

Twelve Little-Known LinkedIn Tricks

By Shelly Kramer

To know me is to know that I love—love—LinkedIn.

At 150 million members and growing, LinkedIn is a powerful professional networking tool, and it's not just for jobseekers. Frankly, if you're in the professional world and not using LinkedIn, I'm not sure what you're thinking.

My team at V3 Integrated Marketing uses LinkedIn for new business development, competitive research and analysis, participating in groups and discussions, and engaging with and learning from peers—and of course, it's the go-to site for savvy jobseekers everywhere.

One of the cool things about LinkedIn is there's always something new to learn. The first step is signing up and creating your profile, but once you've got the basics covered, there are a number of ways you can customize your experience to achieve your professional goals and get more out of LinkedIn.

The following are some of my favorite tricks and tips.

Removing Connections

Want to lose a connection? Maybe it's someone you don't want to be associated with. Getting rid of connections is easy; even better, they won't know you've given them the heave ho.

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When you're logged into LinkedIn, select *Contacts* in the main navigation bar. At the far right, you'll see two options: *Add connections* and *Remove connections*. Click *Remove connections*, check the box next to the contact's name, and click *OK*.

Hiding Status Updates

Sometimes it makes sense to operate in stealth mode. If you're connecting with new business prospects or making changes to your profile in preparation for a job search, you may not want to broadcast that activity to your network.

Click the drop-down menu under your name in the top right corner of the page and select *Settings*. In the profile section under *Privacy Controls*, click *Turn on/off your activity broadcasts*. Uncheck the box that appears in the pop-up window and click *Save Settings*. Now you're flying below the radar.

One tip: Remember to turn this setting back on as soon as you're done. Otherwise, you'll be invisible on LinkedIn and that kind of negates the whole point.

Does Privacy Matter to You? Opting Out of Ads

There was a big brouhaha about LinkedIn and privacy a few months back when it was discovered that a default setting called "social sharing" allows LinkedIn to pair an advertiser's message with the social content from a LinkedIn user's network.

If you don't want your information showing up in random ads, opt out. Click *Settings* under your name and then click *Account*. Under *Privacy Controls*, select *Manage Advertising Preferences*. If you don't want to see ads, uncheck the box that appears in the pop-up window and click *Save Settings*. You can also read more about each type of advertising.

Getting a Custom URL

It's much easier to publicize your LinkedIn profile with a customized URL rather than the clunky combination of numbers LinkedIn automatically assigns. Plus, if you use a consistent name across all your social networks (and you should), this is a great way to boost your "brand awareness."

Laugh if you will, but it's an important part of networking. And when it comes to networking, do you really want anything less than a custom URL on your business card?

To get a custom URL, click *Profile*, then *Edit Profile* in the main navigation bar. At the bottom of the gray window showing your basic information, you'll see *Public Profile URL*. Click *Edit* next to the URL and specify what you'd like your address to be. When you're finished, click *Set Custom URL*.

Making Yourself Anonymous

If you're gearing up for some serious LinkedIn research, say for job hunting, you may want to switch your profile setting to anonymous so individuals and companies can't tell you've been looking at their profiles.

To make your profile anonymous, choose *Settings*, then *Privacy Controls*, then *Select what others can see when you've viewed their profile*. From there, you have three options: display your name and headline, display an anonymous profile with some characteristics identified such as industry and title, or totally anonymous.

Once you've finished sleuthing, be sure to switch back your settings. Remaining anonymous on LinkedIn for a long period of time won't do you much good when it comes to networking and lead generation.

Customizing a Link to Your Website

When you set up your profile, LinkedIn lets you display links to up to three URLs.

Although you have several options for identifying the website content to which you're linking (personal website, company website, blog, RSS feed, etc.), it's better to customize the URLs. For instance, my URLs say The V3 Website, The V3 Blog, and Shelly Kramer's Facebook (which is where I send people if they want to know more about me).

To customize the URLs on your LinkedIn profile, select *Edit Profile* from the Profile menu in the main navigation bar. In the gray box that includes your photo, select *Edit* next to *Websites*. From there, choose *Other* from the drop-down menu. A new box will appear that lets you name the website and enter the URL. When you're done, click *Save Changes*.

Adding Your Blog Feed

If you have a WordPress blog, I highly recommend feeding your blog into your LinkedIn profile (unless, of course, the content isn't appropriate for a LinkedIn page). To enable this setting, select *More* in the main navigation bar and select *Applications*. From there, choose the WordPress application and enter the link to your feed. The blog will then appear in your profile and update each time a new post is added.

If you want to change the location of your blog application in your profile, click *Profile*, then *Edit Profile*, and hover over the application title. Your cursor will change into a hand, and you can grab the blog element and move it to a different spot on the page. You can also use the BlogLink application if your blog isn't a WordPress site.

Hiding a Recommendation

Have you ever received a recommendation you didn't ask for or one that isn't something you'd want to showcase on your LinkedIn profile?

If you get a recommendation that's poorly written or unsolicited and don't feel comfortable reaching out to the writer and asking for revisions, you can easily hide the recommendation. Select *Profile*, then *Edit Profile*, and go to the position associated with the recommendation. Click *Manage*. Uncheck the box next to the recommendation you want to hide, then click *Save Changes*.

Adding to Your Connection Base

A social networking site doesn't do much good if you don't focus on building a network and adding to your connection base. If you've mined your e-mail contacts for possible connections and exhausted LinkedIn's People You Should Know recommendations, there's an easy way to expand your network.

Simply go to a friend's or colleague's profile and click *Connections* in the main profile box to display an alphabetized list of connections. Before long, you'll probably be saying to yourself, "Oh, I know her. And him. And I can't believe I'm not connected to *that* guy." And you can quickly and easily send invitations to connect. For me, this is one of the easiest ways to build LinkedIn connections.

One last reminder: don't forget to customize the invitation before you send it. Nothing's worse than getting the default "I'd like to add you to my connections" e-mail, which in essence is telling the recipient, "You're so unimportant to me that I can't take the 20 seconds it would require to send you a personal note."

Blocking Connections and Group Activities from Competitors

If you're using LinkedIn for business development or job seeking, it's probably a good idea to go under the radar again. In some cases, you'll want to keep others from seeing your activity.

Select *Settings*, then *Account*, then *Customize the updates you see on your homepage*. In the pop-up window under *General*, uncheck the box that says *New Connections*. Scroll down, and under *Groups*, uncheck the box next to *Groups your connections have joined or created*. Click *Save Changes*.

Getting LinkedIn Updates in an RSS Feed

Want an easy button when it comes to LinkedIn updates? You can add LinkedIn updates to your feed reader, which is especially good when you're focused on business development. You can choose from your personal feed, which contains private information from your network, and the public feed.

To add a feed to your reader, go to LinkedIn's RSS feeds page. You can turn on the feed for network updates and add it to

your reader using one of the reader buttons or by copying the link. You can also add an RSS feed of a LinkedIn Answers category—a great way to stay up to date on discussion about a particular industry or subject. Before you add a personal feed to your reader, be warned that some web-based readers will publish your feed URLs, meaning they could show up in search results. If you want to avoid that disclosure, make sure your feed reader guarantees your feeds are kept private (sorry, Google Reader fans).

Beefing Up Your Experience with Projects

"Projects" is a relatively new LinkedIn feature that is *über-cool*! You've probably listed a summary of your career experience and individual jobs on your LinkedIn profile, but Projects takes it to a whole new level, enabling you to further showcase specific skills. You can add a relevant URL to each project and, if your team members are also on LinkedIn, you can connect them (by name and by link to profile) to the project as well.

To add Projects to your profile, click *Profile*, then *Edit Profile*. Under the primary gray box of your profile, you'll see a new *Add Sections* feature on a blue background. Click *Add sections*, then *Projects*, and enter a project description. You may want to add other sections, too, depending on their relevance.

What are you waiting for? Get going! LinkedIn is a powerful business social networking site, and the time you invest in this space will pay off in spades. ■

This article first appeared on V3 Integrated Marketing.



Shelly Kramer is the founder and CEO of V3 Integrated Marketing. V3 focuses on helping clients develop effective strategic marketing plans, build brand awareness, grow new markets, convert leads to sales, develop communities, and master return on investment across all mediums. A marketing veteran for more than 20 years, Kramer is a strategist, brand storyteller, digital marketing professional, content marketing expert, speaker, and corporate trainer.