

Link Up with LinkedIn®

By Pat Price/The Price Group Inc.

I recently had lunch with someone I had worked with years ago. Although we had lost touch, she found me via an online networking site called LinkedIn. Lately it seems that I'm getting more and more requests to join people's networks. So, I thought I'd kill two birds with one stone. I decided to explore LinkedIn as a business tool for myself and also pass along some of my findings. Small business owners know the value of networking – it increases awareness while enabling them to meet new clients, vendors, and potential employees. As networking contacts evolve into business acquaintances and friendships, they become trusted sources for problem solving and introductions to a wider network. And that's what an online networking site helps you do.

What it is: Remember the expression "It's not what you know but who you know"? Online networking sites are designed specifically to help businesses and jobseekers make connections. In other words, they help you leverage 'who you know'. LinkedIn has 20 million users, according to their website. Their concept is much like "Six Degrees of Separation". You create a list of your trusted connections on the site. They will likewise have a list of their own connections. And so on. You then have access to your direct connections as well as their connections (two levels deep). So, the site offers a way to tap into the people you know, and also get access to the people that THEY know.

Here are some ideas for how you can use those contacts:

- **Sales leads:** Suppose you know the name of a business that you would like to call on. But you don't know have a contact within the business. You can search your network of connections to see if anyone currently or previously worked for that target company. They can help you with that contact information. Even better, your contact may be willing to make an introduction.
- **Service providers and partners:** If you've got a project and you're not sure who the right vendor for the job might be, you can use your network to get recommendations.
- **Promotion:** There are a couple of ways you might promote yourself via the site. When you join LinkedIn you create a profile. It includes your work history, affiliations, experience, and areas of expertise. Others will find you when keywords they search for are found in your profile. LinkedIn also has a space for contacts to recommend you. It's visible and accessible by visitors. Another way to self-promote is by providing answers to questions posed by others. That can boost your credibility and establish your status as a subject matter expert.
- **Reestablish former contacts:** Include the names of your employers, colleges, and professional associations in your profile. You will then automatically be informed of possible connections to contact. It's a nice way to quickly reestablish relationships and to fill them in on your current business.
- **Get answers:** Business people can pose questions, so consider asking a question to find a new vendor, ask for new ideas, or test the market for your product concept.
- **Company research:** For example, if you'd like to understand a company's buying policies, you might contact current or former employees of a company to get the scoop.
- LinkedIn can also be used to find or **fill a job**.

What you should do:

- Take some time when creating your profile. Choose words to describe you and your business carefully for a complete, accurate and favorable impression. Care should be taken when creating the profiles to include meaningful key words, so that people can easily find you when they search. The profile is the on-line equivalent of your 30-second "elevator speech".
- Make sure you have a good relationship with the contacts you list in your network.
- Allocate time to work it. At first, expect to spend 30 minutes or more to create a solid profile. Then, spend a few minutes per day checking out your contacts and learning the power of the site. Building your network will take several visits.
- Ask for recommendations. The system makes it easy to ask for testimonials. And that will significantly strengthen your profile.

By the way, I just started my foray into LinkedIn about a month ago (OK, so I'm a typical late adopter). In terms of my personal progress, my next step is to seek recommendations. If you'd like to see what a profile looks like, you can view my mine by clicking here: [View Pat Price's profile](#)

Pat Price
The Price Group, Inc.
PO Box 811, Naperville, IL 60566
630.717.8332

pat@patpricespeaks.com
www.patpricespeaks.com
www.thepricegroup.biz

Naperville Office

4 S 100 Route 59 Unit 17
Naperville, IL 60563
Phone (630) 836-2200
Fax (630) 836-2981
Payroll Fax 836-2206

Alsip Office

3837 W. 127th Street
Alsip, IL 60803
Phone (708) 388-9500
Fax (708) 388-8725

Bridgeport Office

3148 S. Ashland Ave
Chicago, IL 60608
Phone (773) 927-5100
Fax (773) 927-9320

Wood Dale Office

350 Georgetown Sq
Wood Dale, IL 60191
Phone (630) 766-9900
Fax (630) 766-8611

Carol Stream Office

150 N Gary Ave
Carol Stream, IL 60188
Phone (630) 221-8100
Fax (630) 221-8120