

The Interim Manager's Guide to using LinkedIn

Compiled by IIM Director, **Ad van der Rest**

With the growth of social networking and business networking sites like [LinkedIn](#), recruiters and clients are increasingly turning to seeking and finding candidates online. This can be accomplished more quickly, and with more under the control of those seeking candidates, than posting adverts and waiting for people who are out of work to 'apply' for those positions.

So as well as being good at applying for advertised positions, and networking with recruiters and networked clients, the ability to be found and discovered on LinkedIn and on [Google](#) becomes increasingly important.

If you doubt the speed of change, it was not many years ago when candidates applied for jobs by sending paper CVs and covering letters by post (sometimes on quaint 'marble-effect' CV paper).

This article focuses on use of the business networking site: LinkedIn, and

- Having a profile worth reading,
- Being found on LinkedIn

While many of the ideas presented in this article are relevant to any business person, it particularly addresses the marketing needs of Interim Managers.

Having a profile worth reading

Because your LinkedIn profile is a preferred item searched by Google, your profile will show-up in searches about you. Treat your profile with importance and respect – too many profiles are 'banged together' or are incomplete.

- **Get the basic information right:** This will be searched upon so make it count. Don't have your name all lower case. Opinion is divided about letters after your name – I choose not to use these on the 'name line' but do reference them in the Summary and you may reference them in your "Headline". As for putting your e-mail addresses and weird symbols in your name line ■ ☎ ☒, well I have to say I find that horribly tacky.
- **Use your name consistently:** Use your name or nickname consistently on LinkedIn, on websites and on your CV. So not 'Andy' in one place 'Andrew' in another as this will hamper searches. If you have changed your surname, use one surname consistently (there is a 'nee' option on LinkedIn for surname changes). This extends to e-mail addresses actively used – keep 'old name' addresses active to not lose contacts but promote and use current named e-mail addresses.
- **Your professional "Headline":** This should accurately represent what you want to have people search for, and what you are most equipped to carry out. If what you 'do' is carry out assignments as an 'Interim XYZ' then that should be your "Headline", not that you are "Owner of XYZ Limited Company" unless you want to be found by people looking for owners of Limited companies.
- **Be sure to select an Industry:** Recruiters will often filter by Industry so do select one.

- **Have a decent professional looking Photo:** A photo builds trust and credibility and makes you a real person. It's the first thing people notice. Have your face visible (no long-shots, weird cropping or strange photo effects). Have a plain background (no cars, dogs, companions). Also your name should be part of the 'filename' of the photo you upload and if the photo has an associated 'tag' your name should be there too.
- **Write a powerful Summary.** A powerful summary section that explains your 'Value Proposition' is a vital component of your profile. This explains 'what you are about' and is findable in searches. Don't fail to describe what you want to be known for, what you want to be doing next, because if you don't list it, a search for it won't find you. This Value Proposition should reflect consistently through your marketing materials – it is your 'elevator pitch'.
- **List applicable specialities:** By supporting your summary with 'keyword rich' information highlighting your skills, competence and expertise, you make it easier to be 'qualified in' by those reading your profile, and to be picked up by LinkedIn and search engine searches.
- **Diligently complete the 'Experience sections':** This is your 'online CV' so complete it accurately, highlighting evidence of your expertise and making sure to maintain a strong 'keyword' density of those words that will be searched for by those who are searching someone with your skills.

Because it is so public, take care not to share anything that will compromise a prior client (because they will look) and make sure it is congruent with and not contradicting any other CV you publish or submit. Naturally you may have different CVs that emphasise different facets of your expertise, or omit unnecessary information, but 'facts', where quoted, should match.

This section is key for being picked up in LinkedIn search, and is picked up in Google search.

- **Update 'old' job titles:** This is a marketing document after all; particularly with older jobs, it is perfectly acceptable to update job titles to accurately describe the role in line with a current understanding of such a role. You don't have to slavishly stick to out-dated or meaningless titles that will no longer be understood (by people or search engines) as long as such a change is honest. You don't have to list every single role held over decades.
- **Quote useful 'Additional Information':** This section contains key information that will help you get found. Make sure you link to other web locations and help people to find you:
- **Specify 'your' website:** If you have a website (if not, why don't you?), select the 'Other' not the 'My Website' drop-down, because if you choose 'other', then you can name your website link, e.g.: "Interim XYZ Company".
- **Select an easy 'Public Profile' URL:** Select a 'public profile' URL that's easy to use and easy to arise in searches. Typically, this will be your name, for example I use:
<http://uk.linkedin.com/in/advanderrest>
- **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO):** Link your own website and other sites you control back to your LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn has 'high authority' on Google, and should feature highly in a Google search for you. On the subject of being found, if you refer to your company in the text, then its name e.g.: "Interim XYZ Company" is a better 'keyword' than saying 'my company' or 'my blog'.

- **Check your spelling:** Paste your finished profile into a spell-checker (LinkedIn fields don't do this) for a final 'ok' and you're done.

Being found on LinkedIn

Having a strong profile is the 'starting point', but additional techniques will help you get found.

- **Build a strong network of connections:** If you are not within the extended network of the person searching for you, you will not be found. Many commentators advise getting your connections to 500+ as quickly as possible, but I disagree with this 'shotgun' approach.

I prefer to maintain an active and steady 'quality' network growth, but am happy to be flexible. So I accept and invite decent quality connections that I develop in my business endeavours, including clients, client employees, service providers, consultants and other industry key players.

Additionally, I will accept invitations from people I have had met on LinkedIn groups, Q&A groups or on blog sites. I will not connect without a good reason to an unknown "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn" invitation. These invitations come with the risk of destroying your trusted network by leaving other connections open to being spammed and preyed upon.

So not wishing to be rude, I typically now 'reply' to an invitation asking – "what prompted your invitation? Have we met or communicated electronically before?" If I get an intelligent answer back, I might, but if not, it's quite safe to archive the invitation. If you feel it was a deliberate spam invitation that is designed to simply boost connections, I prefer to use the dreaded "I don't know this user" button which will reduce the sender's ability to invite more people quite so openly.

When inviting – say more than the 'default greeting', show some enthusiasm for making that connection and if the invite is not immediately obvious, explain the reason for it. When accepting an invitation – send them a short message to reinforce your pleasure at being connected.

Connections that would help to develop your network more effectively are 'node' individuals – these are people who through position or force of personality have many real and meaningful connections; they are well worth linking to.

Finally, if a weaker immediate connection acts improperly or 'updates' you to death, there is nothing wrong with quietly de-connecting them – this is not something they will be notified of.

- **Be obviously available for assignment (if you are):** Don't confuse people. If you are currently employed by your Limited Company – make sure it is clear that you are seeking assignment. Either through the creation of a job 'Seeking assignment' (you can always delete it again when working) or by making it very clear at the top of your own Company entry that you are seeking assignment. If you do little pieces of 'ad-hoc' for a client, don't leave them listed as a 'current' employer to give the impression you are 'fully occupied' if you are otherwise hunting. You can always keep updating that client's end-date to be the 'month before' the present.

- **Keep it up-to-date:** There's little point still being listed as working where you are not. A quality LinkedIn profile justifies periodic updates, typically in conjunction with your CV or CVs and other profile listing on other websites. To keep it simple, if I am updating a role, or adding expertise to a section, I will do this consistently across my profile, CV's and other sites in one session.
- **Have flexible contact Settings:** Be as easy to contact as you can be (or your sense of privacy allows). If you're hard to contact, a recruiter may not talk to you, but may instead speak to other qualified people 'with' easy contacts. The link to your website or blog gives you a further route to your contact information, and if you want you can share your phone number in the Personal Information settings (up to you...). Don't forget that while Recruiters may have access to InMails to contact you, Clients or other parties probably won't. I often come across profiles that welcome contact, but don't publicly share contact details.
- **Issue 'Network updates' appropriately:** You can issue 'Twitter-length' Network updates. Your connections will see your updates on their LinkedIn home page. Such updates can now automatically be made to your Twitter account as well.

Your updates can vary from communicating a change, to asking a question, to letting people know you are alive. But treat network updates with respect; Keep to the guideline of not 'selling' more than 20% of the time. People will tolerate the occasional request or pitch if it dropped into a tapestry of informative updates.

If your Connections 'eco-system' includes Contacts, Clients, Recruiters, friends and associates, then your 'thought-leadership', activities and assignment availability or non-availability will be passively apparent to your immediate network.

LinkedIn and Twitter still have different styles and uses, so don't just automatically send updates to both without thinking. Some updates will be better on only one site or the other, or only on both given some text tweaking.

- **Recycle your marketing:** If you Tweet, 'Network update' your Tweet (if relevant). If you blog, signpost the blog in your 'Network update'. Don't forget when referencing your blog site or website to use URL compression sites such as www.bit.ly to shrink your hyperlinks – or they won't fit. If a LinkedIn group comment is stunning, also blog it, tweet it and 'network update' it – how efficient a use of your 'thought energy' is that!

Advertise your LinkedIn identity by including your LinkedIn Profile URL in your normal e-mail signature.

- **Have recommendations:** Recommendations push your profile up the search criteria; That's why you may sometimes receive scurrilous recommendation requests (which you should not respond to), and it is even known for people to create bogus identities to recommend them (LinkedIn don't like that at all).

The best time to work on your recommendations is when you are on assignment or when you are not under pressure because they must never look desperate, urgent or rushed.

Subtle method:

Proactively write recommendations of people you respect and have worked with, particularly

in recent assignments. This acts as a 'thank you' for value you have received from them. Emphasise their professional behaviour rather than getting bogged down into technical skills because these will be more useful recommendations to them in the longer term.

A one liner explaining how you know them, followed by a short 'story' highlighting why you are recommending them is most memorable. Actively encourage the recipient to tinker with it and recommend how you could make it 'just perfect'.

Direct method:

You can ask for a recommendation through LinkedIn. Do this only with people you are sure gained value from your work and would have naturally recommended you had they only got round to it.

I prefer to give them an 'escape route' by adding that they might suggest an alternative recommender instead, and not to be concerned if they don't do one at all. Why give them an escape? The relationship is more important than the recommendation. There may be other reasons why they don't like to recommend people – and putting them in a position through your request where they feel uncomfortable may prejudice that relationship.

- **Getting the most out of LinkedIn groups:** We're back to brand here; If you are commenting on relevant discussion posts in an intelligent way, you become visible and may make interesting alliances into the bargain. Find a site that fits your niche; join it; enjoy it.

Naturally, I recommend the [LinkedIn group: Interim Management IIM](#), as an example of such a group for Interims, prospective Interims, Recruiters/Service Providers, Clients and others in the Interim Management eco-system to share their 'thought leadership'.

If you are in a LinkedIn group that has died or has become spam-laden, leave it. Why, because high member-numbered groups will naturally attract more members and frankly, if they are rubbish – they don't deserve to be at the top of the group searches!

- **List your Company on LinkedIn:** LinkedIn lists Companies on LinkedIn. If you own a company – even if it's just you – you can still list your business on the Companies section of LinkedIn which gives you another opportunity to share your offering and link to your website.
- **Use LinkedIn Applications:** There are several excellent applications which display on your profile, which can be found on the LinkedIn [Applications Directory](#).

Particularly useful are the Blog applications such as WordPress and Blog Link. If you have presentations to share, such as your 'Interim offering', you can use Google Presentation or Slideshare Presentations, for this. If you have a compatible CV or other marketing documents, these can be shared using Box.net files.

But make sure only to load or keep the applications you actually use and that add value to your profile.

Conclusions

Being savvy on LinkedIn is not an 'instant win' but is a long-term investment. The recession has taken a toll on many Interims and new technologies are changing the nature of the game.

As things properly perk up, being findable on LinkedIn, and having a coherent proposition once found will be a distinct competitive advantage.

Ad van der Rest
Director IIM & Interim HR Director & Consultant

Acknowledgements

This article was triggered by a discussion post at the [LinkedIn group: Interim Management IIM](#), posted by [Juhi Bera](#) entitled: "Has anyone secured a role using sites like LinkedIn, in this economy?"

The basic structure was compiled by [Ad van der Rest](#), based on various sources about the best use of LinkedIn. Particular thanks offered to [Jens Gemmel](#) for his wisdom on the matter, which has been included in this article. Further kind suggestions, also incorporated into the article were made by [Jamshaid Anwar](#) and Gilbert Tuplin, my thanks also to them.

The [LinkedIn group: Interim Management IIM](#), welcomes Interim Managers and prospective Interim Managers, Clients who utilise the services of interims, or are thinking about doing so, Service Providers / Recruitment Consultants who specialise in Interim Management, or who source Interims and Consultants and Industry partners or members of other interim and professional bodies with an interest in Interim Management.

The [Institute of Interim Management \(IIM\)](#) hosts the [LinkedIn group: Interim Management IIM](#). Since September 2002, the IIM has been a fully independent professional Institute and incorporated as a not-for-profit organisation. www.iim.org.uk