LinkedIn Social Networking Site

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Preface
LinkedIn is a social networking site for the serious. It is about filling out applications, job searching, looking at profiles, and advertising your digital self. It allows you to market yourself with your résumé and references for better job opportunities than other social networking sites such as Facebook. LinkedIn takes a more professional approach to social networking than other job promotion websites. Other job websites data-mine and advertise, while LinkedIn gives its users the feeling of controlled transparency. LinkedIn allows its users to connect to the vast world of business and opens up opportunities with networking to better a person’s future career.

Social Networking
Social networking websites are a considerably recent invention, with the earliest recognized social networking sites being Classmates.com, created in 1995, and SixDegrees.com launched in 1997 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Online social networking is best defined as media designed to allow individuals to create profiles within a web-based system and communicate with each other. They can generate lists of other users who they have formed a connection with, observe and navigate their specific list of connections, and view other user’s lists within the system (Papacharissi, 2009). Social networking websites main purpose centers around emphasizing the preservation of existing social links, maintaining contact between current and existing groups of acquaintances, rather than creating new groups of friends (Papacharissi, 2009).

By presenting public profiles and connections through social network websites such as LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), Facebook (www.facebook.com), and ASmallWorld (www.asmallworld.net), individuals can purposefully send information about themselves to possible spectators. It is up to the viewers to ultimately interpret and gauge how reliable and credible that information can be (Papacharissi, 2009). A person can falsify information on their own profile, so a user must be careful when talking to new users on these social networking sites.
Factors Determining Online Social Networking Participation

MIS teaches students to constantly evaluate the purpose of any information system, prompting us to ask questions such as: ‘What is this system used for, who is going to use this system and is it relevant to the business environment’ ? In examining LinkedIn, these same questions must be asked, in order to determine if social networking in the business setting is appropriate. Before we can begin to discover why people use LinkedIn as their social network site over the competition (e.g Facebook), we must first ask why people are willing to sacrifice their time in order to partake in online social networking.

In examining why individuals chose to participate in online social networking, two models of social interaction come into play, the classical individual-based model, and the intentional social action model (Cheung & Lee, 2010). Classical individual-based models adopt the idea that individuals choose to use an information system exclusively on their own personal reasons, and perceived social pressure. It is referred to as the I-Intention models, with “the personal intention to perform an individual act … where other people are not involved as essential parts of the behavior”. An example being “I intend to check my email message box” (Cheung & Lee, 2010).

The decision to participate in online social networking technologies is a “social phenomenon” which depends not just on the individual acting in isolation, but the members of the group the individual wishes to be connected to. For example, a student would like to use the online social networking site MySpace as an instant messenger in order to communicate with his group members during a team project. However, if none of his team members are connected, or are willing to use MySpace, then the student has no reason to become a MySpace member since the particular social group he or she wishes to be a part of does not use that system. Yet, if his teammates are all members and frequent users of LinkedIn, then that student is likely to join and become a member of LinkedIn, in order to join and belong with this desired social group. In addition, that student is more likely to begin
continuously using LinkedIn, due to the multiple usages of LinkedIn during the group project forming a habitual behavior.

This view of online social networking decision-making is defined as an “intentional social action model which is defined as a purposeful social action where users view themselves as a member of the social fabrics of online social networks” (Cheung & Lee, 2010). This sort of model is referred to as We-Intention, focusing on the group’s consensus when using a social network. “We behavior” differs from I-Intention in that an individual decides to partake in an action as part of a team. An example being, “We intend to play an online game together”, where the individual views playing the online game as a group endeavor as opposed to a private action (Cheung & Lee, 2010).

Factors in Choosing a Social Network Website

The Intentional social action model explains that individuals choose to partake in online social networking in order to connect to a particular social group, using a specific internet based website. However, this model only explains why an individual chooses a certain website; it does not explain what causes a large group to decide on one particular social networking internet site over another. Groups decided on their social networking website based on the type of social environment the website caters too.

Networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn are able to promote and encourage a particular community atmosphere through the use of accessories, features, and layouts. The format of the profile, the ease of connectivity to other member’s profiles, and even the acceptable picture presentation can all influence the perceived atmosphere of a social networking website. As a result, different social groups can be encouraged or discouraged to join an individual site based on which projected atmosphere best matches their collective mindset and needs.
LinkedIn Promotes Business Social Networking

Unlike other social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace, LinkedIn is a social networking site that is oriented around business, with the motto of ‘bring[ing] together your professional network’ (LinkedIn Corporation, 2010). Like Facebook, LinkedIn allows anyone to join, but usually attracts professionals and students. LinkedIn uses a ‘gated-access approach’, which allows users to create a list of ‘connections’, composed of people they have met within their line of work, but requires the user to have pre-existing relationship with the individual, or an invitation from a mutual contact (Papacharissi, 2009). This style of site architecture creates a more professional model of online interaction. This network emulates the business environment by requiring introductions, referrals, formalities, routines, and protocol, altogether providing users with a ‘professional sense of place’ (Papacharissi, 2009).

The business orientation within LinkedIn is further seen through LinkedIn’s profile layout, with templates mimicking a résumé format, detailed lists of experience, core display, and professionally oriented profile images. Customization on LinkedIn is limited, with few options to demonstrate personal taste, although it could argue that just by joining LinkedIn. Individual want to promote a professional, serious statement of class and profession.

Members of LinkedIn are often assumed to be white collar workers, and have technological, literacy and computer-friendly occupations and backgrounds. However, because of the lack of interactive performance, due to the more professional orientation of the site, members are more static and less interactive with each other than other social networks such as Facebook (Papacharissi, 2009). This promotes a tight network, creating tight spaces with little room for spontaneous interaction and network generation. At the same time it also promotes a tighter controlled social setting, which are generally private, open only to professional elites (Papacharissi, 2009).
Prospective Employees

According to publicradio.org, November 3, 2011, the unemployment rate dropped ever so slightly to an even nine percent and companies added a net 80,000 jobs to their payrolls. The overall picture, though, is still, in a word, awful. Nearly half of the unemployed have been looking for six months or longer. For every available job out there right now, four other people are fighting for that same position. With this being said, the question that arises is-how can the unemployed find jobs? Job seekers can search through newspapers to find help wanted ads, go to job fairs, use unemployment agencies, headhunters, or take advantage of the opportunities through the internet. All networking sites have groups formed by people with specific skills in their particular industry. Prospective employees should join these as it will help them to expand their network.

Our group is going to be focusing on the LinkedIn, which is the world’s largest professional networking site with over 120 million members. Immeasurable companies such as Microsoft, Ebay, Netflix and Target have all used LinkedIn to recruit candidates for employment (Alison Doyle). The Director of Corporate Communications at LinkedIn explains that the main reason companies are using LinkedIn is to find passive job candidates. Another reason is because referrals from their employees are highly valued; they typically have a higher success rate, hence the popular employee referral bonus. LinkedIn connects you to your trusted contacts and helps you exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with a broader network of professionals. On May 19, 2011 LinkedIn reached a market valuation of over $9 billion which is growing daily (Michael Liedtke).

Our group focused on many different aspects of LinkedIn, and found this professional networking site to be a great strategy to use when searching for your next career opportunity. In order to use this site to its utmost potential when searching for your next career opportunity, there are several things you must know in order to market yourself properly. To be successful at getting a job through LinkedIn, you want to find and join as many groups as you can. The more groups you join, the more people you will meet and connect with, this in turn will open up more leads. Groups are organized by
specific jobs/and style of jobs. There are also a lot of alumni groups for certain jobs. Groups are used as a great way to get ideas, tips, or suggestions of people you should connect with, or direct you to where to look for potential jobs.

With this being said, when you sign up for LinkedIn, the first thing it asks you to do is set up a profile. This is the most crucial part of your LinkedIn account, and is the initial task that needs to be done in order to start making connections. Your LinkedIn profile is a chance to showcase your skills and talents, as well as help the right people and opportunities find their way to you. It is vital to keep your profile current and active at all times. The profile is viewed as a résumé by prospective employers and must be completed with as much detail as possible. Keep in mind, this is what you use to connect with people in your network and is how you get found on LinkedIn by potential employers. When creating your profile you will want to include your credentials for employment; your qualifications, your experience and your skills, current and past employment, as well as your education. Your profile should contain positive feedback about your work, which can be viewed in the recommendation section.

The recommendation section of your profile is imperative to attribute to your professionalism. All recruiters will most definitely look at this and they will expect recommendations written by senior colleagues. These are considered as good as a verbal or written references. While requesting a colleague to write one for you, ask him/her to focus on the positive aspects and achievements in the past one to five years. Don't ask someone who has known you less than this period of time as it will come across as a biased view (Lakshmikanth). You want to ask people you know and trust to give you a recommendation which can be completed with just a few sentences. Once you start the recommendation process, you can enter in more detail about you current or past work relationship to help strengthen the recommendation. A strong recommendation from your manager or colleague highlights your strengths and shows that you are a valued employee. This is especially helpful when
you are recently laid off, and there is no better time to ask for a good reference than when you manager is feeling bad because they had to lay you off.

Once you have completed the above elements you will then want to upload a picture to your LinkedIn profile. It is imperative to make sure this is not just any picture you would put on other social networking sites such as Facebook or twitter. You will want your picture to look professional because first impressions say a lot to a future employer. Other things to take advantage of when setting up your profile will be the professional summary which highlights your past and current experience. Most recruiters often search under the industry section of this portion. Also, the contact setting on your profile lets you connect to recruiters, letting them know you’re available for hire. The options in this section include career opportunities, consulting offers, new ventures, job inquiries and reference requests. Even if you are not searching for a job at the time being, it is beneficial to be flexible about your interest, because you never know when a good opportunity will come along.

Once your profile is complete, keep in mind you should always keep it up-to-date, to ensure you have made connections. You should tell your network that you are looking for a new position because the job search these days requires the “law of big numbers.” The more people know you are seeking employment, the more likely you'll find a job. Also you should find out where people with similar backgrounds are working. You can find this information by doing an advance search for people in your area who have similar skills. This can help when looking for your next career because it will give you an idea of what companies hire people with your similar skills, ability, and education. LinkedIn has thousands of job listings for each category. You can search using keywords, title, company and location to find the perfect opportunity for you. Also, you can leverage the elements on your profile to help make yourself stand out.

Getting recommended and having a strong network builds your professional credibility and helps you get hired. If you currently have a job, keep in mind it is very important to build your network
before you actually need it. In the current bad economic times, you never know when you will be laid off. Maybe you simply just need a different job, or a second job in order to make ends meet. With this being said, no matter how your career is doing, having a strong network is essential and is an excellent form of job security. Don't wait until times are tough to nurture your network.

It's not the people who you know, it's the people who know you.

**Mangers Hiring Employees**

LinkedIn is getting more and more popular by the year. This is all the better in regards to companies looking to hire prospective new employees. This social media site has a focus and streamlining concerning its hiring techniques. All this will help your company save time and help its continued focus on making money.

LinkedIn is a great way for employers to look at résumés. The social media site does not require individuals to post résumés, but LinkedIn does send emails such as this:

* Rogers,  

*All of your experience matter. Showcase your skills and accomplishments.*

*• Organizations* - Add your Organizations

*• Projects* - Add your Projects

*• Courses* - Add your Courses

*• Honors* - Add your Honors

*• Test Scores* - Add your Test Scores

*• Volunteering* - Add your volunteering experience

For those that take the time to add all they can to online résumés, employers’ are taking note. They look at all the extras as shown by the above email, as well as merits and accomplishments that might be specific to what employers are seeking. Employees should use intelligent keywords on
résumés because these properly placed keywords on résumés are put into data-systems that will red-flag phrases and words that are important to employer.

An example of how employer to employee works on LinkedIn would be a company that makes plastic components for laptops. This company sees a potential employee that had past experience creating similar parts for computers and could be an advantage to the given company with a possible good career for perspective employee. The employee is then contacted through LinkedIn, now that employer has found a qualified worker. LinkedIn has made this process easier and is a huge benefit for the employer and the future employee.

A manager who reads and looks over applications on LinkedIn would give this advice to potential applicants, “Make sure your résumé doesn’t suck.” Managers look over countless résumés that will never receive a response. Posting a solid résumé on LinkedIn will get the best results. Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, Craigslist.com, and some other web-sites are days of past. LinkedIn is the new way, adapting to social networking and utilized modern filtering techniques to best find matches for any given job. Popularity helps a great deal, MySpace was important in 2006, but now if information is on Facebook instead, it receives more merit.

LinkedIn does the most important thing of all which is finding connections that enable face-to-face interviews. Potential employers have a greater chance of personally meeting potential employees, a lot of times it’s a friend of a friend situation. With the popularity of LinkedIn and its outreaching services and e-mail updates, they live up to their namesake.

Searching for job candidates is about making references to others you know on LinkedIn. By helping a business partner, they in turn may help you find who you’re looking for. It is better to have a strong circle of associates over an enormous amount of people that you don’t really know. LinkedIn makes it easy to stay connected to valued potential associates by bringing them into your friendship circle. A healthy environment is one where you work with friends and people you trust.
Other ways to finding new employees is to reach out within your own network. What you will do is go to your LinkedIn account page, click contacts, and then connections. On the connections page you see your personal contacts. From this page, you can go to companies which will show all affiliated companies including schools and institutions. Tags are available as well as industries and recent activities. Through your own contacts page, you could potentially already have an ideal candidate.

Reference search is a good tool to get started with the hiring process using LinkedIn. There is InMail Messages that help you keep track of contacts and references along with a profile organizer. Using the references is a way to search for specific job place locations that previous contacts may be working at or once worked for. If that doesn’t give you enough information then use, *expand your network* and *connect to more people*. There is even a *person you may know* tab. It could be that none of them are familiar, but by their description job title it is possible that one of the contacts could be an interest of hire.

You can see how many people view your profile as a source candidate. Many recruiters use LinkedIn, which makes it all the more important to have a complete and compelling profile. Company owners and Human Resource’s spend time browsing candidates and their digital selves. This means that they can see who your friends are and who you’ve tried to previously contact. This is a full transparency website with concern to business relationships. Unfortunately, many managers get discouraged when viewing profiles. They can look at 300 résumés and not see one that they might like. As an employer it would be wise to pay for the premium service and get an *InMail*. The *InMail* service will get you better connections.

Information about your company that you want others to know is broken down into first, second, and third degree. First degree would be direct friends and colleagues, the second degree would be friends of friend, and third is people you don’t know. With LinkedIn paid premium service
employers are able to send private messages straight to second and third degree connections. *InMail* also permits second and third degree connections to be sent to employee’s direct email.

LinkedIn is an effective tool for hiring employees. You may have to view many résumés, but eventually the idea is that the employee is waiting to get hired. It surpasses the other career sites in that the popularity and reputation helps make localized connections. Many times employers hire people they know nothing about besides what’s on the given résumé in front of them. LinkedIn helps employers by giving them the opportunity to ask someone they know to give direct references with concerns to prospective employee.

**Paid vs. Free Versions of LinkedIn**

LinkedIn provides free membership to the basic consumer looking to get involved in the social scene. Contrary to other social websites such as Facebook and Myspace, LinkedIn takes a more professional approach. LinkedIn provides businesses and members the ability to seek out jobs and employees based on the profile pages, which provide important information on people; such as résumé information, current business prospects, or travel plans.

Succeed by finding the people you need -

1. **Sales Leads** - Executives from every Fortune 500 company
2. **Candidates** - Millions of employed professionals open to hearing about new career opportunities
3. **Business Partners** - More than 50,000 companies worldwide
4. **Industry Experts** - Experts in all major industries

Source: [http://www.linkedin.com/business](http://www.linkedin.com/business)

While the basic freelance profile suits the needs of most people. LinkedIn provides services to business professionals who are looking to get a little more out of their experience. Users are provided with a choice of three paid subscriptions including: Business, Business Plus, and Business Pro. The alternatives to the free version offer users several tools to get in contact with both employers and allow
employers to seek out prospective employees. The membership versions return larger lists of people on search lists, allow InMails to be sent to users not in their extended network, and provide organized systems to allow searched profiles to be organized and stored.

“If you are a recruiter, sales professional, entrepreneur, researcher...or any other professional whose success depends on contacting the right person, LinkedIn will make you more successful.”

(http://www.linkedin.com/business)

The Business subscription to LinkedIn would provide a new upcoming business owner with basic tools to create a profile for their company. At a price of only twenty-five dollars, the membership fee should appeal to many small companies and even entrepreneurs. Compared to the free version of LinkedIn, users are provided with expanded search capabilities and are allowed to use up to three free InMails per month; giving them the capabilities to contact people outside of their extended network.

If a user directly contacts via InMail,

- 30x more likely to get a response
- Fast and Direct
  - Delivered to the user’s email address
  - Displayed on the user’s LinkedIn homepage
- Trusted
  - LinkedIn acts as a secure communications broker
  - Your professional profile gives your recipient the confidence to respond

Source: http://www.linkedin.com/business

The next step up from the basic business subscription is the business plus profile, which offers users the same services as the basic business subscription but with a few added perks. The monthly membership fee doubles to fifty dollars a month, but users gain an even broader search spectrum, up to 500 consumers per search, and are provided ten free InMails per month. The Business Plus
subscription appeals to small to medium businesses looking to post information about their establishments, and also to seek out employees continued growth of company.

The final paid profile option offered by LinkedIn is the Business Pro option, priced at $500 dollars per month, it is mainly targeted at high-profile businesses; however, the high price tag comes with a bundle of services as well. Searches with the Pro option return 700 users every search, by far the widest search capabilities available by all the LinkedIn options. Users are also provided with fifty InMails, allowing these clients to contact many other LinkedIn users outside of their network on a daily basis. Lastly, users are provided with twenty-five organization folders, where they can store user information, organize searched profiles, and classify potential employee candidates.

LinkedIn offers several features to its users for providing organized efficient business profiles that are effective in information transfer, and are professional in appearance. The first part of a profile lists a company overview which gives a friendly welcome to the company by listing employees, blog posts, and even twitter feeds so they can read what the company is all about. The second part of the profile presents users with job openings. Users can view a business profile and view available jobs and upcoming job positions that the company has. The paid options of LinkedIn offer companies extra features which can spice up their job pages by showing the culture of the company, and posting links to current employees.

LinkedIn also offers users a section to post about products and services the company offers. Job seekers or users seeking a little more information about the company can use this section to view what the company is all about. They can also see how many users of LinkedIn recommend the product or service. Business profile users are provided a section for analytics as well. The business can see what types of consumers are interested in their page, what other companies they have researched and are currently linked to. Business profiles then list a company description which can be updated by employees if authorized, and then given detailed summary of what the company is all about.
profiles also list company employees who are on LinkedIn, along with LinkedIn users who have indicated they have recently joined the company.

By providing different services targeted at different consumers, LinkedIn has broadened its market and established its website as a professional business source. LinkedIn has established a social website which can touch the everyday consumer and also capture the interests of organized businesses who are looking to get in touch with business professionals and job candidates.

**LinkedIn Privacy and Security**

Social Networking sites like LinkedIn and Facebook have become very popular among society. But with the increase in social networking sites and the information on those sites, comes a decrease in privacy.

**Data-Mining and Social Networking Sites**

Data-mining can be an issue when it comes to different social networking sites, but it does have its benefits. Data-mining is the application of statistical techniques to find patterns and relationships among data for classification and prediction (Kroenke, 2011). In other words, companies can gather information about a person and use that information to determine likes, dislikes, and trends among that person. An example would be on how LinkedIn can use your information for market research which will decide a customized list of advertising and articles of the New York Times that you will see on your profile (Lynch, 2009). Data-mining can be good or bad depending on how someone defines their own personal privacy. If a person feels uncomfortable about putting a majority of their information up on a social networking site such as résumé, phone, education, address and twitter feeds, then LinkedIn is not for you. Companies can gather this public data and sell it to marketers, credit card companies and many other parties who are looking for your information (Stein & Harrel, 2011). It is scary because you never truly know who has this information about you and what they are doing with it. Data-mining can be a good thing when used in the right way though. LinkedIn can gather your
information with data-mining to better connect you to people who can help with your career and job opportunities. Another bonus is that it can help customize the advertisements and news articles you see that will best suit your likings. Also, LinkedIn does keep your information anonymous when used for market research, but outside companies can still mine your data (Lynch, 2009). Overall, LinkedIn may seem a little scary with all the data a person can put on their profile, but it is a great tool to use to network in the business world.

**Data Mining Unregulated**

Data mining is also unregulated so what are these companies doing with all our information? One of the articles, *Your data, Yourself*, by Joel Stein, mentioned that Senator John Kerry wanted to introduce a bill that would require companies to make sure all the information they know about you is secured from hackers and enable you to inspect and correct all incorrect data these companies have on you (Stein & Harrel, 2011). Also, a person could even opt out of the system if they did not want to be tracked. Stein also states that the biggest problem with data mining is not the privacy, but it is when the information is wrong (Stein & Harrel, 2011). Stein called numerous companies to find out what they knew about him and it was interesting to see how much information was wrong about him. Each company had gathered different and wrong information about him. This bill could correct all the information companies have about everyone for better market research by companies while helping to safeguard a person’s identity and help regulate how much companies can gather on people.

**Job Searching and LinkedIn User Settings**

If a person is first starting out on LinkedIn and is looking for job opportunities, it is best to have your profile available to as many people as possible. It should be easy for a company to view as much information about you as possible in order for them to make their decision on whether or not you will get the job. Some ways of opening up your profile, is by going to your profile settings and adjusting the profile, groups, companies and application settings. One thing you should make sure of is that you
are comfortable with all the information that you are showing because people may view your information who are not one of your main contacts that are known as “connections” (Lynch, 2009). Another option in the settings that you can change is whether or not your connections can see your full first and last name. If you just want your connections to see only your first name with the initial of your last name, you can change this under the “name & location” in your personal information settings (Lynch, 2009). In order to have a good profile and increase your job opportunities, you must make your profile open to the most people, but make sure you approve of the information that you are sharing.

**Leaking Company Information**

Also, if a person has a linked in account and works for a company already, that person should be careful about some of the news that you share about your job. An employ at HP announced that he was working on a future cloud-based service that his company would implement when HP had not even announced this news yet (Bradbury, 2011). This was an issue of what an employee should keep private about his job, and what an employee can post to the public. Not only can your connections see the posts you make, but companies that data-mine can use the information to learn about their competitors. Companies can use hacks that use Boolean operators within a query box to narrow down their searches to mine information about other people and other companies (Bradbury, 2011). An example is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Operator Name</th>
<th>Dependency</th>
<th>Possible Values</th>
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<td>Last Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>&lt;keyword&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Company</td>
<td>ccompany:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>&lt;keyword&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Also, if you are worried about your other connections stealing your contacts from your LinkedIn list, you should change your connection browse settings (Lynch, 2009). Changing some of your settings on your profile and being careful about the news you broadcast about your company can stop other competitors from gathering important information from you.

LinkedIn offers consumers several advantages over other modern social media websites. While Facebook and Twitter take a more casual approach to user profiles, LinkedIn adheres to strict business interests. Users of LinkedIn must always take into account the information they are releasing to the public, as their weekend drunken escapades are unlikely to fetch as many positive remarks as they would on other social sites.

(Bradbury, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past Company</th>
<th>company</th>
<th>n/a</th>
<th>&lt;keyword&gt;</th>
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