

# How to Add Connections on LinkedIn

Sean Nelson

Second Edition 2011



From the author of the LinkedIn MBA,  
LinkedIn Marketing Secret Formula,  
and the Social Media Sonar blog.

## About the Author

Sean Nelson is the author of the Social Media Sonar blog ([www.socialmediasonar.com](http://www.socialmediasonar.com)) and has been blogging about LinkedIn since January, 2008. He has written three LinkedIn books – “LinkedIn 101”, “The LinkedIn MBA”, and “LinkedIn Marketing Secret Formula”. He also created a companion workbook, the “LinkedIn MBA Workbook”. (Books are available at <http://socialmediasonar.com/resources/books>)

Sean continues to manage social media strategies for a number of clients and is a founding partner in Surge Labs, a Conversion Rate Optimization company. “When I started using social media my primary thought was how do I use these new tools to grow my network to drive new business. Next I moved to using these tools to communicate to my target market through the sharing of relevant content. With Surge Labs we’re focussing on improving what happens when your target market responds and clicks through to your home page or landing page and then enters the purchase path. Its amazing that by tweaking a headline or changing the color of your action button you can significantly increase revenue”.

Sean shares much of what he learns at the Social Media Sonar and the Surge Labs blogs.

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Be sure to check out the Social Media Sonar blog for more tips and strategies

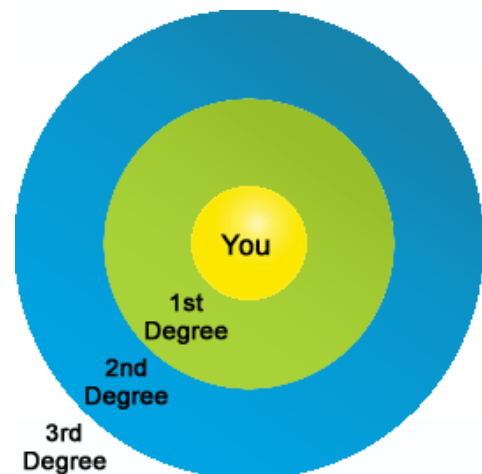
## Introduction

Your network is a key piece of your LinkedIn presence. To build a network that will allow you to see more members, find more opportunity, and find success you need to grow your connections.

This guide will help you understand how to grow your network by connecting to more business professionals. First let's touch briefly on what LinkedIn is and how your connections are defined.

LinkedIn is a business oriented social network. It's a way for business people to form online connections that can build and extend relationships.

These relationships are in the form of connections which vary by degree. (A direct connection is a 1<sup>st</sup> degree connection. A 2<sup>nd</sup> degree connection is a person that is connected to one of your first degree connections but not connected to you. A third degree is a person connected to one of your 2<sup>nd</sup> degree connections but not to you or a 1<sup>st</sup> degree connection). Anyone beyond that is considered to be outside of your network.



There are numerous ways to build connections on LinkedIn. For starters you should start by connecting with friends and family, former classmates, current and former coworkers, clients and business partners, and people you meet networking. It is said that the average person knows 250 people so getting to 100 connections is very doable.

Based on your strategy or purpose for being on LinkedIn you'll have to determine what your connection strategy is. There are three connection strategies you can utilize and this will determine how fast you can grow your network and how large it might become.

### The Four Connection Strategies



**LION:** Connect to just about anyone. Believes that a larger network leads to more opportunity. Value in size of network.



**Turtle:** Connect to select individuals. Believes that a smaller, known network is more valuable. Value in strength of network relationships (depth).



**Hound Dog:** Connect to those they know and those they would like to know. Believes that controlled growth allows them to expand networking while maintaining depth. Value to some degree in size and depth.



**Alley Cat:** Connect to those they know and would like to know and accepts just about all invitation requests. Believes that while known relationships produce value, unknown connections have value as well. Value size and depth equally.

Your connection strategy will determine how effective your Direct Network will be from a communications perspective. My belief is that the more connections you have the more likely you are to find new opportunities or to have new opportunities find you.

Be sure to check out the Social Media Sonar blog for more tips and strategies

Most people are familiar with the strategy of being a LION. LION is an acronym for a LinkedIn Open Networker. It's the oldest defined strategy among LinkedIn users. LION's are members who seek to build their networks substantially and will typically accept most invitations. They believe that a wide network will present more opportunity.

You may have never heard of the terms Turtles and Hound Dog in regards to LinkedIn. These are two names that I came up with to designate the other two strategies. Since a lion is an animal I decided to stick with the theme.

Turtle's are what I call closed networkers. These are people that restrict their connections to those that they know very well. They believe that what's most important in a network is the depth...how well you know those within your network.

There is no official Turtle group or Closed Networkers group. A group of Closed Networkers who choose to not network with others they do not know just would not make sense. There are many people out there who have found success using this strategy, so while I prefer a more open connection strategy, it's what works for you as an individual that is important.

The final strategy is the Hound Dog. These are people that connect to those who they know and those that they would like to know. They don't necessarily accept invitations from strangers unless the person is someone they think would be good to connect to. Likely if someone that they would like to meet asks to connect they will do so.

The thing to keep in mind regarding connections strategies is that there isn't a right or wrong strategy. There's only the strategy that works best with how you want to use LinkedIn.

**The following steps will outline one way to get to 100 connections.**

### **Step 1: Go After the Low Hanging Fruit**

Each person you add expands your network so we need to build up some initial connections. Your first step is to connect with people you know very well and whose email you have.

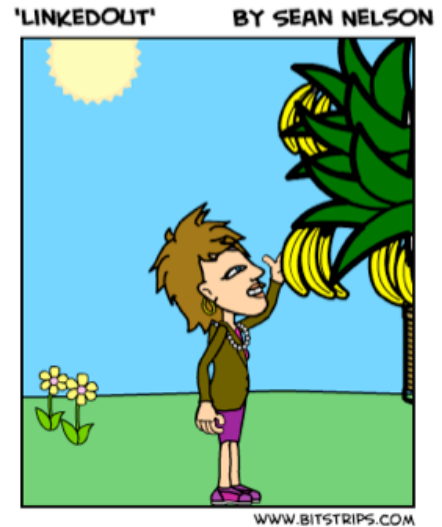
The first place is to start with your friends and family. These are people that are pretty much guaranteed to connect to you. You can also

initially invite colleagues and business partners, to join as well.

If you do any offline networking or are involved in any associations, groups, or charities you likely have many people that you know well enough that they will immediately accept your connection invitation. Client's are also another source of connections

The goal is to add as many as possible without having to do much thinking about it. Some of the people you know will not be on LinkedIn. You can send them an invitation but they will first have to create an account with LinkedIn. For the people you know who do not have an account I would recommend that you call them first and explain why you joined LinkedIn and why you are inviting them.

If they are in business or employed with a company it would benefit them to join and create an account. You'll be doing them a favor getting them started.



Be sure to check out the Social Media Sonar blog for more tips and strategies

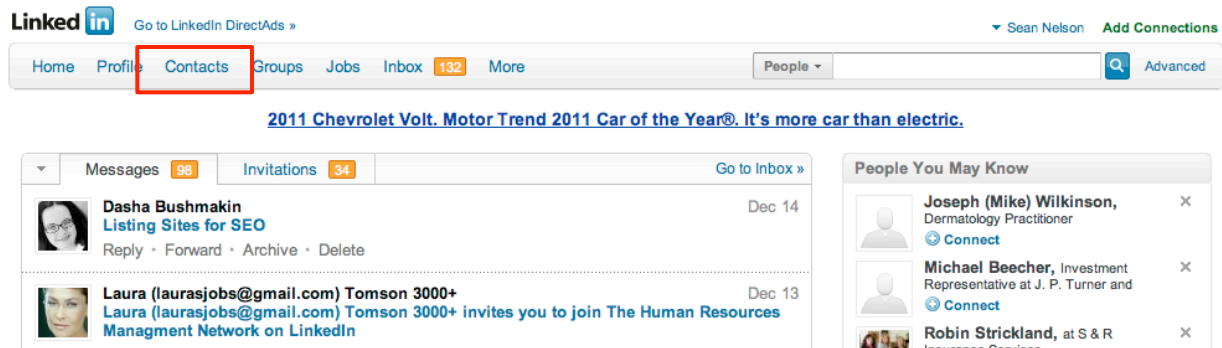
Type up a simple invitation that says something to the effect:

I am working on expanding my LinkedIn network and since we know each other  
I am extending an invitation to you to connect on LinkedIn.

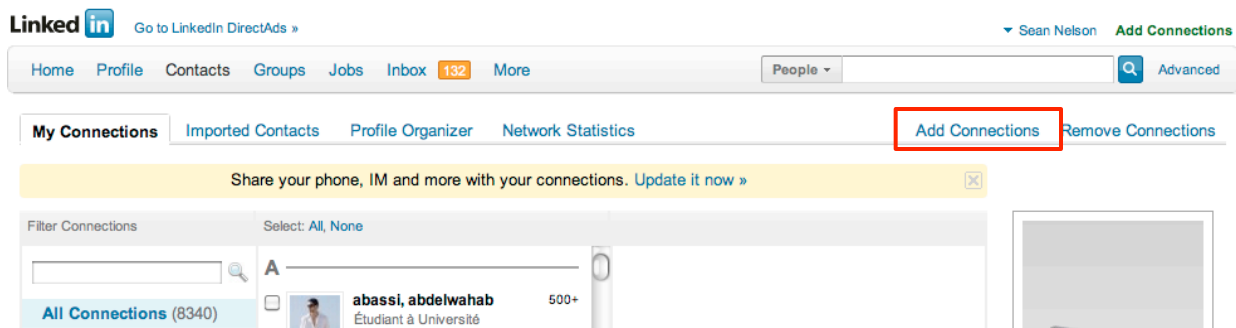
Then, for anyone who does not accept your invitation that day, call and discuss  
it with them.

## Step 2: Add Connections

From your home page click on the Contacts text link.



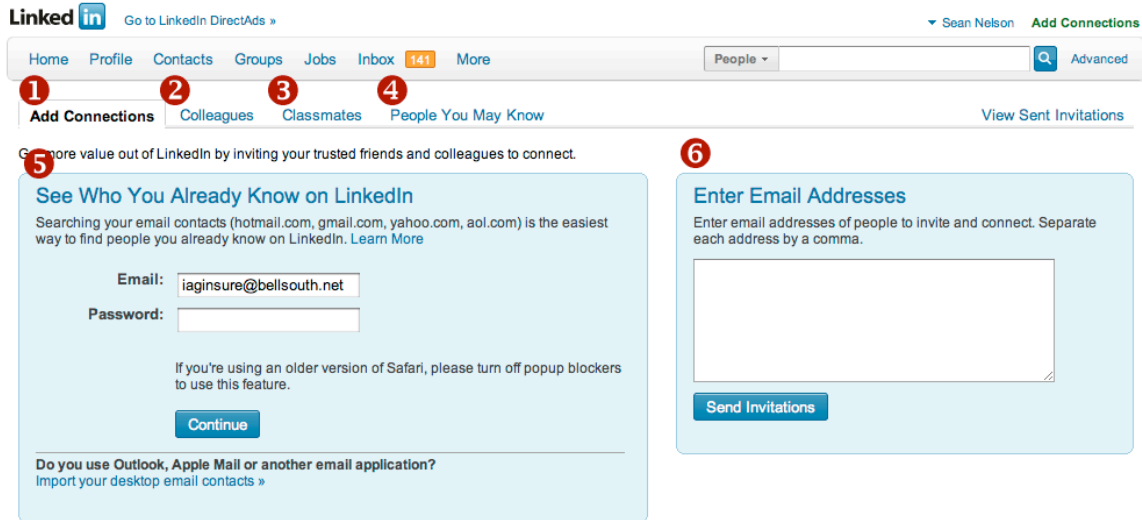
Then click on the Add Connections text link at the top right.



The Add Connections text link takes you to the Add Connections page. On this page are four tabs: Add Connections, Colleagues, Classmates, and People You May Know.

There are two additional tools on this page that allow you to “See Who You Already Know on LinkedIn” which searches your web based or desk top based email programs. And the “Enter Email Addresses” tool which allows you to search for connections by entering one or more email addresses.

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### A. Add Connections Tab

On the main page tab you can use the tools to find connections based on an email address. The tool on the left can be used to search a web based email program or a desk top email application. Below the “Continue” button notice the text link to “Import Your Desktop Email Contacts”.

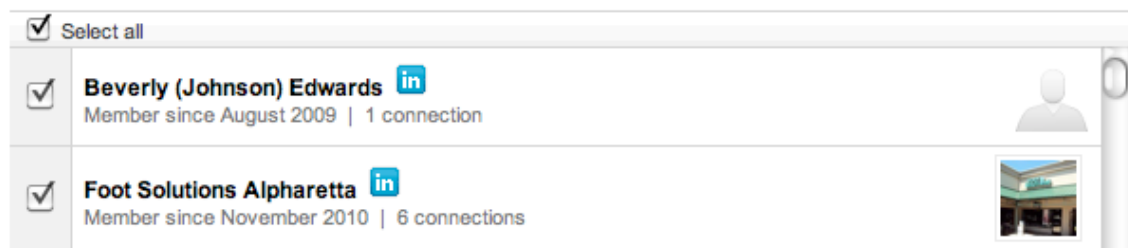
On the right side you simply enter an email address and LinkedIn will pull up any account that uses that email address.

### Adding Connections From a Webmail Account

Once you enter your email address and password LinkedIn will review the people that you have sent or received emails from and load them into your contacts (They are not connections yet).

### Invite 494 Contacts to Connect

You have **494** contacts that can be invited and **219** are already using LinkedIn. Select which contacts you wish

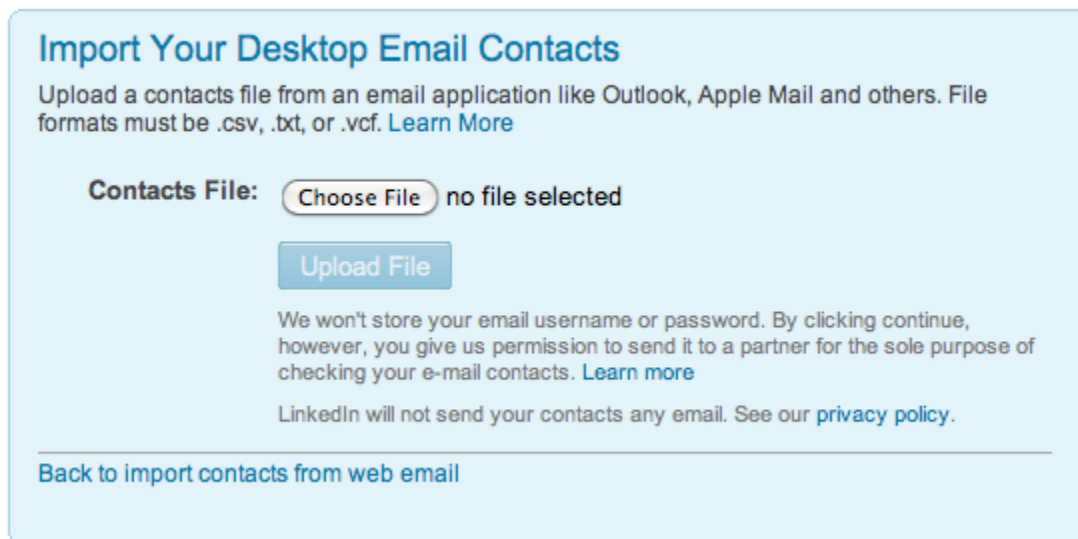


Contacts whose emails are in their LinkedIn account will be designated by the LinkedIn icon. If you do not see an icon it doesn't mean that they are not on LinkedIn, it just means that the email you have is not registered with an account.

You then simply check the box next to each person you would like to invite.

### Adding Connections from a Desktop Email

To access the desktop email interface click on the text link "Import Your Desktop Email Contacts". This opens the following interface.



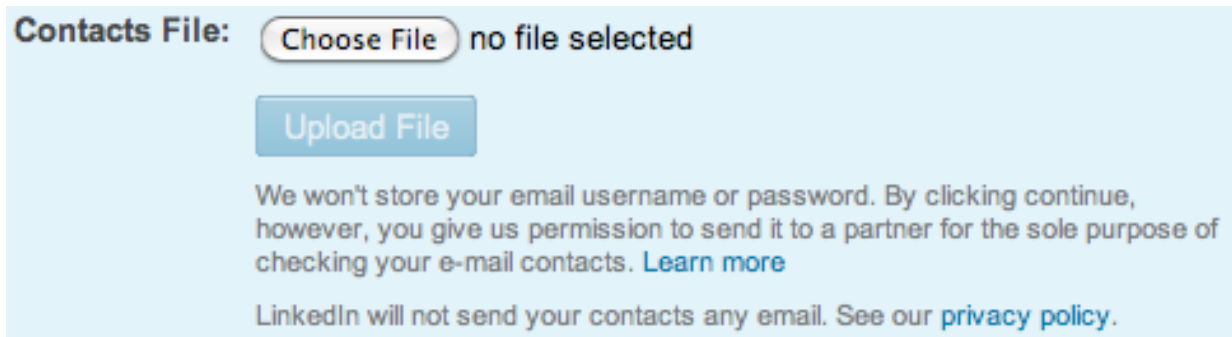
The screenshot shows a light blue interface for importing desktop email contacts. At the top, the title "Import Your Desktop Email Contacts" is displayed in blue. Below the title, a paragraph of text reads: "Upload a contacts file from an email application like Outlook, Apple Mail and others. File formats must be .csv, .txt, or .vcf. [Learn More](#)". Underneath this text, the label "Contacts File:" is followed by a "Choose File" button and the text "no file selected". Below the "Choose File" button is an "Upload File" button. A paragraph of text follows: "We won't store your email username or password. By clicking continue, however, you give us permission to send it to a partner for the sole purpose of checking your e-mail contacts. [Learn more](#)". Below this is another line of text: "LinkedIn will not send your contacts any email. See our [privacy policy](#)". At the bottom of the interface, there is a link: "[Back to import contacts from web email](#)".

As noted you can "upload a contacts file from an email application like Outlook, Apple Mail and others. File formats must be .csv, .txt, or .vcf." After this text there is a text link to "Learn More". Clicking this link will open a pop up that describes how to export your connections.

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Explanations are currently available:

- To export a CSV file from Outlook
- To export a CSV or tab-separated file from Palm Desktop
- To export a CSV file from ACT!
- To export a vCard file from Palm Desktop
- To export a vCard file from Mac OS X Address Book



Once your file is loaded contacts will be displayed like in the Webmail process.

## B. **Colleagues**

The Colleagues page helps you find contacts at your current or previous places of employment. On the page are links to search the companies listed in your profile.

Initially there is a search button available for each current and previous employer. Once you have conducted a search two new buttons replace the initial button: View New and View All.

[Add Connections](#) **Colleagues** [Classmates](#) [People You May Know](#)

### Find past or present colleagues

Get connected and never lose touch again. Find the people you know that are not already connected to you on LinkedIn.

#### Current Position(s)

**Social Media Sonar** Colleagues

 [View all Social Media Sonar](#)

#### Past Position(s)

**MyPoints, Inc.** Colleagues

Last checked: 7/13/2006

[Find new](#)

[View all](#)

**Budget Rent A Car** Colleagues

Last checked: 1/15/2009

[Find new](#)

[View all](#)


### C. Classmates





Classmates is the same as Colleagues, only the search focuses on schools you have attended.


[Add Connections](#) [Colleagues](#) **Classmates** [People You May Know](#)

### Find past or present classmates

Get connected and never lose touch again. Find the people you know that are not already connected to you on LinkedIn.

 **Select a school from your profile:**

-  **Minden High, 1975-2009**
-  **Georgia State University - J. Mack Robinson College of Business, 1996-1997**
-  **Georgia Southern University - College of Business Administration, 1990-1993**
-  **University of New Orleans**

 **Add another school to your profile**  
and find classmates who are already on LinkedIn.

Be sure to check out the Social Media Sonar blog for more tips and strategies

## D. People You May Know

The final tab displays people that you may know based on your current connections. There is a list of mini profiles and a search function on the left hand side.

[Add Connections](#) [Colleagues](#) [Classmates](#) **People You May Know**

**Filter By**

**Current Company**

- All Companies
- Keller Williams Realty (2)
- SunTrust Bank (2)
- ActionCOACH Latinoamérica (2)
- Solid Source Realty (2)
- GE Capital (1)

**Past Company**

- All Companies
- Nortel Networks (3)
- SunTrust Bank (3)
- Bank of America (2)
- Merrill Lynch (2)
- US Navy (2)

**School**


- All Schools
- Georgia State University (8)
- Kennesaw State University (8)
- The University of Georgia (6)
- Georgia State University - J. Mack Robinson College of Business (4)
- University of Georgia - Terry College of Business (4)

**Melodie Theisen** [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Manager at Atlanta Dent Company / Atlanta Auto Color / Interior Magic / Envirolube Express of Florida

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**Michael Beecher** <sup>2nd</sup> [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Investment Representative at J. P. Turner and Company  
In Common: [▶ 4 shared connections](#)


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 **Mark Cowlin** <sup>2nd</sup> [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Owner, Ibell Cowlin Ltd  
In Common: [▶ 4 shared connections](#)


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**Paul Rotella** [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Owner, J. V. PREP PRoductions, LLC

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 **Vincent Wright** <sup>2nd</sup> [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Chief Branding Officer at Brandergy  
In Common: [▶ 162 shared connections](#)

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 **Randy Rose** <sup>2nd</sup> [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Sr Technical Recruiter at CyberSearch  
In Common: [▶ 71 shared connections](#)

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**Marcin Stanczewski** <sup>2nd</sup> [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Seeking Business Development Sales Manager Opportunities  
In Common: [▶ 161 shared connections](#)

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**Jeret Garmon** <sup>2nd</sup> [Connect](#) | [X](#)  
Electrical Contractor at JBG Electric, LLC  
In Common: [▶ 2 shared connections](#)

### **Step 3: Use LIONS to Expand Your Network**

The number of connections you have, and their connections, will determine how large your network is and thus impact the results when you conduct a search. Our third step is to connect with a couple of LIONS to expand your network. LIONS or open networkers will usually accept most connection requests.

You can usually identify Lions or open networkers because many will have the word Lion in their profile or will have their email after their name. If you decide to be an open networker I would not recommend putting your email after your name as I have seen cases where LinkedIn has suspended an account for violating their user agreement.

I met one person at a chamber event who was a LION. At the time I met him I did not have any idea how well he was connected. After the chamber event I sent him an invitation to connect without paying attention to the number of connections he had. After he accepted I noticed that my network had jumped by about 350,000 people.

LION's will likely connect with you whether they know you personally or not. They will usually list their email so you should have no trouble sending an invitation. Your invitation should say something to the effect:

*"I am working to expand my network on LinkedIn and would appreciate it if you would consider connecting with me. Thank you for your consideration."*

You can also feel free to connect with me. While I don't consider myself a LION I do have over 8,000 Direct connections with over 1,000 connections in the Atlanta area.. The email to use to send me an invitation is [sean@socialmediasonar.com](mailto:sean@socialmediasonar.com).

Be sure to check out the Social Media Sonar blog for more tips and strategies

#### **Step 4: Go Back and Redo the Searches in Step 1.**

You should find that your results are more robust with the addition of imported connections and a couple of LIONS. This should help you find additional people to connect to.

This time we're not concerned with going through the process of checking your Webmail and Outlook contacts. We just want to do some people searches using the Advanced People search to identify people we know, or should know from past companies, former schools, etc.

### Step 5: Take it Offline

Once I started getting serious about using LinkedIn a majority of my first connections came through people I met or simply attended the same event with. At the time I hadn't written this guide or even thought about the best way to grow connections. I was just trying to connect to people in my chamber.

Offline networking is a great way to find connections. At many chambers they will photocopy the cards of everyone in attendance and provide a copy to each person. If the event you attend does not do this you will have to work the room to get as many business cards as possible. If there is a speed networking event in your area, this would be a great way to get business cards.

Take each of the cards or the copies of cards and search each name on LinkedIn. If you find them, send them an invitation to connect. Here are two examples of invitations. The first assumes that you did not get a chance to meet the person, but they did attend the event.

We crossed paths at the Chamber Meeting (event name) this morning. I am using LinkedIn to enhance my Chamber networking and I'd like to add you to my professional network.

If you met the person at the event then you want to reference it in your invitation.

It was a pleasure to speak with you at the Chamber Meeting earlier today. I am using LinkedIn to enhance my Chamber networking and I'd like to add you to my professional network.

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### **A Note on Sending Introductions**

Be warned that some people take offense at receiving an invitation request from someone they do not know. LinkedIn makes it easy to invite people to connect, but they also have a strict policy about spamming people, and you could find your account suspended.

If five or more people that you send the mass invitation to say that they do not know you, your account may be suspended. If this happens you will have to contact LinkedIn and plead your case. It may be a better option to add each person individually.

Adding people one at a time is a slow process but it does allow you to personalize each invitation request. Personalized email requests will likely lead to a higher acceptance rate and potentially avoid your invitation being marked “I don’t know this person”.

When you add contacts through webmail or a desktop email program you can choose to send out up to 500 invitations at a time. Using this tool does not allow you to personalize each invitation and uses standard LinkedIn invitation text.

Remember that just because you sent or received an email from someone in the past it does not guarantee that they will remember who you are.

## The Outlook Toolbar

When I first used the LinkedIn Outlook tool it helped me to rapidly send out invitations to people I knew who were already LinkedIn members. You can also send out invitations to people that are not currently LinkedIn members.

Once again I want to stress that if you send out a mass invitation you cannot customize the invitation for each person. Sending a mass invitation can put you at risk of having your account suspended. If five or more people indicate they do not know you when they receive your invitation your account may be suspended.

The LinkedIn Outlook tool can be found by clicking on the “Tools” text link at the bottom of a LinkedIn page.

At the top of the form is a text link to the Outlook Toolbar. The Outlook Toolbar allows you to build your network from your frequent contacts, to manage your LinkedIn contacts in Outlook, and to stay in touch with your network. The toolbar works with Microsoft Windows XP/Vista, Microsoft Outlook XP (2002)/2003/2007. You must be using a computer that has Windows XP or Windows Vista.

The Outlook tool will help you

### **Build Your Network from Frequent Contacts**

- Build your network selecting from people you email often
- See suggestions of who to invite based on email frequency
- Invite with one click to build your network faster

Be sure to check out the Social Media Sonar blog for more tips and strategies

### **Manage your LinkedIn Contacts from Outlook**

- Update your Outlook contacts with LinkedIn profile information
- Receive notifications when your contacts change their LinkedIn profiles
- See when people you e-mail frequently are not in your network

### **Stay Connected to Your Network**

- See LinkedIn mini-profiles for everyone that emails you
- Use the LinkedIn dashboard to stay up to date with your network
- Access LinkedIn with one quick and easy click

View more information on the Outlook tool at the LinkedIn website. You may access the information by going to [http://www.linkedin.com/static?key=outlook\\_toolbar\\_20\\_faq](http://www.linkedin.com/static?key=outlook_toolbar_20_faq).

## Wrap Up

LinkedIn is all about connecting to other business professionals. Many people just figuring out LinkedIn have trouble building their connections. If you have a large offline network, it should not be difficult. If that network doesn't exist, then the strategies above will get you started.

You'll have to determine what your connection strategy will be. Will you be an open connector like a LION, not being concerned whether or not you know someone before connecting? Will you be a closed networker like a Turtle, connecting only with those you know well?

Or will you be a Hound Dog and connect with those you know but also use LinkedIn to connect to those you would like to know better? This was the strategy I followed for a while. Over time I've moved towards being more open in my connection strategy.

The change has proved beneficial to me and has been a part of the success I have found using LinkedIn to grow my business. You'll have to make your own determination of which connection strategy works best for you.

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