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Forging Stronger Business-to-Business Links with LinkedIn's Company Pages

LinkedIn now has more than 100 million professionals worldwide, potential clients for small businesses. If you have a LinkedIn profile, follow these steps to take advantage of recent changes to LinkedIn and create your Company Page today.

Add your company page. In LinkedIn, choose **Companies** on the navigation bar. On the right are links to **Add a Company** and **FAQ**. Click on **FAQ** for comprehensive information, and go to **Company Page Overview** for the **requirements to add a Company Page**. There are only four, but one is that you must have a company email address (e.g. john@companyname.com). Once you meet all the requirements, select **Add a Company**, fill in the contact information and verify that you are an official representative.

Add basic information. Add company description, industry, website URL, Twitter ID, location, and more. Once your page is established you can click on **Admin tools** in the upper right, select **Edit**, make your changes and **Publish**. Your profile must be associated with the correct company in order to edit the page. You can also assign administrator rights to employees for later updates.



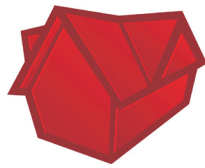
Add your key services. Select **Services**. Under **Admin tools** on the right, select **Edit**. Add a more detailed description of your services with banners and URLs to highlight current promotions. Target audiences with multiple variations of your service page. Add products or services by choosing **Add a product or service** under **Admin tools**, and provide information and photos. You can assign specific employee contacts for each service, add a promotion with a link to a specific URL, and even add a YouTube video.

Ask clients and associates to recommend and follow you. Once you have taken those first few steps to get your page in order, don't forget to solicit recommendations for your work, which can be done directly within the services you have promoted. Also, don't forget to ask associates and clients to follow you.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Your Logo, Your Business!

Creating a first logo? Revisiting your current logo? Spend the time and money to create a logo that best suits your company and your marketing goals.



Why is your logo important? Your logo, a symbol of your business, is the seed of all your marketing efforts—it should be the first step in creating your business identity. Your logo will likely be the first visual representation of your business for prospects. A logo can enhance a first impression. Logos build loyalty and establish brand identity. Many hours of strategic thought may go into the creation of a logo, even if it stems from personal preference.

Your logo should be functional. This distinct representation of your company should work well anywhere. It should be easy to reproduce, including in black and white. Logos that are less “trendy” have the ability to remain “current” with minimal changes over the course of decades.

Think strategically. Before you begin the design process, evaluate your company mission and goals. What do you want your logo to say about your business? What types of words do you want associated with your business?

Associations might be industry based, like education, technology, government. You might want your logo to bring up other associations like power, knowledge, speed, quality, or timeliness. The better you articulate the direction of your business and what it represents, the more likely you will help create an apt logo.

Have a budget in mind. Before enlisting the services of a designer or endeavoring to “do it yourself”, ask yourself how much you can afford to spend and how much time you can afford to lose. Time is money, and the more specialized your logo design, the more it will cost. Professional design rates for a logo and identity material can run from U.S. \$3,000 and up. Smaller budget? Expect to sacrifice conceptual and creative design time. Ensure that any artwork promised by your designer or that you find online will not infringe on another artist’s copyright. Royalty-free illustrations often cannot be used to create a logo!

If possible, hire a designer. Your logo should reflect the uniqueness of your business. A designer brings experience and creativity to your project, helps navigate potential design and financial pitfalls, and creates files for print and web. Choose a designer whose work you admire and with whom you can work closely to bring your company identity to life. Look to your designer for ideas and suggestions, but be prepared to provide insightful information about your company to aid the design process.

Let it flow. Once you have your logo, carry that logo and look through everything else. Your identity material (cards, letterhead, envelopes), marketing material (brochures, folders, postcards, sell sheets, rack cards), and social media logo treatment (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+) will all be based on the functionality and appearance of your logo.

Types of logos: font-based, illustrative, abstract

Strapped for cash? Consider a font-based logo. Choose a simple text logo like Sullivan & Sons Plumbing or Ryan Realty. Choose an appropriate font. Do you want a classic look or more modern feel? Conservative or playful? Choose a color that best suits your business. Pinks and soft blues are great for companies selling items for babies. A finance company might choose green. Emergency services may select red. What do your font and color choices say about your business? Do they enhance or detract from your message? With extra conceptual and design time, simple font-based logos can be transformed into something more, like the design of the IBM logo.

Illustrative logos can be generic or customized. Often a logo includes an illustration. This may be a generic symbol associated with your business (a hammer, a pen, a house) set next to your business name. This is another less expensive treatment, one you will typically find at a business card mill. How many other carpenters, writers, or realtors have that exact same logo? Does your logo differentiate you from your competition? Custom designed illustrations can be more expertly integrated with your business name and can set you apart from the competition, but will cost more as they are being uniquely created for you. Acquiring clip art yourself or through a designer? Be sure that artwork can be used in your logo!

Is an abstract symbol right for you? You do not need a literal symbol of your business. The Nike symbol requires communication of underlying associations with the symbol. The simple swash conveys a feeling of simplicity, action, speed. The RE/MAX balloon is an unlikely choice for a realtor, but eye-catching just the same and illustrative of its “Above the Crowd®” tagline. An abstract symbol must convey feelings and associations to potential clients; much time and effort can be spent on conception of symbols and what associations that art might have on viewers. Choices of style, color, font, and much more help solidify those associations to best suit your business goals. Expect to pay more for conceptual and design time.

How to WOW! Keys to Stellar Customer Service

What kind of experience do you create for your customers? Creating a favorable and memorable experience forges an emotional connection to your business and will help you retain customers, gain repeat business, and yield more referrals—all good for the bottom line. When it comes to customer service, shoot for the stars.



Listen to the customer. When speaking to a customer, do not allow your attention to drift to other matters. Listen to what the customer's needs are and ask questions so you can better meet those needs. Customer complaint? Take the time to listen without interrupting so you will be better able to address the issue to the customer's satisfaction.

Be available. There are many business issues to divert us from the sales floor, or from taking that customer call. Be sure you remain available to your customers to answer questions, help them find the right solution, ensure satisfaction, and address their problems. Don't dodge an upset customer. Take the time to address their problem.

Keep your word. Build trust with your customers. There's a tendency for people to over-promise and under-deliver. If you make a promise, deliver on that promise. Even better? Deliver more.

Review your office, work area, or shop. People are subtly influenced by many factors. If you run a restaurant and your menus are dirty, there are coffee stains on the counter, and the floor needs sweeping, that leads your customer to wonder where else you may be cutting corners. If you

have a customer waiting area, keep it clean. Magazines and newspapers, coffee, and a television are also nice touches. Whatever your profession, make sure you put your best foot forward when serving or meeting clients.

Make it right, no matter who's right. Don't argue with a customer. Focus on the problem and how you can make things right for that client. That customer could be doing you a favor—giving you a second chance to earn their trust and their repeat business rather than never returning.

Mind your manners. Treat people well. Remember what your mother taught you. "Thank you," "Please," "You're welcome," and "I'm sorry" should be part of your every day vocabulary.

Set standards of service. What type of service do you want to deliver? Evaluate your business and set standards for service. Post standards to make them more tangible to employees. Taking it a step further and posting some of those standards for all to see makes it more tangible to your customers.

Train your employees. Review your standards of service with employees. Show them what you expect from

them and train them to meet those expectations—for example, how to greet customers, keep the work area clean, and provide information about products or services.

Treat your employees like customers. Your employees are on the front line. Lack of knowledge about expectations, lack of training, and a lack of discipline can lead to problems. Unfairness or rough treatment can lead to problems as well. Treat your employees like the professionals you want them to be. Motivated, happy, engaged, and friendly employees are a boon to your bottom line.

Show your appreciation. How often do you get a follow-up call from a business you frequent? Be an exception—make follow-up calls to customers to "check in," ask how your business solution has helped them, or if they require other services. Send thank you and other notes. Treat your more frequent and best customers to more—special offers, appreciation events, and other perks.

Lead by example. It all begins with you. Work on your customer service skills every day, provide exemplary service, and your employees will take notice!

Full steam ahead with promotions. You can create paid ads for your company or for specific services and promotions. Just look for **promote my products & services** or **promote my product** under **Admin tools** on your **Service** page or product or service page. Ad variations can test which image and text performs best. Be brief, creative, and honest. You can target your ads to specific audiences, one of many campaign options available to maximize your ad. There are help links to answer questions and guide you through the process.

NEW on LinkedIn: Status Pages. The most exciting new rollout is status pages for companies. Now, you can create status updates that showcase your company and help to drive your connections and their contacts to your company page! Once you create a status update for your company you and your employees can share it with personal connections. You can also send the update to individuals or post to your groups (if they allow such promotions). There's a comment space and like link to engage your followers and others too, so make the most of each status update!

New to LinkedIn?

LinkedIn connects you to trusted contacts, helps to broaden your professional network, and helps you exchange ideas, knowledge, and opportunities. It allows you to establish your professional profile, to control your online business identity, to strengthen and create connections, and to increase your chances of rising to the top of search results.

Go to LinkedIn.com, register, learn more about LinkedIn at the Learning Center: <http://learn.linkedin.com>, and begin to set up your account and personal profile.

Protect Your (Intellectual) Property

Do you have an idea, innovation, logo, or other creation that can yield great rewards for your business or venture? It may be time to protect your Intellectual Property.

What is Intellectual Property? Intellectual Property (IP) refers to a number of distinct types of creations of the mind for which a set of exclusive rights are recognized and also to corresponding fields of law. Under intellectual property law, owners are granted certain exclusive rights to intangible assets which include musical, literary, and artistic works; inventions; words, phrases, and symbols; and designs. Types of IP rights include copyrights, trademarks, patents, and industrial design rights.

Why does my IP need protection? Small businesses are often at a greater disadvantage. They lack the expertise and resources to secure proper protection, and they lack the staff to monitor any global theft of their IP. You should be able to reap all the rewards that your IP can bring to you. Without protection, others could steal the idea, creation, or innovation that you worked hard to develop. Protecting your IP from piracy and counterfeiting can keep the compensation flowing where it belongs—to you. Whether doing business at home or in another country, you should always get the appropriate forms of protection for your creation.

Examine all your IP, then review your options for protection at home and abroad. Protect your IP in all the countries in which you do business or where you could, if the property is successful and transferable. Also consider protecting against knockoffs from foreign countries that would devalue your product and reputation. Most IP rights are territorial; in other words, a U.S. patent or trademark only provides protection in the U.S. If protecting in foreign markets, research what patent or trademark agreements they have with your nation. Should you include specific IP clauses in your contracts with suppliers and partners? Do a cost/benefit analysis to determine which IP protection makes sense for your business.

Types of protection. In the U.S., a person who “invents or discovers any new or useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof” should consider patent protection. A patent is generally granted for 20 years in the U.S. with fees paid to maintain enforcement of the patent. Have a new logo or slogan? Value your business name? Trademarks generally last forever and protect words, symbols, sounds, or colors that may distinguish your goods and services from those made or sold by others. Copyrights protect original works such as literature, plays, musicals, and art. Works made for hire are protected for 95 years from first publication or 120 years from year of creation.

Concerned about protecting your intellectual property?

Looking for information about copyrights, patents, trademarks, and other methods of protecting your property? Here are a few informative sites around the world.

- Directory of Intellectual Property Offices..... <http://www.wipo.int/directory/en/urls.jsp>
- Protection against fakes (US) <http://www.stopfakes.gov>
- U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).....<http://www.uspto.gov>
- European Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Helpdesk.....<http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org>
- European Patent Office <http://www.epo.org>
- China Trademark Office (trademark rights)<http://www.saic.gov.cn/sbjEnglish/>
- China State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO) (patent office)<http://english.sipo.gov.cn/>