



Message Your Way to Career Happiness on LinkedIn

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"I can't wait to message strangers on the Internet and ask them for help with my job search!"

No one in the world has ever said this. Or if they have, I have not met them.

It's hard putting yourself out there and asking for...anything. Help, advice, guidance, friendship, time, money, love, etc.

But if we don't ask, we don't get.

And in this digital age, we are far more physically isolated than we have ever been as a society.

Even before the pandemic.

And now we are truly off on our own little islands, without even a boring in-person professional association network meeting to attend.

Even I long to put on real clothes and talk to someone who probably can't help me, with a plastic cup of wine in my hand, nodding and smiling while the food is sitting there looking so inviting.

Okay, I admit that I often enjoyed the food more than the people, but that's because you can't curate the list of your dream contacts by attending in-person events, but you CAN in cyberspace.

Online networking is not weird and invasive and is a normal and acceptable professional practice!

Write that statement on an index card and place it near your computer because we are going to find some people who do your dream job, work at your targeted company, or just seem super interesting and relatable to you in a professional and totally non-stalkerish way.

I promise you can do this and make it work for you.

I have dozens of former clients who looked at me like I had three heads when I told them they needed to network online, but they did it.

And they are now where they want to be.

As women we need to learn to take up more space.

Be bolder.

ASK for what we want.

And it isn't just a one-way street. We have so much to offer others. Wouldn't you like to spread more of amazing YOU around? And help other people, too?

Human connection in the digital age is a struggle for everyone. Please don't assume that you are the only one craving community or wanting to find "your people."

So, let's settle in and get ready to meet some of the 740 MILLION LinkedIn members you don't know!

Why is it so hard?

Communicating online can feel unnatural. There are no social cues to tell if the person we want to connect with will be receptive. We only have a photo and a professional profile to give us clues as to what kind of a person is on the other side of our message.

So how do we know if this person will receive our message positively or reply?

We don't.

And it doesn't matter.

There are 740 MILLION LinkedIn users!

You can find 10-20 nice, normal people who will reply to you.

I promise.

Now, we don't want to just make friends - these are strategic messages, and everyone involved knows that you aren't looking for a pen pal (yes, I am old enough to remember pen pals.)

How do you know who to message?

Out of all those millions of people how do you know who to message?

First, you need to think about what you hope to gain.

Most people are looking for one of these outcomes when they cold call a potential contact on LI:

- Job lead information (this is NEVER what you lead with!)
- Information about a company's culture
- Better understanding of a career path
- Mentoring on a career related issue
- Knowledge sharing on a topic of professional interest
- Shared work challenges for diverse populations

I am sure you can think of more, but these are the main ones that come up for my clients.

So, how do you find the people?

The LinkedIn search bar is your friend. You can type in any word or combination of words and then search by connection level (1, 2 or 3), locations, current company, past company, school, industry, profile language, and keywords – such as title, etc.

Chances are you will always get more hits than you can even look through in a search.

But look you must, so here is some guidance on what to look for:

Is this person a viable source of knowledge, based on their profile?

Literally, that's it. This is not complicated. If the person appears to have the insight you need, shoot them an InMail.

InMail - why can't I just message everyone?

Like all social media sites, LinkedIn has a responsibility to protect its members' privacy.

If someone only wants to hear from their 1st level connections that they have accepted into their LI world, then their message tab will be locked.

But you can also invite them to become a connection!

Others have their message tab open and are willing to receive messages from anyone.

If you are a LinkedIn Premium member you will see your entire extended network and have more messaging capability. If you are job searching it is worth paying the fee to get this additional boost to your network.

READ PROFILES BEFORE YOU MESSAGE!

It is much more professional and respectful to read someone's profile and reference something of interest in it, than to send out tons of messages that have no connectivity to the person.

In the era of bots and all sorts of ad retargeting online, people know when you are messaging everyone with no discernment.

While in some ways it is a numbers game (the more messages you send, the more replies you will get), it isn't a blind numbers game.

Remember, we are being strategic.

What are some specific things to look for in profiles?

- Company - present and past
- Schools and degrees/certifications
- Title and responsibilities
- Career progression
- Interests/volunteer activities
- Their activity - posts, and posts they have liked and commented on
- Potential for shared experiences (women, POC, disabilities, veterans, moms returning to the workforce, recent grad, late career)
- Type of work projects/professional interests

People like it when you compliment them or are genuinely interested in something they are doing. Remember that you are making a HUMAN connection. This means being pleasant, conversational, respectful, and honest.

Mistakes to Avoid:

- Don't be fake - over complimenting, gushing over basic accomplishments, fan girl approach.
- Asking for a job - NO one will respond positively to such an outright initial request.
- Long stories - get to the point quickly!
- Messages with no call to action - if you would like a 15-minute meeting, say that.
- Making it one-sided - you aren't just ASKING for something; you are looking to make a mutually beneficial connection. What can you offer?
- Forgetting to say thank you and acknowledging their valuable time.
- Make sure you introduce yourself.

What if they don't respond?

Who cares?

Seriously, it doesn't matter.

You don't know them or what is going on in their lives, so please do not waste precious energy and time worrying about it.

The people you are meant to connect with will respond and you will have productive, pleasant conversations.

Send me your LinkedIn messages!

I am happy to review your messages and give you feedback and ideas for improvement.

However, please make sure you also provide the following:

- Your strategy - why this person? What are you hoping to gain?
- Your follow up plan if they reply - set up a short meeting, ask more questions, etc.

REMEMBER: WE ALL NEED COMMUNITY TO SUCCEED!!