

Frequently, when I suggest that business school applicants use LinkedIn to support their application, they respond with a funny look (or a quiet pause over the phone). How, *exactly*, would I propose that aspiring MBAs use LinkedIn to support their application? See our overview for some quick tips.

It's actually pretty simple.

Update your Profile

While different schools may have different approaches to their use of LinkedIn, it is fair to assume that someone in the process may have a look at your public LinkedIn profile. Therefore, you should be sure to keep your profile up-to-date and professional, including relevant details. Things to keep in mind:

- Your LinkedIn profile is an online resume. Without including ALL resume bullets, you should provide two or three for each role. Treat the bullets with the same professionalism as you would a resume.
- Include a compelling summary and search terms.
- Include skills such as languages on your profile.
- Review all affiliated groups that show publicly on your profile, ensuring that this is information that you would feel comfortable sharing with anyone. If it's a group that is important to you, leave it on!
- Photo (make sure that it's professional... if in doubt, ask someone who's good at sharing an honest opinion)!
- Include college activities as a bullet or two, as well as types of classes you took if that's not otherwise clear.

Update your Contacts

LinkedIn works best when you are connected to as many of your personal and professional contacts as possible – these people can be helpful as you prepare for business school.

- Review contacts in your computer address book and ensure you are connected to each of them online.
- Think creatively about other contacts in your personal and professional life you can include: neighbors, professors, volunteer collaborators, and others.

Get Recommendations

LinkedIn recommendations, if well-written and professional, can only serve to enhance your presence. These recommendations are particularly valuable as you look to connect with people to learn more about careers and support your business school applications.

- Identify former colleagues or classmates who could write a strong recommendation for you. (Be aware, though, that many employers have restrictions about writing public recommendations. Know your company's policy before asking someone to write on your behalf.)
- Reach out and request recommendations directly through LinkedIn.

- Typically, we would not suggest including endorsements from your formal recommenders on your LinkedIn profile. If you already solicited a recommendation from someone you plan to approach to be a formal recommender, feel free to leave it as is, but try to avoid requesting recommendations for multiple channels.
- Get additional recommendations through your volunteer affiliations.
- Provide recommendations to others. Providing recommendations shows that you understand the value of being connected!

Join Relevant Groups

As you seek to explore career paths that are compelling to you and as you craft your story for applications, it can be helpful to research choices through relevant industry groups.

- Identify which career paths are most compelling to you.
- Use the search functionality to identify groups that align with your interests.
- Join selected groups and follow discussions, contributing when appropriate.

Find Connections for Informational Interviews

One factor that consistently sets great applicants apart is the clarity of their future goals. One of the most effective ways to develop this clarity is to talk with people who have experience in the industry or organization that is most interesting to you. Contacts can share insights about their role, their company, the value of business school in their chosen career, what schools may be the best fit (and why), and what opportunities to take advantage of during school to best prepare.

- Use the people search feature to identify people associated with different companies or organizations that are interesting to you.
- Also search for people by MBA program and industry to determine who might be best able to answer your questions for each of the schools you are interested in.
- Develop a list of the most interesting contacts, how you are connected to them (who can introduce you) and follow up to see if people are willing to make those introductions. *Note: if relationship is via a group, have a standard email that you can use to introduce yourself, sharing a little about your background, your imminent plans for business school, and why you would like to talk with this person.*