

RCLC Blog Post: Liz Rutkovsky

Professionalism Through Social Media Networking and LinkedIn Best Practices

Overview

We hear it all the time: you only get one first impression. Have you thought that your first impression can be online? Oftentimes, employers will search your name online before they choose whether or not to interview or hire you. Knowing this, how do you want to present yourself? Would you prefer your personal Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram account to come up? Or a curated professional profile complete with thoughts, experience, and accomplishments to be what an employer views first? LinkedIn provides the opportunity for you to present yourself well and to be your best advocate. How do we go about using LinkedIn to expand our networking skills and represent all we have to offer?

The Basics

First, you want to make sure you have a completed profile. Completing your LinkedIn will allow for LinkedIn to support and show your profile more as a search result on both the employee and user end. LinkedIn will instruct you on what sections you need to add as you complete your profile. It is important to have a profile photo, as well as your Experiences, About, Education, Skills, and Licenses and Certifications sections filled out.

Putting Your Profile Over the Top

It is most important on LinkedIn to be active and engaged, which we will cover later in this post. However, there are a few bells and whistles you can add to your profile to put it over the top. One recent discovery of mine is the “Featured” section. This section is toward the top of your profile, right below your About section, and can be seen before your Activity section. This is an opportunity for you to spotlight your favorite posts, articles, links, or documents. You can feature your resume if you’d like or any awards you may have received. Personally, I like to use this section to spotlight the posts I make about the accomplishments that are most relevant to what I’m up to. I recommend using this section, as it is the first insight into you that will be seen as a viewer navigates your profile; this section also stands out due to the use of previews/images to display your Featured posts.

Recommendations, Interests, and Accomplishments are other ways to improve your profile. Although an affordable option for employers, resumes and LinkedIn profiles are an unreliable depiction of a candidate. This is because the candidate is controlling what is seen. Candidates can embellish their accomplishments or descriptions of roles which can make it difficult to tell what is accurate. A way to combat this is to get recommendations on your LinkedIn profile and engagement on your posts. For your profile, do not be shy to ask supervisors and team members from current and previous jobs and leadership to write a short recommendation to attest to your ability and character. Another option is to ask a Professor or UCF staff member to help you with this, as long as they know enough about you to be able to properly represent you. Having other perspectives on your profile will show that you are an asset and validate your claims on your LinkedIn. Interests can be different organizations; when you have interests, you follow the organizations and will see when they post in your feed. They also have a space at the bottom of your profile. This is a way for people to get a glimpse into you as a person. For example, I follow AHLA, Roundabout Theatre Company, and the Rosen College. From this, you can tell I am

interested in hospitality and theatre/entertainment. Accomplishments are more than just accomplishments. You can add courses, organizations, and honors and awards. I do not add every course I have ever taken to my profile, but I add my major-specific courses that are relevant to my career. On your resume, others learn what you are studying, but not each class you take. The Courses section is a great place to list classes that can be useful to you in your career. For example, not everyone knows that Hospitality Management Majors must take Financial and Managerial Accounting, and the knowledge you learn from these courses can make you more competitive when applying to roles in the industry. Awards and Honors are straightforward; be sure to add any awards or honors you have earned throughout your years.

Tips and Tricks

On LinkedIn, it is important to connect with the people you meet and network with to keep those relationships going. LinkedIn is the easiest place to do this, because you can easily engage when someone else posts, and vice versa, instead of always needing to contact each person you want to maintain a connection with directly to check in. When you connect, be sure to add a note! It may need some help to ring a bell sometimes when professionals network with many people in a day. When you request to connect with someone on the computer version of LinkedIn, you will have the option to “Add a note” to include a personalized message. Adding a note will set you apart from others. A note can be as simple as thanking them and expressing your desire to stay connected.

Keep in mind that when you connect with people, your feed will include not only each post they make, but every time they react to any posts within their network. It is up to you whom you want to connect with. It is beneficial to have engaged with each of your connections, whether you’ve met them personally or have messaged them on LinkedIn. Cold-connecting is considered beneficial to some, but in my opinion there is such a thing as over-connecting. Connecting with people you do not know will not just be viewing their feed, but everyone in their network as well. Although it can be considered a positive, this can also cloud your ability to view posts of those you know personally and want to engage with. Determine who you want to connect with; you do not need to meet them, but it is useful to have interacted with them in order to form a mutually beneficial relationship and meaningfully engage with their content.

Best Practices

Your profile is completed and you’ve connected with people - but that is not all there is to LinkedIn! It is important to be engaged and be creating content in order to portray yourself well. Your engagement is what is most important to set you apart from others both within your network and to employers.

There are a few ways you can create content on LinkedIn. You may be thinking: what do I post? The answer is simple; post what you’re up to! This can be what you are learning in class, any accomplishments, and/or experiences in a job or internship! It is okay to toot your own horn, because no one else will do it for you. You are your best advocate! It may seem boastful at a certain point to post just your accomplishments. A way to combat this is to write about what you have achieved, but spin it to talk about a lesson learned that might be insightful and help others. If you don’t have any accomplishments you feel are worth posting, that is okay too! Your posts do not have to be all about you. You can post useful resources for others or a lesson you learned

accompanied by an article you found. LinkedIn is also used to share useful lessons and information with your network, so keep that in mind.

It is important to consider how you are reacting to posts. Likes and comments on other people's posts are represented in your network's feeds in the same way as your original posts. If you both like and comment on a post, that can show up twice in someone's feed. I recommend you be intentional with your reactions. Remember that each post that you endorse will show up in others' feeds. React to news you think is important, insightful posts, or the accomplishments of your network. Ensure that what you are engaging with is useful to share with your network. It is important to engage, but keep your network in mind when engaging with others.

Branding yourself to stand out

When posting and engaging, think of how you want to present yourself. Think about your desired field and your connections, and how you want to be viewed. You are your best advocate, so be sure to engage with posts you want to associate yourself with, and post content that represents you well and the professional you aspire to be.

I hope these tips were helpful. Good luck on your endeavors!

About the Author: Liz is a junior studying Hospitality Management. She is currently a Professional Intern in Human Resources for Entertainment Technology Partners and a Student Assistant for UCF's First Year Experience Office. Aside from RCLC, Liz is the Public Relations Coordinator for the President's Leadership Council and the President of the Rosen College Human Resources Development Association. Liz loves musical theatre and spending her free time with friends at the theme parks!