

## WNYEC Best Practice / Differentiator

<b>Linked-In</b> (area)	<b>Etiquette for LinkedIn</b> (subject)
Mac Z, Kellee R, Mike C (team)	29 Mar 2010 (revision date)
<b>Best Practice Topic</b>	<b>Best Practice Description</b>
1) Create a user-friendly profile	our LinkedIn profile is your virtual business card. Make sure that it represents you the way you want to be viewed by strangers - make that 'people you haven't been introduced to, yet.' A sketchy LinkedIn profile signals that your busy day doesn't allow you to fill in trivial details like what you're doing now, what you've done in the past, or any other useful information. Such an incomplete profile won't serve you as you network on LinkedIn, but it's impolite as well: its message is "I'm going to use this database to find people, but I won't bother to include enough information about m
2) Invite true friends - or at least, true acquaintances - to connect	Spam is spam, and you must have a minimal level of contact with a person before inviting him or her to connect with you on LinkedIn. A contact - a less-intrusive overture than an invitation to connect - is a good way to approach people with whom you have no relationship. LinkedIn users vary in their views on how well you must know someone before connecting to him or her, but it's inappropriate to send connection invitations to people who have never met you, heard of you, or had any inkling of your existence
3) When you make a request, be clear about your intentions.	You'll find your LinkedIn contacts generally happy to forward your requests if you approach them politely and are clear about your goals. f you're job-hunting, say so. If you're looking for investors, ditto. A wolf in sheep's clothing soon finds his messages sitting, unforwarded, while his LinkedIn contacts wonder whether he can be trusted.
4) Reciprocity is a wonderful thing, and gratitude is key	When possible, it's great to include in your LinkedIn outreach messages some suggestion that you're aware of your obligations as a requester. That could mean an offer to make a useful introduction for the person who's forwarding yours; or an offer to help in some other way; or just a heartfelt thank-you for the introduction you seek. It's disconcerting for your first-degree forwarder to receive a slew of requests from you in one day (and this is common when one of your first-degree contacts is more-highly-connected than others) with no acknowledgement at all of the favor you're asking. LinkedIn is no different from the 'real' world, in that sense: asking for an introduction is a favor, and it's nice to show gratitude for that.
5) Pass along requests promptly, or say why you won't.	Membership in LinkedIn is a kind of agreement with the community that you intend to participate as an active node in a large and vibrant network. If people send you requests and they sit there, unforwarded and unresponded-to, for weeks, you're not only the weak link in the system. You're impeding someone else's business efforts, and giving no reason for your bottleneck behavior. If you can't forward on a request or move a communicate forward, say so - and say why. LinkedIn provides a handy list of reasons for declining a request, plus an "other" option - use 'em.
6) Don't abuse your network.	Once you have cultivated a network, it's tempting to reach out to the gang anytime you have news or a need for assistance. And LinkedIn's functionality allows you to broadcast a note to your posse of contacts, by way of a Profile Update blast. Use these sparingly, not as a substitute for the Daily All About Me Newsletter. If you do, you may find yourself being un-connected from people who can't manage the high volume of what's-new-in-your-life mailings.
7) Don't invent history to acquire colleagues	LinkedIn allows you to find former workmates at any company that has employed you, without being connected to them otherwise. Finding a colleague match only requires that you and another person worked at the same organization during the same time period. So, as tempting as it may be to make connection with people who worked in various appealing companies over the years, if you invent a work history in order to do that, you're going to Hell. Perhaps that is overstated, but if you falsify your employment history on LinkedIn in order to create colleague-links with people you haven't actually worked with, it's an abuse of the LinkedIn system and the trust of the LinkedIn community.
8) Play by the rules.	There are a number of ways to misuse LinkedIn in such a way as to convey the message, "I don't care about the long-term health of this network or the company that built it - this is All About Me." Including your email address in your LinkedIn name, for instance, makes a fee-for-use service like InMail superfluous for someone who wants to reach you, which is (if nothing else) exceedingly rude, seein' as how LinkedIn provides the basic functionality to users at no charge. Unless you want to broadcast the message, "I don't care whether LinkedIn can optimize its revenue strategy or not - I'm gonna optimize my connect rate," you might consider rethinking your Me First approach.

<b>9) Value relationships over transactions.</b>	As in physical-world networking, valuing people for their intrinsic worth over the business transactions they enable is key. No less than in middle school, 'users' are never welcome company for long. "Ka-ching" networking - the kind of outreach that signals "Say, you could make me a buck today" is unseemly and unfortunate. LinkedIn is a fabulous tool that enables connectors and influencers to help other people and achieve their own goals, too - and it's great when we keep those priorities in balance.
--	---