



# LinkedIn

## NO, IT'S NOT CHEATING ON YOUR BOSS

BY SUE EDWARDS

It wasn't long ago that LinkedIn was seen purely as a tool for job hunters.

Employees would update their profiles under a cloak of secrecy, as if they were posting their resumé on a job board, guiltily hoping they wouldn't get caught by their employer.

Those days are gone. If you didn't get the memo telling you that it's no longer considered "cheating on your boss" to be active on LinkedIn, then consider this your reminder.

Social media certainly performs a powerful "social" function, but it can also generate real business returns. LinkedIn is arguably the most "business focused" of the various online networking tools.

For the uninitiated, LinkedIn ([www.LinkedIn.com](http://www.LinkedIn.com)) enables you to create an online profile that documents your career and educational history. You can enrich your profile with uploaded presentations, and keep your network updated on new accomplishments.

The tagline for LinkedIn is "Relationships Matter," enabling you to be "linked with" other people so that they become part of your network.

Here are two ways LinkedIn can add value to both you and your employer:

**1. It provides ready access to resources.** Information is power: the more speed with which we can get trusted answers to important questions, the more value we create. By posting questions to your contacts on LinkedIn, you will receive responses from people you trust. If you join special-interest groups, you can receive a bounty of referrals, articles and ideas from around the world in mere minutes. You can also conduct searches for people within your network with particular expertise.

**2. It supports you in being seen as an expert.** Both you and your organization benefit when you become known as an expert in your field. By answering questions on LinkedIn, sharing links to articles/blog posts you've written, and contributing to the dialogue in your communities of interest, you build your reputation. You may be invited to speak at conferences or receive inquiries from the media. People within your own company may come to know you better than they did through traditional internal >

channels.

While writing this article, I received emails from two potential new clients. The first thing I did was to check out their profiles on LinkedIn, so that I could focus my follow-up conversation more specifically with them. It's an efficient way of knowing a little bit about the people with whom you are doing business. And I have to say that when I see that a potential client or supplier is not active on LinkedIn, it does make me question whether they know the true value of this tool for business.

A wise boss knows that an employee who develops expertise and shares it externally in a responsible way, reflecting appropriate concerns for confidentiality and proprietary information, drives great value for the organization among customers, suppliers and the broader community. So, get Linking... it's not cheating! •

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