

LinkedIn Profile Checklist For Job Seekers

INTRODUCTION

Make LinkedIn Work for You as a Job Seeker

LinkedIn is a powerful, free platform that helps you showcase your professional brand to employers and recruiters. Remember, while LinkedIn makes money from companies, your profile gives you the advantage, so use the platform to serve your career goals.

To stand out, focus on looking like a **passive candidate**: someone who appears in-demand, engaged, and valuable, not desperate or overly available. Recruiters are trained to seek out these candidates, and you can use this to your advantage even if you are actively looking or currently unemployed.

If your situation is unique—maybe you're not working, want to keep your search confidential, or keep attracting the wrong roles—a certified career coach can help you shape your profile and strategy for better results. Here are examples of challenges a coach can help address:

“I’m not working. How do I look employed?”

“I want to job search without my current employer finding out.”

“Recruiters keep calling me for jobs outside my target area.”

A certified career coach will help you appear more attractive to employers and position yourself for the jobs you want. Use the checklist provided to optimize your LinkedIn profile, work with the algorithm, and get closer to your next opportunity. Find a certified career coach [here](#) for tailored guidance.

INSTRUCTIONS:

WHAT TO DO:

Step 1: Before you begin editing your profile, review your LinkedIn profile against the checklist, taking notes on each section.

Step 2: Need a sounding board? Contact a certified [IACC Career Coach](#) to discuss the nuances of your job search and how you should modify the recommendations of this checklist.

Step 3: Turn off automated messaging to your network before you begin editing your profile. See instructions [here](#).

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Section 1: PHOTO

What is Good Enough for now?

- Decent image that shows your face clearly (so they recognize you during the interview)
- Captures you in an appropriate professional setting

What is Ideal?

- Updated, recent photo
- Professional quality headshot, well-lit, front-facing (face and body not turned away)
 - Consider a lifestyle photographer for a more natural look
 - Many certified career coaches have a long list of requirements for the LinkedIn photo, as we are targeting a specific look: professional, competent, easy to work with
- Smile that lights up your face
- Dress at par with your profession; not all roles need professional attire
- Professional-level images across all online professional networks (e.g., email emoji)
- Nothing distracting behind you (consider blurred background) or hard lines that would make rotating the image difficult (e.g., brick wall)
- Your eyes level – use the nine squares of photography
- No AI Images
- No “Open to Work” badge around your image

Notes:

Section 2: BANNER

What is Good Enough for now?

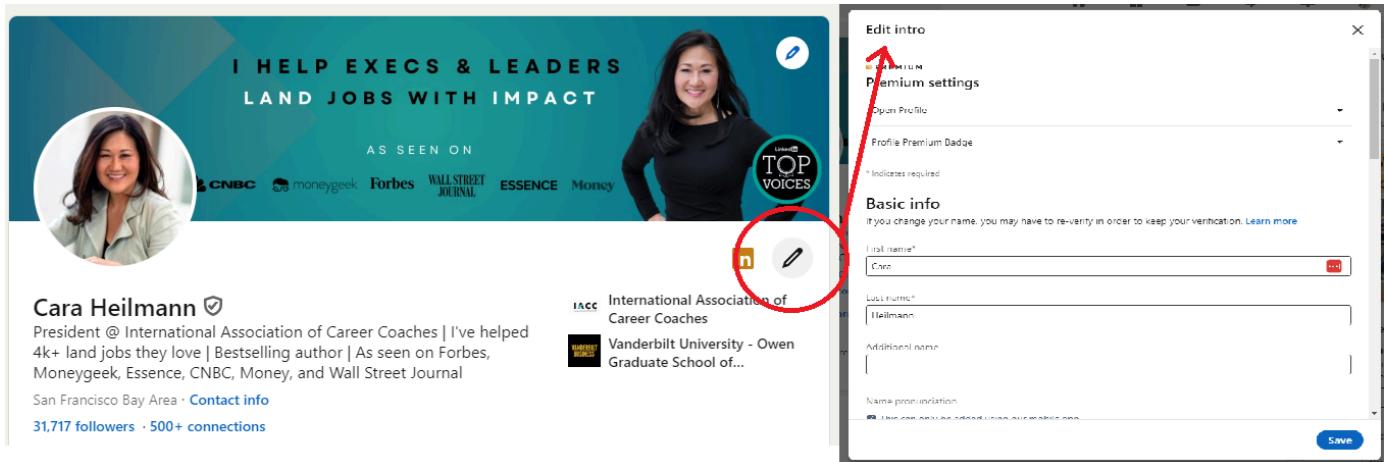
- An interesting image or pattern that is aligned with your position, industry, and location
- Avoid leaving the default LinkedIn blue banner

What is Ideal?

- Related to your field
- Branded of your current employer to show you are still working and happily employed
 - Able to find a generic banner and add a company logo for a similar effect
- Do not distract from your image (e.g., not too busy or colorful)
- 1584 x 396 pixels
- Look like an employee, not someone trying to sell something on LinkedIn

Notes:

Section 3: INTRO



What is Good Enough for now?

- The same name that is on your résumé
- Headline that looks like you have a job: VP of Banking at Bank of America (Title at Company)
- Select: Show the current company in my intro
- Select: School to show

What is Ideal?

- Add to Headline keywords for your target job so your job goal is clear: VP of Banking at Bank of America | FinTech Product Leader (Title at Company | Keywords towards your target job)
- Zip code that is smack dab in the middle of a 25-mile radius of the area you would work (app to draw radius [here](#)). Ask your certified career coach for reasoning and importance.
- Select a city that is broader than your immediate city: San Francisco Bay Area (vs. Berkeley, CA)
- Create a custom URL for your profile

Notes:

Section 4: ABOUT

What is Good Enough for now?

- A short summary so it is not blank

What is Ideal?

- Don't copy-paste your résumé
- Add one sentence about the company you work for at the start of the About section
 - Edit so it doesn't sound like you are looking for contract work, but instead, you sound like an employee and a passive candidate
- Incorporate relevant keywords throughout to trigger SEO
- Consider adding your email at the very end of your About section. This is level-specific, so check with your career coach to see if it suits your target level.
- Look to a top employee in your industry or at your target company for inspiration—keep in mind that you want to look like an employee (not a business owner trying to sell something)
- Top Skills section - list 3 - 5 skills - find a target job and see the skills requested for guidance
- Frame skills and experience to the current company to look happily employed
- Align verbiage to show your expertise to meet the requirements of the target job
- Check spelling and grammar for your profile, especially the About section

Notes:

Section 5: EXPERIENCE

What is Good Enough for now?

- List companies, titles, and dates as listed on your résumé

What is Ideal?

- Select the company's official profile so its logo appears (not the default blue LinkedIn logo)
- Verify that companies, titles, and dates are the same as listed on your résumé (e.g., we do not want surprise jobs that aren't on the résumé, but it is okay to have employment on LinkedIn earlier than what is on the résumé)
- Add a description to each position
 - Professional to leadership, consider adding a bulleted list of achievements
 - At the executive level, consider truncating to have descriptions only, similar to what is on your résumé
- It looks like you are still employed (speak with your certified coach for honest, legitimate ways)
- Highlight skills, abilities, and achievements similar to what is on résumé (mask confidential company information)
- Use actual company-issued titles so you aren't flagged during any background check process, and discuss with your career coach if you've had multiple roles at the same company so as not to clutter your profile
- Add v-bars (|) after titles to describe and pull forward keywords tailored to target job

Notes:

Section 6: EDUCATION

What is Good Enough for now?

- List schools and degrees achieved
- Do not list graduation dates if you have been out of school two (2) or more years
- If you have a post-high school education, do not list high school

What is Ideal?

- List of schools and degrees – chronological, with the most recent at the top–highest on profile–most relevant degree at the top
- No dates, no high school if attended school post-high school
- If you do not have a degree but attended college, add college and area of learning (e.g., Diablo Valley College, Business Administration)

Notes:

Section 7: SKILLS & ENDORSEMENTS

What is Good Enough for now?

- Add at least three skills in the Skills section

What is Ideal?

- Add skills to match the target jobs - list as many skills as possible
 - Many skills may clutter the look of the profile, so weigh the pros and cons; for example, at higher levels, like the executive level, these skills are not scrutinized as much from recruiters and employers
 - Consider adding skills that are hard skills (vs. soft skills) as the recruiter is searching for hard skills, knowing that the soft skills will be vetted during the interview (not candidate search)
- LinkedIn Learning prompts you to add the certificate or the course plus new skills to your LinkedIn profile, so consider adding if aligned with your target job
- It is unknown how effective endorsements are on LinkedIn. It isn't SEO at this point, so we do not recommend action at this point

Notes:

Section 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

What is Good Enough for now?

- No action is required if the focus is to have a good enough profile

What is Ideal?

- Ask a mix of bosses/clients, peers, and employees
- Add recent recommendations if current ones are several years old
- Be mindful of the gender/race of those providing recommendations and seek to demonstrate leadership in diversity and inclusion
- Higher job titles are desired, vice-president and above, if possible
- Customize/personalize recommendations
 - Ask the recommender to focus on two subjects: 1. Area that you excel at and your recommender can speak to your achievement; 2. Area that your experience doesn't highlight enough that your recommender can speak to.
 - If targeting a technical role, have someone speak to your technical skill.

Notes:

EXTRA CREDIT

What is Good Enough for now?

- Review your online LinkedIn activity and ensure nothing negative is seen—companies will read through your activity and make judgments
- “Like” positive educational and helpful posts in your target subject area

What is Ideal?

- Post and reshare other posts that are positive and in your target subject area
- Target weekly posts and build from there
- Post links to longer articles in Publications to highlight your subject matter expertise
- Share images from work of people celebrating or working together to highlight positive aspects of life at your company
- Choose a cause that lights you up that you could post about, for example, “women in tech” or “vets at work”
- Join quality groups on LinkedIn and allow people to see groups—hide groups that might confuse, like job search groups
- Check notifications on LinkedIn of colleagues announcing promotions and new positions—post a note of congratulations

Notes:

Thank you and invitation!

The International Association of Career Coaches would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to IACC Path members Lisa Virtue, Kelly Drummond, Annette Garsteck, Michelle Mendoza, Evelyn Buchanan, Robert Gardner, and Ursula Bjercke for their invaluable contributions in recommending enhancements to the checklist. Their combined expertise of over 60 years in career and executive coaching has significantly enriched this project. The insights and feedback they provided not only enhanced the quality of the checklist but also ensured that it reflects best practices in the field.

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Invitation to keep the learning going

If anyone has additions or edits as LinkedIn continues to evolve the platform, please send them to Cara Heilmann at cara@iacareercoaches.org. Thank you for allowing us to continue creating high-quality products for our clients.