

LinkedIn Recommendations Tool

Recommendations on LinkedIn don't differ too much from recommendations you'd get anywhere else. It's actually kind of a funny game we humans play. You know you can't make a good professional impression without recommendations, yet you also know you wouldn't solicit recommendations from someone unless you were sure they would be strong and positive. Still, as flawed as the human system of recommending may be, it's vital to your profile.

Unlike in real life, on LinkedIn, everyone can view both the recommendations you receive and the ones you leave for others. Keep in mind that not only do your own recommendations speak to your work, but those you leave for others probably reveal even more about your character and values. People are clearly judged by how they present themselves in a public forum, so look at every recommendation you write as an opportunity to show who you are while you shine the spotlight on a colleague or friend.

The immediacy with which others can evaluate you through your recommendations is another thing that separates LinkedIn from older ways of doing business. It used to be that checking references was reserved for the last phase of the hiring process. You wouldn't check references unless you were close to making an offer to a candidate. Now you can use LinkedIn to see what others have said about a prospective employee, employer or business partner before you've even met. Recommendations placed are there and always waiting for the world to see who you are in the eyes of others.

It's best to have at least one recommendation from each of your most recent jobs. If you've had several short stints with companies recently but a much longer tenure with a company before that, then be sure to also include a recommendation from that previous employer.

Ideally, your recommendations are from managers, preferably the people who managed you directly (or, for contractors and consultants, from actual clients who hired you). It's also good to include recommendations from co-workers at your same level, especially if they worked with you in the same group. Finally, recommendations from people who you've managed also can be telling if they attest to your skills as a manager. Just make sure that they are long on specifics and short on saccharine!

Requesting Recommendations

There are several things to keep in mind when you request recommendations from your colleagues, friends, and business partners and in particular recommendations should feature your specific attributes and contributions.

To ask someone to write a recommendation for your LinkedIn profile, use the request recommendations form. This appears when you click on the 'Get Recommended' hyperlink.

When you customize the note, include some specific details you'd like to have featured from the part of your career you shared with this person. Give a few specific talking points as suggestions when you send your request. This not only makes it easier for the person who has agreed to recommend you, but it also makes the recommendation more closely tailored to the results you want.

Again, what you'd like to spotlight will vary depending on what you're hoping to achieve with your LinkedIn presence. If you're job hunting, you'll want to look across the breadth of your career and request recommendations from people who can spotlight the most important attributes for the type of job you're seeking. Former managers can attest to what you accomplished for them and suggest to your next manager what you are capable of.

Finally, when you come across former colleagues who you respected or enjoyed working with, why not write unsolicited recommendations for them? If you send those without expecting to receive any in return, you are living the creed of LinkedIn by doing more for others than you ask for yourself.

Your former colleagues will have the chance to review your recommendations before accepting them into their profiles, so they will know immediately what you've done for them. You'll certainly make someone's day, and it's quite possible that you'll also get a few good recommendations to fill out your profile too.