

In which Georgina & Andy respond to the most Frequently Asked Questions about LinkedIn...

Question 1: Is it bad to have 500+ connections?

Georgina says: This really depends on what you want to get out of LinkedIn. Of course, if you had 500+ friends on Facebook, people might be a bit sceptical but LinkedIn is different. By connecting with people that you may not know but have a shared interest in a certain topic or industry, you may find that you end up collaborating with that connection at a later point in your career.

Andy says: Before I had 500 followers I thought it was bad and wrong, but now I have 500+ I think it's 'cool for cats'! I'm benefitting from having a larger network which gives me new opportunities for collaboration and professional activity and, just to reassure you, I do know everyone I've connected with, which leads us on nicely to...

Question 2: Is it OK to connect with people you don't know?

Georgina says: Again, this greatly depends on you. Some people choose not to because they only like to connect with people that they already know or know through existing connections. However, by connecting with new people could mean new opportunities.

Andy says: If you're open to this then there's actually a term for you – a LION – LinkedIn Open Networker – someone willing to accept any connection invitation regardless. We have at least one person at CJBS who is openly a LION on the platform and he is one of the most successful and engaged people I know, so go figure.

Question 3: What about my security/privacy?

Georgina says: Of course, many people can be nervous about putting too much information about themselves online, especially due to identity theft. However, there are ways that you can protect yourself. Don't put private information such as your birth date on your profile. Not only does this protect your security, but it also makes sure you don't suffer unintended age-related discrimination from potential employers.

Andy says: Also, remember that you have two profiles: one public version that appears in LinkedIn and Google searches, and one that appears to people who have connected with you. Use the settings here to ensure that you are happy with how much you are giving away about yourself. It's also important to remember that your employer can see (some of) you on LinkedIn so think before you add the fact that you are looking for work to your profile.

Question 4: How often should I update my LinkedIn profile?

Georgina says: As often as you feel you need to. Daily updates can be fairly excessive, but do regularly update your profile when you take on a new project or start a new job. Keeping your profile regularly in check not only means you have a chance to regularly evaluate your own progress, but also means that you can show off your latest developments to the world.

Andy says: Bottom line thinking on this is whether your profile reflects what and who you are right now and how you would like a prospective employer to view you. I now use my LinkedIn profile to update my CV – something I do regardless of whether I'm looking for work – as its always more current.

Question 5: Are recommendations and endorsements worthwhile?

Georgina says: Yes! A lot of your profile is written from your perspective and of course you're going to want to say that you can do lots of excellent things. Having other people confirming that you're as brilliant as you say you are is massively important and justifies everything that you say about yourself on your profile. Recommendations give that extra impact because they are from a real person who has worked with you closely and are able to talk about you on a personal level.

Andy says: Yes, recommendations have a lot more value especially if they say something more engaging and interesting than 'he/she gives 110%' or 'he/she is competent'. It's totally fine to guide your recommender to highlight something you've done or cover certain ground – they'll probably even thank you for the steer.

Question 6: What is the etiquette for connecting with people I don't know?

Georgina says: When you initially try to connect with someone, LinkedIn will generate a stock phrase. Edit this to make your invitation request more personal, even explain why you are connecting with this new person so that you don't appear as a random stranger on the Internet. It will help start a conversation that could go on towards something new and exciting.

Andy says: Be polite at all times and don't expect to always get what you want – this sort of attitude will definitely lead to more successful connecting.

Question 7: Should I pay for LinkedIn Premium?

Georgina says: That's entirely up to you. The free version of LinkedIn is very powerful, but LinkedIn Premium gives you extra tools that you may find useful when setting up a new business or looking to connect with people more through the InMail function.

Andy says: And don't forget you get a shiny gold badge on your profile – WANT! Seriously though, if you're looking to make a lot of new connections for business/professional purposes then LinkedIn Premium is the way to go.

Question 8: I am happy in my current job, so why bother with LinkedIn?

Georgina says: This is a chance to have an online presence that sells who you are and what you do. This means that people can find you easily through Google, opening up new chances to work with others in your current role or business. You never know who might be looking for you and what might have come of that missed connection.

Andy says: Because it's good practice to take stock and record your achievements and activities. Apart from anything else looking back at everything you've done, or are doing, will make you feel good about yourself and more motivated as well! Go forth and LinkedIn!