



Social media has transformed the way we communicate. This column discusses the intricacies and ramifications that social media has on our everyday personal and professional lives. Suggestions for topics are welcome. Email me at rich.maggiani@solari.net.

Using LinkedIn to Get Work

BY RICH MAGGIANI | *Fellow*
AND ED MARSHALL | *Senior Member*

RECENTLY, I RECEIVED this email from one of my LinkedIn groups: “Whether you are looking to improve your prospects in your current job or career, are looking for a new one, or are looking for great candidates to fill your available positions, the LinkedIn Job & Career Network is the place to be!” So I clicked the link and became a member. At last glance, the group had 65 jobs listed.

This prompted me (and guest co-columnist Ed Marshall) to investigate LinkedIn as a place to get work (jobs or contracts). And I discovered it is a great resource! As of February 2010, LinkedIn’s membership exceeded 50 million. Through LinkedIn you can look for work, research companies, and easily promote yourself in job searches. But first, you must create a thorough profile of yourself and gather professional connections.

Create and Continuously Update Your Profile

Your profile is basically your online résumé, so make it a living document of your professional life. But treat your profile differently from your résumé by being more creative and expressive. Write in the first person, fill it out completely (LinkedIn displays a percent-complete meter for you to gauge your progress), and include all your relevant jobs and education. Make sure your summary not only explains who you are (your features), but more

importantly what your employer or clients get from your expertise (their benefits).

Include a professional photo, head shot only, and use the same one you would use in other settings. Write an update of what you are doing at least once a week, or more often if you’d like: announce what you are working on, awards you received, whether you are looking for work (more on that later), and whatever else you think would be of interest to your connections and anyone else who might be viewing your profile. (Tip: Bookmark LinkedIn and add it to your browser’s toolbar for quick access.)

Be sure to add any events that you are attending and announce them to your connections. For instance, at the time we wrote this article, Rich’s profile showed that he’s attending the STC Board meeting, presenting at STC’s Technical Communication Summit, and presenting at The Future of Technical Communication conference.

Other tasks you can do: link to a website, your blog, your Twitter account, your SlideShare presentations, and any other applications that are relevant for you (such as your reading list). Make sure the settings for your public profile are set to Full View with all items checked.

The point here is to create a complete and compelling profile of yourself and your professional expertise, and then allow the widest array of people to view it.

Your connections can be the greatest help in getting work. Make the effort to connect with as many people

as you know. Connect with all your STC colleagues and people you work with (now and in the past). Ask your first degree connections to help you connect with their valued second and third degree connections. Join relevant groups (up to 50) and connect with people in that group.

Why do all this?

- ▶ Because search engine results for your name almost always rank your LinkedIn profile in the top five results.
- ▶ Because prospective employers and clients want to know as much about you as possible.
- ▶ Because potential connections want to know who you are before accepting your invitations.

Search for Work

The most straightforward way to look for work is to search for it. (Select Jobs from the top menu bar when you're logged into LinkedIn.) Enter a keyword for the work you are looking for (for example, technical communicator). Advanced searches let you narrow your search by eight factors, including job title, company, and location. Here you can be quite specific about the type of job for which you are looking.

A good method is to search for the job title "technical writer" (as it seems the LinkedIn world has not yet caught up with the title "technical communicator"). Our search produced 35 entries. Click on a job title to learn more about the position and the company (including a link to the company's website). Like the job? Just click the Apply Now button.

Each job posting also lists people in your LinkedIn network who work at that company. You can contact these people to help in your quest for that position. To pursue this, first try to contact them through a direct message. This method, however, is limited to your primary contacts and those people with whom you share a group. Next, consider sending them an InMail (requires an upgraded [paid] membership) or getting introduced through one of your contacts that connect you to the person (free, but takes longer and isn't as reliable). You might also consider joining a group they belong to; if you are accepted into the group, you will then be able to send them a direct message. (Now you know why it's best to maintain a large network.)

If your job search doesn't elicit any postings on LinkedIn, the search engine lists jobs from third-party sources. This is what happened when Rich searched on the job title "technical communicator": there were 34 job postings. The information you receive is similar to the LinkedIn listing, albeit not in the consistent LinkedIn format.

You can see that searching for jobs on LinkedIn brings a wealth of information. Two quick searches brought almost 70 opportunities.

Groups also list job opportunities. Just go to your Group's page and select the Jobs tab. This is why it's a good reason to join groups related to your profession.

Promote Yourself in Job Searches

Announce that you are looking for jobs or contracts through your status update panel (located on your home page when you log into LinkedIn). Consider stating the industry you are looking in. (One caveat: Anyone you allow can see your update, so if you don't want your current employer to know you are looking, this is not the method for you.)

Why do this? Updating your status once reaches all of your direct connections and potentially all their direct connections (which, in Rich's network, is almost 300,000 people). Your direct connections might know of opportunities through their extended network and contact you with an opportunity. As your direct connections add to their network, those extensions can hear about your job search as they connect to you. Both situations give you much wider exposure. Over a period of two weeks, Ed had two job inquiries that came from his second and third degree connections.

Tweak your job hunting status every other week or so, just to update all your connections and remind them that you are available.

Research Companies That Interest You

Another benefit of LinkedIn is that you can research companies of interest through your extended network. From this you can discover current and former employees (and when they left) in your network. You can check out key statistics, current industry news, stock information, job postings, and turnover rate. You can also ask people in your network to help you get work from a company.

Recently, two of Ed's friends asked him to help them connect with his connections who worked at two companies the friends were interested in. In one case, Ed found problems with one company from his connection and let his friend know, saving that friend from a potentially bad experience. In the other case, Ed recommended his friend to his connection at the second company. Since that connection was a former manager, Ed's recommendation carried weight.

The possibilities for getting work through LinkedIn are boundless. Remember, though, that as a social media network, your chances are enhanced by relying on your connections. So cultivate them. **i**

ED MARSHALL (www.MarshallDocumentationServices.com) is a technical communicator and trainer specializing in developer documentation (APIs, SDKs, and web services), source code control and file management systems, and tools to "let the computer do the work."

RICH MAGGIANI (rich.maggiani@solari.net) is a communication consultant with more than 25 years' experience. He is the founder of Solari Communication (www.solari.net) and a member of STC's Board of Directors.