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**Managing Yourself**

## **How to Tell Your Story on LinkedIn**

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**Summary.** Your LinkedIn page is often the centerpiece of your online career persona yet most of us serve up a motley buffet of achievements, experiences, identities, missions, and passions. Or we go the other way and set a sparse table with only the four basic food groups:... [more](#)

Your LinkedIn page is often the centerpiece of your online career persona, yet most of us barely consider what we're offering there. We serve up a motley buffet of achievements, experiences,

identities, missions, and passions for readers to shovel through. Or we go the other way and set a sparse table with only the four basic food groups: name, current job, past experience, and education. The first approach overwhelms the reader — employer, investor, client, or ally — and the second leaves them starved for information and less likely to connect. The opportunity is lost and we all go hungry.

No matter how great you are in a role, if you can't articulate your value, it's that much harder to gain the sponsorship you need to move into the leadership positions you seek. With your LinkedIn page, telling the story of your professional progression, leading your audience to its happy ending, and framing it in terms they care about is the difference between casting a wide net to catch Arctic Char in the Caribbean and chartering a harpoon boat in the Norwegian Sea. The result: you get the meetings, leads, and interviews that you actually want.

In my work as a career coach, I help mid-career women get hired, promoted, and buy in for the impact they want to make. To a one, that means establishing a compelling leadership brand identity the best, stickiest, and most effective way possible: by telling a cohesive and concise story that connects to the audience you want to reach most and getting them to reach out to you. To curate your LinkedIn page for storytelling success, follow these steps.

### **Write Your Own Happy Ending**

Where is all your hard work leading? Are you the innovative CEO of a fast-growing company bent on bringing solar technology to every home along the Eastern Seaboard and then the world? Or the female Diversity and Inclusion evangelist who won't rest until half the CEOs of all Fortune 500 companies are women?

Knowing your professional story's bright, bold, happy ending anchors the narrative and helps you understand which pieces of your experiences, achievements, and results are relevant to your

story.

Take Nichelle. For several years she'd been glued to her laptop, working 13-hour days, jumping every time her manager named a new height, all in the hopes of making director at one of the biggest social media platforms. But no luck.

All her efforts, words, thoughts, and writings were directed at that goal until we unpacked the true happy ending to her brand story: to become a content producer, writer, and speaker on matters of race. Because the skills and experiences of a writer or producer are vastly different from those of a marketing director, she needed to evaluate every line in her resume, going over each skill she'd mastered, and boldly rewrite her internal dialogue and external communications to *only* include the parts that were relevant to her future as a speaker, writer, and maker concentrated on the experience of people of color.

### **Know Your Audience and Connect the Dots for Them**

When you know your ending, you get a better sense of what your LinkedIn is for. Are you here to generate leads? Get the attention of recruiters? Make professional connections in your industry to move forward your vision? It's common to think that your LinkedIn should be about you. But as any brand strategist will inform you, every message is about positioning the product to meet the needs of its consumer. On your LinkedIn page, your mission is to present yourself so your partners, employers, sponsors, investors or clients think "this person has the answers I need!"

First step to doing that: narrow who you're talking to and identify their needs.

Lila, who excelled in negotiations and business development, was a rising star at a tech company when she realized she wanted to pivot to working with content creators. After identifying that she wanted to work at a large, international firm with established

premium content, we pulled out the similarities between her experience in selling premium consumer brands to millions of consumers and translated it to meet the needs of established content creators looking to sell premium shows to millions of viewers.

Two seemingly unrelated business focuses now flow from one to the other and create a seamless transition that any recruiter can understand immediately, and that Lila can reinforce in job interviews.

### **Look for Inspiration**

With your future clear and your audience set, we can now move onto style. Despite what the Internet might suggest, there is no one perfect template. Creating your leadership narrative on LinkedIn is a creative endeavor so make like all great artists and steal, steal, steal.

Choose a LinkedIn profile or two that speak to you and break down what's working and not working about yours as you see it, and what you love about these other people's profiles.

Frankenstein the exact pieces of their profile you love into your own draft to get a sense of the right type of phrasing and order you might want.

This worked for my client Kiko when she moved from an operator to investor in a venture fund she started. When it came time to advertise her new role on LinkedIn to companies she might invest in, and investors she'd need to write her checks, she knew she needed to demonstrate strength, competency, and success in investing and operating, with hard data to back her claims.

By sending me a few LinkedIn profiles and articulating what she liked about each — the formatting of portfolio companies successes, the tone, how people blended personal details into their professional summary — we crafted a hybrid profile that hit the right style while meeting her audience's needs and sealing her

credibility.

## Get to Work

With all the pieces in front of you, it's time to make this story your own. Keep what you love about your profile and ape the other people's style, line by line if you want. If you love how someone tells a transformational story in their summary paragraph, go through each sentence of theirs and see how you could tell a similarly impactful story by swapping their details for yours. If you love how boldly someone describes their mission, try out your own. Even if it isn't perfectly worded, it's a start and definitely clearer than nothing, or what you had before. Remember, you can rewrite your LinkedIn.

You can have great dreams and the best experience to achieve them, but at some point, you're going to need help from others. If you can't communicate what you want and instill confidence in others that you're the right person for that job, you're fighting an uphill battle with one arm tied behind your back and an eye patch. Developing a story around your leadership to suit your audience's needs is the first chapter of your gripping personal brand story. Spoiler alert: learn how to use your LinkedIn to tell a great story and you'll reach your vision faster.

**Alex Cooley** is a former TV writer-producer (The Colbert Report, Madam Secretary) turned founder of ACElectric, a leadership storytelling consultancy for mid-career women in tech, media, and finance seeking promotion, that next level role, and buy in from their teams & bosses.