

Why I Like LinkedIn, a Social Network Internet Site and How I Use It

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I was always a rainmaker. I started shaking hands thirty months ago with a purpose - to collect business cards and develop relationships. I shook hands and exchanged cards with more than 3600 people. I have an active database of over 2000 people. People tell me I am one of the best. I have made quite a nice living from it. I have become quite influential, branding myself as the go-to guy in Queens, NY - one of the five boroughs of New York City with a population of 2.2 million. I have established relationships with a Major League Baseball team; the highest echelon of the New York Police Department; senior management of JFK International Airport - home to over 4000 businesses; more than 45 elected officials in the State Senate and Assembly and City Government; and a Board seat with the local Chamber, whose 1200 members named me 2002 Business Person-of-the-Year. I [give before getting](#). I also focus on whom people know rather than what they know. I have raised large amounts for charities. People donate to gain access to the influence network I created

I have discovered that business networking is changing. People have many definitions of what it and most do not know. Most are looking for immediate gratification. Networking is a long-term approach and people become frustrated because they do not see immediate results. Employers will not allow their staff to try it or have reined them in because it takes so long to develop and pay dividends. The pool of interested parties is getting smaller. I am getting tired. How can I work smarter, not harder?

I used to say everyone knows 250 people. Most think that if you know 2000 people, you have 2000 opportunities to market your product or services. I always multiplied it by 250 - which made the network 50,000 strong. Or so I thought! I needed to learn more about social networks utilizing the models of six degrees of separation, where only six people (or less) separate you from someone else.

My good friend, Victor Urbach, wrote about Social Networking in his February 2004 newsletter, The Urbach Letter. He called it electronic schmoozing. [I joined LinkedIn](#) because he asked; but I did nothing else. I received a few more invites from others I respect and started to explore it. Signing up and not doing anything is a waste of time. If you register, plan on working it.

I was Vice President of Membership for an Internet based retail-buying club called YOUNetwork in 1999. People signed up for a free membership and they could purchase over 1,700,000 items at a sizable discount. I was able to grow membership from 2500 to 37,500 in four months. I called it Viral Marketing; but the word or phrase had negative connotations. The growth occurred with a small core of people building it.

The phrase people use today is Social Networking and it is attracting a lot of attention. I noticed Victor attracted over two hundred to his network. I saw other friends had over seventy-five. I saw quality people that I do not know, but I can read their bios. I previously had to depend on people to remember me and introduce me. Can you always remember? People are busy and do not always know my needs. We would be bankrupt if we just focused on others needs, unless we paid each a lot of money to do such. LinkedIn provides bios – but you must write one. The more focused, concrete and complete you are, the better you will be viewed. If you do nothing, nothing will happen. I spend a lot of time working with LinkedIn. You, or anyone else, can work on it 365/24/7 – one of the many beauties of using the Internet. I enjoy waking up and seeing the results of my labor – all while I was sleeping! As your online network grows, you will discover new people daily who can be valuable to you. LinkedIn requires you to go through the person LinkedIn identifies as having the connection to make the introduction – which you write and they approve. Your contact approves (or disapproves) and sends it on.

The mainstream media has written about LinkedIn. A sampling: [Forbes Magazine](#); [US News](#); [CNN](#); [PC Magazine](#); [InfoWorld](#); [Sequoia Capital](#); [Guardian UK](#); [Washington Post](#); [Christian Science Monitor](#); [Intelligent Enterprise](#); [PC World](#); [USA Today](#).

I have spent over six years in the Internet industry as a Senior Management Executive and LinkedIn is one of the very few sites I have found with the robust technology to fulfill their business plan. It is quite impressive even though it is still in late beta stage. It will troll your outlook e-mails, safely extract e-mail addresses and put them into a contacts folder. How often would you go through your addresses and do that? It will then sort the addresses and put them into a suggested letter template for you to use. All you have to do is review and hit the send button. You will be amazed with how many people are already members of LinkedIn.

I have about 1200 e-mail addresses. I sent LinkedIn invitations to about 250 of them and 50 responded. I sent a follow-up message explaining why I found LinkedIn powerful and promising. Another 25 joined. Not a bad response rate! I began to send the invitation to others and the response has grown to 100 – all in less than two weeks. I expect it to grow to over 200 once follow-ups are sent. Remember my network of 2000, which I valued to have a base of 50,000? With just one hundred signed, LinkedIn calculates I have a universe of 189,000 contacts even though many people have not done a thing yet. When they start to invite their networks, it will be fun to watch the universe to grow exponentially.

I do not know all the people on my email list. I met them all, but only know a few hundred of them. But they all know my name because I am always sending e-mails with items of interest. My goal is get them to react. Many do not respond. Yet, when I sent this solicitation, it was something new, unique, useful, and worth exploring. I was surprised by the favorable response. I was even more amazed when I saw their powerful networks. I cannot wait to develop closer relationships with them. Additionally, many of powerful people I need to meet already have three to ten of my contacts as their trusted contacts.

LinkedIn has a robust search engine. Using keywords or suggested queries and surfing your friend contacts, you will find many influential names you know or would like to know. You cannot link to them for the sake of linking because the laws of six degrees will go out the window. You must know them. LinkedIn will connect you with someone you know or one of his or her contacts that knows them.

One of the first books written by David Teten, Donna Fisher and Scott Allen was “The Five Keys To Building Business Relationships Online.” It describes the power of being in the middle. There is a group of people on either side and individuals from one group need to get to the other group. You know both. You become a powerful broker.

I know many people that are acquainted with other powerful people I do not know. I may want to do business with them. I can read their profile and devise the appropriate message, send it along, and start to develop a new relationship. People respond 83% of the time because the queries are arriving from trusted contacts that are vouching for you.

It took me 30 months to amass 2000 influential contacts. So, start today with Social Networks and take your time. Ready – Aim – Fire. Learn and explore.

Take your time to invite others and encourage them to do the same. Every time someone becomes connected to you, your sphere of influence grows larger. I am convinced I shall meet more influential people in a shorter time using Social Networks such as LinkedIn on the Internet.

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