

Building your board ready LinkedIn profile

Part of IoD Ireland's Director Development Toolkit

Introduction

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with over 1 billion members. Consider LinkedIn as a critical tool for networking and visibility of your personal brand as you embark on your board director journey. Having a consistent message across your board CV, LinkedIn profile and the experience of meeting you in person is key. This guide covers how to put your best foot forward on LinkedIn. It will assist those with no presence on LinkedIn as well as those looking to improve their profile.

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Why use LinkedIn for board opportunities?

1. Personal connection

It is quite common that board appointments happen via a personal connection. It is imperative that you make and maintain personal connections. LinkedIn is the perfect platform to build these valuable personal connections.

2. Directly approaching a company or board

LinkedIn is a great resource to help you build a list of target organisations and boards you aspire to serve. You can follow organisational activity on their LinkedIn business page or connect with executives and board directors on their personal profiles. You can also sign up for their LinkedIn Newsletter. This way, you will keep up to date with what the organisation is doing, plus you may get notice when board, committee and advisory board roles are available.

3. LinkedIn advertised board role

LinkedIn is not only a professional networking platform; it is also a job board. Organisations can use the platform to advertise vacancies and manage the application process. These vacancies include opportunities for board, committee, trustee and advisory board positions. You should take time to regularly browse the "Jobs" listed on the platform and set up custom "Job Alerts" so that you receive notifications when applicable vacancies are listed.

4. Board recruiters and headhunter

Most board recruiting firms and headhunters will also use the LinkedIn platform to identify potential candidates. If you take the time to ensure your LinkedIn profile is board-ready and includes your board profile, you will increase your chances of recruiters reaching out to you. You should also be proactive when it comes to recruiters. Follow relevant board recruitment firms' "Business Pages" on LinkedIn and connect with individual board recruiters.

Building a strong profile

LinkedIn make it very easy to create and update your profile. Simply click on the pencil icon to the right of each section and follow the suggested content boxes.

Images

It is worth investing in a professional headshot. Your image is the first thing people will see and use to identify you. The quality and recency of the image you use makes a statement about you. Your photo should look like you today — not how you looked 20 years ago. A smile makes a positive first impression! There is the option to add a background photo at the top of your profile. This space can be used to tell the viewer more about your personal brand — you can include a corporate image, a passion of yours or simply an image you like that gives an insight into your personality.

Your profile

Complete each section as thoroughly as you can, remembering to save each section as you go!

Introduction

It's optional how much contact information you include here. A personal email address is useful, phone number is not required. People generally use InMail (LinkedIn's messaging tool) for initial contact. Give thought to your headline — alongside your headshot and name, this is the content that gets the most visibility and creates an initial first impression. If you have experience as a board member, you should include this in your headline.

About

This section should be similar to the summary section on your CV, so the viewer gets a consistent impression of you. It's personal choice how long this section is, a paragraph is recommended. Include a high-level overview of your background, skills, experiences and why you would make a great NED. Ensure the key skills you would bring to a NED role are included here. Communication style for non-executive roles should be succinct, to the point and reflect non-executive style vocabulary.

Featured

In this section you can include any articles you have written or been mentioned in, blog posts, awards you have won, publications or videos you have featured in.

Experience

Click the + to add each position you have held. As your non-executive portfolio of experience grows your executive roles take less prominence. A couple of lines about your role, what the company does, and your key achievements is sufficient. If possible, include the company logo. LinkedIn has a large repository of company logos and if the company has a LinkedIn company page it will auto populate the logo. Make sure your experience marries with your CV and dates and titles are consistent.

In general, your LinkedIn profile will be more succinct than your CV. LinkedIn will automatically put your experience in chronological order. It is sufficient to list company, job title and dates if you do not wish to add lots of information in this section.

If you have non-executive director experience include it all. Don't forget committee roles, especially if you have chaired a committee. LinkedIn allows multiple roles to be held concurrently, ideal for a portfolio NED. It's recommended to list each NED role separately and include Charity / Pro-bono roles in this section rather than in the Volunteering section.

Education

At a minimum include the institution, course, and dates. LinkedIn requests a lot of information here which is not critical to populate.

Volunteering

If you have experience volunteering it is a good idea to include it in this section. Involvement in committees in sports clubs and schools as well as charity volunteering is all worthy of inclusion.

Skills

Include as many of your key skills here. The more populated this section is, the more likely your profile will be found through searches. LinkedIn prompts your connections to endorse you for those skills, which gives credibility to your profile.

Recommendations

It is optional to include recommendations from others you have worked with. It is very useful for executive roles. Checking connections in common to get a recommendation from someone in your network is a more discrete way of reference checking for non-executive roles.

Useful tips to get you started

Here are some useful tips to give you a good start:

- Look at the LinkedIn profiles of those in your network for inspiration, especially non-executive directors — what do you like / dislike? What impression are they creating? What impression do you want to create?
- When you update your LinkedIn profile you don't necessarily want your contacts feeds to be alerted to the tweaks you have made to your profile. You can hide alerts for updates by following these steps:
 1. Go to Me >
 2. Settings >
 3. Visibility >
 4. Visibility of your LinkedIn activity >
 5. Share profile updates with your network — switch this to off while you update.
- It looks more professional when you customise your LinkedIn profile URL for inclusion on your CV, email footer etc. You can customise your LinkedIn URL in your profile by following these steps:
 1. Go to Contact Info >
 2. Click the edit pencil >
 3. Click on Profile URL >
 4. In the top right corner click edit your custom URL and save it.
- Make sure to regularly review your profile and update it accordingly. It's best to schedule perhaps a quarterly review of your profile.
- The more active you are on LinkedIn the more visible your profile will be. Perhaps plan to spend some time reviewing your feed on LinkedIn on a weekly basis. Posts you like, comment on or create will appear in the Activity Section.
- Build your contacts on LinkedIn on an ongoing basis. LinkedIn will regularly suggest contacts you might want to connect with. When you are meeting people that may be useful to your NED career connect with them on LinkedIn to stay in touch.
- A board-ready LinkedIn profile is just part of the process. Staying active and visible within the IoD Ireland network keeps you top of mind with peers, industry colleagues and search professionals. Don't forget to join the **IoD Ireland Members' Group** on LinkedIn. It will help expand your network beyond your immediate connections, connecting you with fellow IoD members. Actively participating in IoD Ireland Members' Group by sharing valuable insights, answering questions, or initiating discussions can help you establish yourself as a thought leader in your field. When you consistently contribute to group discussions, other members notice your expertise, which can enhance your professional visibility and credibility.



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