

5 Reasons to Use LinkedIn

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A few years ago the importance of having a website as part of setting up a small business was seen as essential. Now there is a need to increase your web presence through a variety of methods. Social networking is becoming increasingly popular and should be considered a part of your marketing strategy in the same way as face to face networking. There are a number of ways to become involved in Social Networking - I think LinkedIn is one of the easiest. Here I list some of the reasons you may want to consider engaging.

1. To Be Found

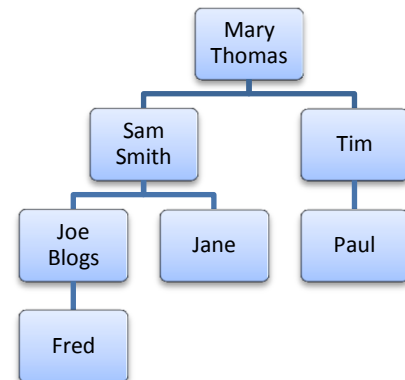
Other companies can search on LinkedIn by keywords and geographical location, for example 'accountant in Newbury' or 'Twitter training, Oxfordshire'. You want your profile and /or your company's profile to be displayed as one of the results.

2. Visibility

Every time you update your LinkedIn status, your new status is displayed to your contacts. This gives your contacts an impression of how busy you are and what you are doing. I wouldn't recommend updating your LinkedIn status too frequently, once a week is probably fine.

3. Contacts

The real power of LinkedIn is being able to connect with people you know and, perhaps more importantly people you used to know. By connecting with somebody you can see their connections. This works to 3 degrees away from you. So in the diagram, I can see all of Joe's connections. I think this is particularly powerful at the 2nd level. If I find that Joe works for the company that is my biggest target client, I can call Sam and ask for an introduction to Joe. For this reason, I only connect with people that I know well and would be happy to introduce others to.



4. Testimonials

People are encouraged to write recommendations for each other on LinkedIn. These can be a powerful way of advertising your work. If I have a recommendation displayed on my profile from Sam Smith (say), then if Sam has written the recommendation well, it can give specific information about one of my courses or my training. Somebody looking at the recommendation can look at Sam's profile and get a view on the value of the recommendation. It is a good idea to give recommendations as well as they are seen on your profile. Do make them specific though as it reflects on both you and the person you are recommending.

5. Research

Use LinkedIn to find out information about a client you are just about to have a meeting with. You may find an interest, a school or some past experience in common. If nothing else, it will give you points to talk about. Similarly, use LinkedIn to search for companies you want to target you may find you already have a useful contact at the company.