Connections** (Over 1.6M members!)
- **The Project Manager Network** (Over 507,000 members)
- **The Recruiter Network** (Over 516,000 members)
- **Digital Marketing** (Over 447,000 members)
- **On Startups – The Community for Entrepreneurs** (Over 393,000 members)
- **The Consultants Network** (Over 302,000 members)

[1]Source: Mashable - http://mashable.com/2013/08/22/linkedin-groups-redesign/

7 SELLING ON LINKEDIN GROUPS

You've heard of SPAM. But have you heard of SWAM? For LinkedIn users, it's deadly....

In order to reduce spam in LinkedIn groups, the site allows group moderators and other group members to flag and block anyone they regard as a spammer.

The catch is, once you're blocked from one group – you're blocked from all of them.

It's called 'Site-Wide Auto Moderation.'

This is pretty much a death sentence for your LinkedIn account. Your comments and posts simply stop appearing in groups, sometimes for months on end.

The most common reason for being blocked is that you are selling your service or product too overtly. Instead of offering genuine insight into the subject of the discussion, you talk about – you !

The problem is, users and group owners don't need a reason to block you. They may have simply decided your business is not suitable for their group. They may regard you as a competitor and thus a potential threat. Or they might just not like your content.

7 SELLING ON LINKEDIN GROUPS

So how do you benefit from LinkedIn groups without falling foul of the group owners?
Here are three of the top five ways to avoid being SWAMmed:

1

Never post links to your website, even if it's really relevant to your discussion. Any link to your website can be considered a promotion and therefore spam.

Ideally, avoid links to all external websites as some group owners have taken an even stricter line and have banned links altogether. If there's an article you really want to quote, cite the publication in your discussion, but don't link to it.

2

Familiarise yourself with the rules of your group. Not all groups have rules, but those that do are pretty strict about them. Click on the 'I" icon on the group header to find them.

Even if you've read the rules previously, before you post, read them again. Rules can change and if you break them, there's no right of appeal.

3

Ensure that discussions are relevant. If you're a member of several groups, you might be tempted to use software such as Hootsuite to share the same post simultaneously on several groups. Don't! The subject matter of each group will be different and you discussion will end up sounding irrelevant.

For example, if you're talking about tax returns, what relevance would that have to a group about marketing?

The more relevant the discussion is to the group, the less likely you are to be accused of trying to promote your business directly – which is the ultimate no-no.

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU CAN NOW AVOID THE TOP 7 MISTAKES BUSINESSES MAKE ON LINKEDIN.

- Do you sell to other businesses?
- Are you keen to generate high-quality leads?
- Do less than 50% of your leads come from LinkedIn?

If the answer to these questions is 'yes', visit **www.brainstorm-digital.co.uk** for details of our bespoke programmes, workshops, live online meetings, strategic guidance and **blog**, where I share with you:

- 5 ways to identify your dream clients on LinkedIn
- 3 ways to generate new leads
- The 5 key steps to convert LinkedIn connections into sales
- Crucial do's and don'ts when launching a LinkedIn lead-generation campaign
- Examples of how others in your industry are rocking social media.

You too can convert your LinkedIn contacts into new contracts!

Wishing you every success,

Danny

ABOUT DANNY

Danny is one of the UK's top lead-generation experts, helping companies generate new business through their social media activity.

Areas he specialises in include pharmaceutical and healthcare, and the education sector.

Since he founded Brainstorm Digital in 2000, the London-based agency has given hundreds of companies the skills, knowledge, and confidence to bring in new business online.

As well as delivering the majority of Brainstorm's training courses, Danny is a sought-after speaker who regularly addresses business schools and conferences on how social media can be used for client acquisition.

He is author of **The Influencer Outreach Guide - How to convert brand influencers into brand advocates**, and **The Youtube Marketing Guide**.

To find out more about how you can generate more leads for your business, visit our website **http://www.brainstorm-digital.co.uk** or call Danny on **020 8953 8820**. You can also email him at **danny@brainstorm-digital.co.uk**.

And don't forget to connect on Linkedin **http://uk.linkedin.com/in/brainstormdigital**

For regular tips on how to succeed online, follow my blog at http://brainstorm-digital.co.uk/blog

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