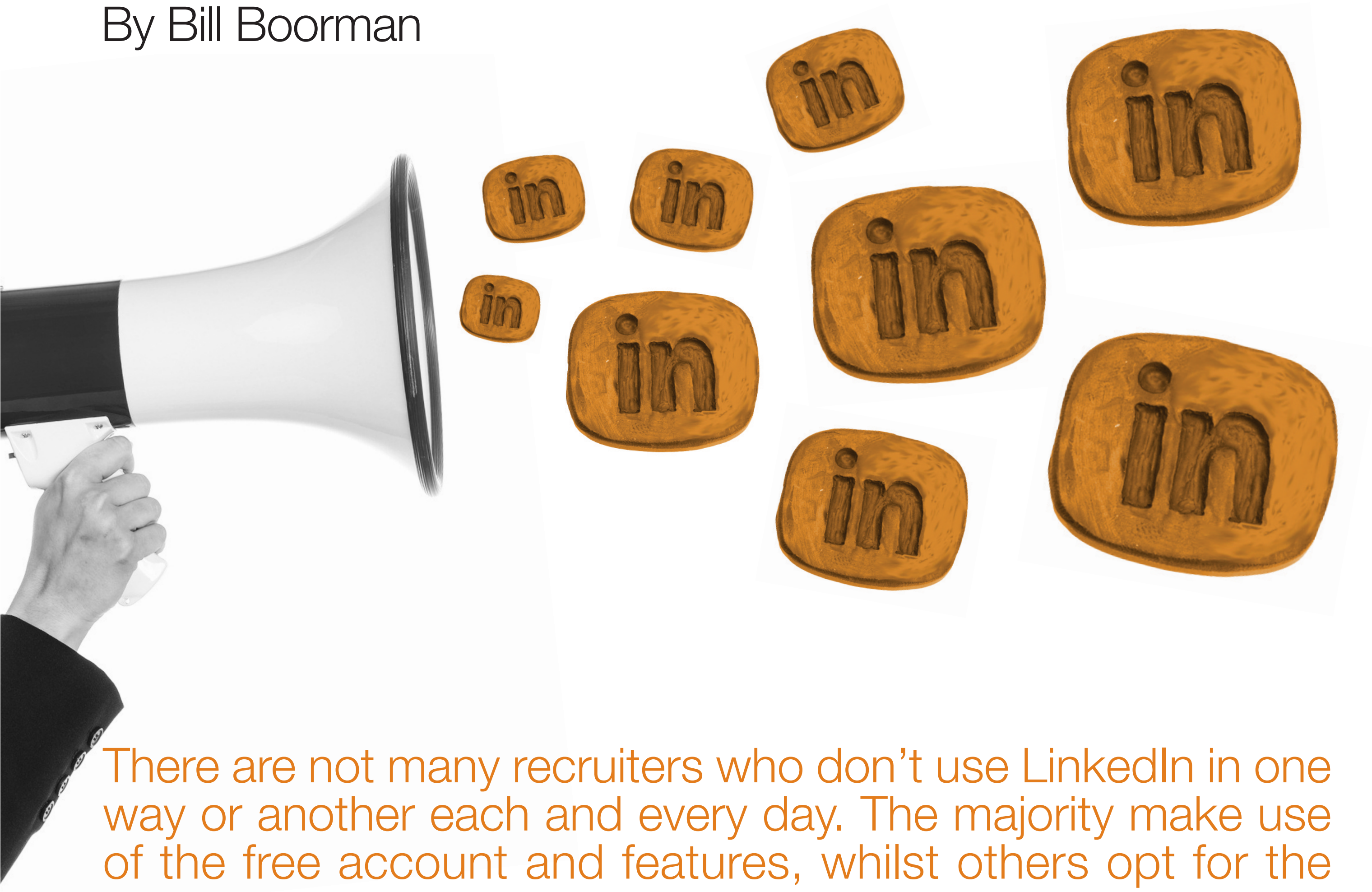
LinkedIn and the agency recruiter

By Bill Boorman



There are not many recruiters who don't use LinkedIn in one way or another each and every day. The majority make use of the free account and features, whilst others opt for the paid for accounts. In this paper we will offer some thoughts and advice on the difference between "free" and "paid for." Only you can make the decision about the investment needed for a paid for account, although this is probably the question I get asked about most.

In his career book, “The start-up of you”, LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman describes the channel as being in permanent beta. I take this to mean that like the other big social media channels, rivals (or compliments) Facebook, Twitter and Google+, there is a constant state of reinvention and evolution. Features are constantly changing, profiles and home pages look different and feature different data, and it is a constant battle to keep up with what is possible, and what is not. For my part, I make sure I check the LinkedIn blogs each and every day to know what is being implemented, and what might be coming.

Another confusion for users is the way in which new features are rolled out. LinkedIn trial new features and functions with target groups of users on a small scale, monitor use and feedback, make adjustments and then roll out to another group of users. It is a “rinse and repeat” process that ensures that feature and functions are determined by user actions. Whilst I applaud this approach, I understand how frustrating it can be to read about a new feature or look, such as a change to search, to log in and find out nothing has changed, in the same way as it can be frustrating to log in and find that “your” profile, which you consider to be your domain, and you have invested hours in to crafting the perfect profile, now looks completely different. LinkedIn can be a confusing place, and are over dependent on the users communicating changes among themselves. Whilst this might foster community, it can lead to plenty of confusion, fuelled by a number of self-appointed experts.

In this paper we will take a look at the fundamental changes as they apply to recruiters, and take a forward look in to where the channel might be going. This is of course based on following the channel to date, only those inside the ever growing machine that is LinkedIn know what is likely to be coming, and what features and functions get widely rolled out will be determined by you, the users.

Your feedback and thoughts, as always, would be brilliant.

What is LinkedIn?

We all use the channel, but what do we really think it is? There are some who would argue that it is just a giant job board, and there are millions of jobs posted and shared daily that would justify that argument, but does hosting jobs make you a job board? I’m not convinced about that argument. I would define a job board as:

“A web domain whose primary purpose is to display open jobs for hiring companies, enable applications from interested candidates, track job seeker/employer data and in some cases, host CV’s for reference by hiring companies via a CV database.”

There are lots of variations on this, but I think the key in the definition lies in the primary purpose, and the primary purpose of LinkedIn is not to host jobs, although in many cases they will act as a conduit to connecting users who are hiring companies, or their agents, with users who may become employees.

We don’t have to go back very many years in the history of LinkedIn to see a much more static channel with just a few “social” features. Updates were from the profile, and any real engagement, apart from InMail messaging was restricted to comments or updates in groups. This has changed.

At the last set of financial results, Hoffman announced that there had been more engagement on the platform in the last few months than in the whole of the previous year. The reason for this change was the introduction of the updates stream from the home page, with the addition of social features. LinkedIn consider social features to be:

- Comment
- Like
- Share

This makes updates visible to anyone connected with the user who is interacting. LinkedIn also apply a similar algorithm to Facebook's Edgerank to determine the most visible content in a user's stream. The more that you interact with a user, the more their content is made visible to you, the less frequently you interact, the less likely you are to see their updates. Since the introduction of these algorithms in to LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, interaction with content, and generating content or updates that people will interact with has never been more critical. This means considering tactics like asking questions in updates, sharing other relevant content, and thinking about who your audience really is. Interaction should be considered the new influence. This creates a challenge for recruiters, who are more used to posting only jobs, using LinkedIn as a private sourcing channel, and being less open in conversation. The modern recruiter needs to spend time talking and listening to their network, with a move away from the "post and pray" and "source and spray" attitudes that have prevailed in the past. Recruiters need to learn to be engaging, and engaged, even when there is no obvious fee to be made. Every like, share or comment spreads the name, and the message further afield. The introduction of the @ message in the channel also means that open messaging via updates can be targeted at individuals via the public stream. Sharing an update with an @ message to someone you know will react with an action, is a sure fire way to get a conversation started. When you post an update, think about who you is most likely to be the fire starter, and include them, because interaction starts a chain reaction. Any interaction is highlighted on the flag symbol on the home toolbar, as well as people who looked at your profile, as well as any interaction in updates in groups, or company pages you manage. This ensures users are made aware of all interactions and @ messages without needing to check on the update.

Increasingly, the social features of each of the main channels are replicating. What works and proves popular in one will be added to the others. A good example of this is the addition of # tagging and searching to enable visibility of updates on a topic, such as an event, without the need to follow or be connected, which has migrated from Twitter to Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn. Pages have become key features for linking personal profiles with brand and career pages in each of the channels. Groups around topics or themes of interest, first made popular on LinkedIn, feature strongly in Facebook and Google+. The places and way in which users engage has been established by user popularity, who vote by participation and clicks. Each channel allows video and picture sharing, commenting and interaction, and it is this type of content which is proving most popular. Whilst the features may be merging, each has its own personality and tone, reflected in the style of updates.

For recruiters this means establishing a presence in each of the channels, understanding the personality (reflected in the updates), and contributing on a regular basis to target groups, whilst maintaining content rich personal and business profiles. As a point of reference, personal LinkedIn profiles are viewed by potential candidates as much, if not more than the company website, and personal profiles link to the company page. It is important to pay attention to what each of these landing pages look like on arrival. This means regular updates on both, with unique content on both (duplication is just boring), and rich media content like video and pictures on each. Updates bring visitors more than anything else, and an active (regularly updated) profile is 70% more likely to lead to a click through to the company page. The conversion rate to pay attention to here is the ratio of viewers to followers. We will cover personal profiles and company pages in more detail later in the paper. What is important to note is the link between personal profile and company page, and the importance of regular updates and contribution, because this has the biggest impact on conversions and audience growth. Where LinkedIn has been largely considered a sourcing and reference channel by recruiters, we have witnessed significant socialisation over the last 18 months, and recruiter behaviour and action needs to reflect this.

The relevant network

The biggest benefit of LinkedIn is the relevance of the network for recruiters. The structure of the data, and the professional nature of the site, means that personal networks have a higher degree of relevance to target audience. The more social recruiters become, the more there is a need to think "audience" rather than candidates and clients. Through updates from the personal and business profiles, recruiters can spread the reach of relevant audience, and increase engagement with potential candidates and clients, more so than in any other channel. The way in which users network has changed in line with the socialising in the channel. This began with the Twitter factor. Before Twitter, social networks were invitation only, and were a means of staying connected with people they knew, and were invite only. The launch and growth of Twitter completely smashed this thinking. For the first time, people could connect, follow and communicate with anyone they chose to. Once Twitter took off, this approach spread to the other channels including LinkedIn. The average size of network has grown from 225 to 350. The difference between the networks recruiters may have in other channels is relevance, where connections are much more focussed around work life.

Relevant network growth is self-perpetuating, driven by the LinkedIn recommendation engine. New people to connect with are recommended by the algorithm based on a combination of a user's profile and the make-up of their network. For recruiters, this means considering the make-up, relevance and size of their network, This also means investing time and effort to intentionally network each day. The most effective way to do this is to find and follow relevant people, which means you get to see all of their updates. This presents the opportunity to comment, share, like, @message and engage, and once users interact, there is a real opportunity to connect. Recruiters should consider their LinkedIn network to be:

- Connections
- Followers (users can follow company pages, discussions or individual members of a shared group.)
- Members who share a group

The make-up of each of these groups of users will determine the level of relevance of a recruiter's network, which usually stands at 70%. Each connection brings the reach of their network, down to the third degree, influencing search results, connection invites, content sharing and recommendations. A good starting point for building a network is to target companies with employees of interest. This could be by job type, skills etc. It is possible to draw up talent maps by company. This gives access to firstly your first to third level connections at the company, and all the other employees with LinkedIn profiles. Following the company gives you visibility of contacts, and following the employees begins the relationship. When you follow or connect with user accounts it is important to remember that the Edgerank style algorithm means that users only retain visibility of updates and changes by on-going interaction. Part of a recruiter's network time should be invested in maintaining interaction with the accounts of interest. In their excellent book "Social Gravity", Joe Gerdstandt and Jason Lauritsen talk of the importance of intentionally connecting on a daily basis, by continually researching who you want in your network, rather than passively waiting to turn up.

The use of the LinkedIn owned application, Rapportive, links social profiles with email addresses, including suggesting people to connect with, based on your inbox. It acts as a good reminder and helps to build a network on LinkedIn based on the people who are communicating elsewhere. It has been interesting to note the integration of Rapportive into the features of the main channel by adding social accounts and last messages under the contacts tab of connections. Whilst this is a new feature, it does make all the social profiles and social content of all of your LinkedIn connections visible and searchable. It also makes all of your aggregated message history visible in one place.

Sourcer and trainer Irina Shamaeva recently wrote a post in the Boolean Strings network that stated it was possible to add anyone to your network, and gain access to relationship data by important contacts, (and sending invites) via the Gmail import feature. This can be through any e-mail provider via a Gmail account set up for this purpose. An account for anyone you import in this way (through the add connections feature under the "network" tab.) It also worth using the "alumni" tab also under "network" to find old colleagues and student alumni. The alumni search feature currently allows for search of any company or academic establishment, with lots of criteria for narrowing the search. This could prove to be as valuable a feature or means of searching as the advanced search, particularly in paid for accounts.

One of the key features of the paid for talent pipeline recruiter accounts is that recruiters can import any file and content to the profiles of their network, regardless of if they are a connection or hold a LinkedIn account. This is a key benefit for recruiters, a decision needs to be made how much recruiters want to use LinkedIn as a CRM, or if this is a duplication of effort and data, with the risk of storing data in two places, without the benefit of a unified search.

It is fair to say that the size, relevance and reach of a recruiter's LinkedIn active network can be considered their net worth. We term active network as those connections a recruiter has had an interaction with over the last few months, because interaction creates visibility and recommendations. In this way LinkedIn are rewarding interaction and engagement within a network, which has in part been responsible for the significant growth in engagement and interaction in the channel - smart users have recognised that it is no longer enough to connect and stay passive. A recruiter's network can now be divided in to three parts:

- **The active network -** Connections who interact and have visibility to each other

- **The inactive network -** Connections with no interaction. Visible by search but hidden

- **Followers/followed -** Observers. People interested in you or interesting to you. Followed companies are different in that they are searchable, enabling the targeting of updates to a specific audience.

The network tab on the home page has recently added an alumni page, which enables users to search their former university and school alumni by employers, position, seniority, groups and a number of other key criteria, as well as finding alumni groups. This is a move to give current students a good reason to create a profile (students are the largest demographic of new users), which gives recruiters a good starting point for connecting with alumni, with a basis for an introduction.

When you consider the benefit to recruiters of an active network, over a passive network, An active network is achieved by continuous networking and interaction, which means investing time in to the network about content other than jobs, and pure search. Networking needs to be a planned activity on a daily basis, with an even balance between creating own updates and interaction with your connections, followers and followed, and finding new connections and follows. LinkedIn has become a social channel, and recruiters need to learn to be social in it, with an objective of relationships over transactions.

Sharing Centre

A LinkedIn share has more value than any other channel because of the relevance of the audience. Updates are promoted in the stream according to their popularity, and popularity is judged by the interactions of other users, much like Edgerank on Facebook. A few simple rules apply to the algorithm to measure popularity:

- Trending is measured for 24 hours from the time the update was posted
- Update direct in channel, not via an application. Direct updates only count.
- Update from LinkedIn to Twitter. All retweets and comments in Twitter count as a share or comment on LinkedIn as long as the LinkedIn URL is used
- All websites and posts must feature a LinkedIn share button in the first 4 icons.

Recruiters should be looking to share content at least once a day, other than jobs. This can be original content, or content relevant to audience sourced from LinkedIn today or other sources. The benefit of using LinkedIn Today is that users have access to the most popular content, with one click share. Sharing content spreads the recruiters name to a target audience, and each share, like or comment expands the reach of the update.

The personal profile

LinkedIn is the primary reference point for people checking or researching people. An individual LinkedIn profile gets viewed more times than a website or career site when investigating an individual for any purpose, where people used to Google your details when they first met and spoke to you, now they turn first to LinkedIn. In the past, visits to a user profile were mostly through search and new users and connections. This is changing, accelerated by the addition of the contact tab. 55% of visitors to my own profile over the last 4 months are already connections. This changes the purpose of a profile as a reference point.

The latest profile is more dynamic than the old one dimensional profile. A user's behaviour in the channel determines what LinkedIn believes you are in channel for, and what data is most useful. The data is displayed to the right of a profile and includes such information as:

- **People similar to the profile you are viewing.** LinkedIn determines this by the make-up of your profile, groups you belong to, topics you subscribe to and the make-up of your network. This feature is one of the main drivers of traffic to view a profile. For recruiters, this means following the profiles and on-line behaviours of your competitors. When considering this, you should also include corporate recruiters in the sectors you recruit. Where you can match the profile and network, traffic follows.

- **A targeted PPC ad.** This is a seriously underused function of LinkedIn. Users view profiles far more than anything else. Consider the LinkedIn journey usually takes. Before applying to a company or connecting with a recruiter, they look at profiles of people who do the type of job they are interested in at competitor companies, or the profiles of recruiters in-house or external. This is probably the most viewed piece of internet real estate by potential candidates and clients who are viewing your competitors. Split testing of ads in this position proves that "follow" a page is much more successful than individual job ads, and follows the same pattern as other social media channels. Whenever users are asked to leave channel and go to another web destination, such as a website, there is as much as a 50% drop off. PPC advertising on LinkedIn works best where the direct is to the company page and the content of the ad, which can be personalised with the inclusion of the users picture (from the visitors profile), is an important part of LinkedIn strategy. This takes the user from a personal connection with an individual recruiter to the company and following the company makes users searchable, enabling targeted, relevant updates. Targeted PPC (by profile), and a paid for company page (more about this later) should be central to LinkedIn recruiting.

- **People who viewed this profile also viewed.** This is another of the leading sources of traffic, and is enhanced by being included in the similar profiles section. It is interesting to note that 70% of the names listed stay consistent. Whilst this is hard to influence, it is worth monitoring to see where people are going from your competitor's profiles, and comparing the similarity in profile content, such as professional profile (the top line), keywords used and relationship. It is not unusual to note that a potential candidate will view multiple profiles from the same agency. Where all the profiles are identical or written in the third person this creates an impression of not being authentic. A personal profile should be that, differentiating one recruiter from another by specialities, experience, summary and content.

- **How you are connected.** This shows the connections you have in common, presented in a hierarchy according to the number of shared connections and interaction. The number of shared connections is a useful indicator of what you have in common, and provides a valuable source for introductions through a mutual connections, a grossly under used feature, that brings a very high connection rate. If I was building a network again from scratch, I would concentrate on these referred connections.

- **Users network filtered by:**
  - Company
  - School
  - Location
  - Industry
  - Skills

  This gives you a good understanding of the groups of people an individual user is connected with, and the make-up of their network. This data gives a good indication of who is likely to be the best introducer, according to the largest part of their network. Industry, in particular, gives an indication of where they have most connections and reach. All of this data can be used to determine who you want to target through PPC advertising, a good understanding of how the user networks and what they might be interested in, and the best route to an introduction.

- **In common with.** This displays the areas you have most in common with the user such as connections at a company, groups, skills etc. This is a useful indicator as to how likely you are to be recommended to them as a connection via LinkedIn. It is worth researching this through individual target connections because the further apart you are, the lower you are going to come in search results and recommendations. The relevance of your network to your target audience should be critical in your thinking, and network planning. The bulk of your network should be your audience and not other recruiters.

When you consider that that the individual profiles of recruiters are the most likely landing page of anyone, candidates or clients, checking out the recruiting business, it is easy to see how important it is to present the right image on arrival, and to create a clean link to the company page. The probable journey of a candidate is individual profile to company page to job to apply, making it critical to keep the route easy to navigate, presenting the best image with each click. Recruiters need to pay as much attention to branding as they do sourcing, and this is currently an imbalance in the channel.

The main body of your profile is:

- **Professional headline.** This is the calling card for any user, and is what is seen in the recommendation engine as well as when a user hovers their mouse over a name after a comment, update, like etc. This shows the picture and the headline. Attention should be paid to the content of the headline, which should be descriptive, rather than job title.

- **Updates.** This gives users access to the latest update, with the option to see more. This is another important area to consider. What does this say about you as a potential contact? The explosion of job posting tools to the timelines of the social channels means that many recruiter's updates are purely jobs, which doesn't entice people to connect when they check out your profile. Recruiters should be looking to find a balance of updating content through shares or content creation as well as jobs.

- **Contact info.** The new contact tab is open to anyone who is connected with you, and is split in to 2 parts:

- *Relationship.* This shows the message history within LinkedIn between you, and in other channels like Facebook, Twitter etc. Set a reminder to contact, a note on how you met and who introduced you, and free text tags to organise your contacts in any way you want. Tags are searchable, which means you can message or update by tag, leading to a greater degree of relevance by audience. Relevance of message or update has the greatest impact on getting both an open and a response. The source and spray tactics adopted by many recruiters are damaging to brand, and results.

- *Contact.* This shows all the contacts listed on a user's profile including Twitter, Facebook, Google+ etc. as well as websites etc., with the facility to add any other contact info. This is creating the opportunity to find in LinkedIn, organise contacts and message from the channel. With an increasing numbers of visits coming from established connections rather than new visitors, there is an indication that users are utilising this feature as the point of reference to message and update connections. This means more time in channel, and more time in channel will only increase the effectiveness of PPC advertising and candidate attraction within LinkedIn.

Another of the technology acquisitions LinkedIn have made is CardMunch, which enables users to take pictures of business cards and import the details in to LinkedIn. Whilst this is exclusively an iphone app at the moment, it is a great app recruiters should be using to import the data from all those business cards collected over the years in to LinkedIn. CardMunch also shows the LinkedIn profile and shared connections when you take the picture.

- **Summary.** The summary section is a free text field that enables recruiters to add content including rich media such as video, papers, pictures etc. The other benefit of the summary section is the opportunity to include keywords, which in turn increases the results in search creating more visibility. It is worth remembering that visitors will view the profiles of the other recruiters in the business, which means that whilst they should share a common message, they should be different, and written in first, rather than third person. Each time the company name is listed this creates a dynamic link to the company page, and an inclusion of the logo. This is the principle driver of traffic to the company page. The summary will be the main point of reference, over experience, and should include some personal detail as well as professional detail. As with each of the personal profile sections, rich media can be added to make the profile unique and dynamic. Think of this as a personal website, and the number one reference point on the web.

Another of LinkedIn's acquisitions is SlideShare. This is the best way to embed and share content on a profile. The free version allows for up to three uploads, which is a good starting point, but the enterprise version, which has a low monthly subscription, adds some great features like lead capture, visitor analytics, direct contact etc. Uploaded content is framed in a viewer, which is simple to embed anywhere, to share and to like. This gives recruiters the opportunity to embed papers, job ads, video (via YouTube), documents etc. A good use of this is to add job descriptions that are currently live to the projects section, particularly when sourcing in channel, enabling targets to view jobs.

Each of the sections can have 3 features that enable customisation:

- Edit
- Upload files and rich media images
- Change order

• **'Experience.'** Part free text, part template. This is another section where users can add the important keywords which improves rankings in search. When adding keywords it is important to remember context to keep the profile readable. Recruiters need to consider their specialisation and what they want to be found for. A good way to audit which keywords are most listed, and as a result, most influential on search results is to copy the content of the profile in to a word cloud generator like tagxwdo.com which will show what features most in search, in order to align this with what you want to be found for.

• **'Skills and expertise.'** This is the section for adding skills in order for others to endorse you. There are over 1 million skill endorsements being made by users each month. Endorsements can only be awarded by first level connections, and are searchable. This means recruiters can factor skills, location, employer etc. in to a search. Users can add up to 50 skills to be endorsed, with auto-suggestions coming from LinkedIn, based on the categories used by others. It is worth noting what categories your competitors have added because this is where recruiters compete in search and recommendations. This has solved a problem in LinkedIn search and recommendations in unifying profiles from entirely free text, keyword matching to matching on similar criteria. This has resulted in noticeably better results in matches and recommendations.

• **'Recommendations.'** Recommendations have not changed, but have taken a more prominent position on the profile, matching them to the job at the time. The best approach to these is to solicit recommendations for each job from former colleagues to provide consistency throughout the profile.

• **'Advice for contacting.'** This is another place to put all contact details and instructions from phone number to e-mail. This section should be moved to editable fields because the contact tab is only visible to first to third level connections. Recruiters need to be easy to contact and connect with in and out of LinkedIn, and this feature enables this.

Outside of the core fields, additional information can be added in the following areas:

• Projects
• Courses
• Languages
• Test scores

Projects are a great place to post job descriptions when searching, and other employer brand documents. You can upload any rich media content either direct or via SlideShare. The benefit of using SlideShare is that the framing is excellent (a bit like pictures on Instagram), download is easy, viewers can follow accounts for updates, and the paid version has excellent analytics and lead generation, and content can be embedded anywhere.

Predictive analytics

By following and tracking user behaviours, we have been able to identify distinct patterns of behaviour on-line that indicate that connections are preparing to start looking at jobs. The magic moment when they are moving from passive to active. The types of actions are:

• Updating professional headline
• Changing work experience
• Adding skills
• Getting 3+ new recommendations
• Connecting with recruiters

When a user completes any of these actions 5 times in a month it is a clear indication that they are preparing to get active in the job search. Every action on LinkedIn leaves a data footprint, and tracking these actions means that recruiters can stay closer to their network. A growing relevant and engaged network with data tracking helps recruiters to be in the right place at the right time. The key here is to maintain a relationship with updates and interaction before making approaches about job opportunities, when the internet behaviour indicates that they are ready, and will be receptive.

There is a grossly underused feature of LinkedIn that enables recruiters to track these changes not only in their own network, but for anyone with an open profile in the channel. LinkedIn Signal enables recruiters to set filters to monitor different groups of users, such as members of their network, a group, by location, skill etc., and to save searches and set alerts etc. to monitor updates. Changes to profiles etc. are all listed in updates, and Signal, like all of LinkedIn supports Boolean operators, which means recruiters can monitor networks for changes in the user profile. An alternative to this is to look at external applications like Joberates Signal to monitor the network and update on changes that indicate a user is ready to step in to the job search.

Groups

There are real benefits to recruiters belonging to relevant groups. Belonging to a group extends all of the membership to search results, opens up members (regardless of connection level), to messaging and enables recruiters to follow any member, discussion or update. In the same way as users can follow companies, following a member gives access to every update for interaction, which is a good route to making a connection. Posting relevant discussions in groups raises brand exposure, and creates a real opportunity to be seen as an active member of a community. Whilst it is possible to share all updates in groups without going in to the group, these are far more effective when posted as a discussion. It is also important to note that the new rules on posting in groups mean that posts moved to spam by the manager of any group results in the needing approval in all the groups you post in by the group manager. This means care must be taken to relevance to the group in posting. The days of posting jobs as updates are long gone.

Since the introduction of Google Panda, group discussions in open groups have been increasingly appearing in search results, giving a real benefit to creating discussions in open groups. Like any community, the more involvement and interaction a recruiter has in the groups they belong to, the more exposure they get to the target audience. Checking in, commenting and updating groups should be considered a critical networking activity for recruiters, and a great way to expand their reach, brand and connections.

Merlin data

Every keystroke, update and action made by every user is tracked by LinkedIn, and analysed to determine the ways in which the product needs to evolve, and how people are interacting with companies, content and jobs. This is what is commonly termed big data. All of these actions are collected and interrogated by LinkedIn's own system known as Merlin. I have been lucky enough to get access to the Merlin data for a number of customers I work with, as well as an insight in to the general trends, and the data tells a very clear story about how LinkedIn is changing.

The data story is showing the switch from LinkedIn as a reference site for sourcing, to a site where users are spending an increasing amount of time, following a distinct journey before applying for jobs. As previously mentioned, relationships are becoming less transactional and built around a developing relationship that starts with the individual and their personal profile, moves to following the company page, updates and content, checking the profiles of other colleagues via the company page, before looking at, and applying for specific jobs via the careers tab on the company page. The careers tab is only available on paid for pages, and should be considered an essential investment for all recruiters. What is also clear, in keeping with the experience of other channels such as Facebook, is that when users are asked to leave the channel they are in and go elsewhere on the web, there is a significant drop off. Recruitment companies should be working on enabling the whole of the application and engagement process to take place in channel to avoid this, taking the data, rather than the candidate to an external CRM or website, through the use of features like LinkedIn connect and LinkedIn apply. LinkedIn efforts should be as much, if not more about branding and networking in channel, as they are about sourcing. A very new approach for many recruiters, but reflective of the market shift from transaction to relationship.

Company pages

Every company listed on LinkedIn has a company page. The company pages are growing in importance as the route by which users move from connections with individuals to connections with companies. Free company profiles do not have a careers tab, which means jobs can only be listed as updates. Whilst this gives some exposure, and shares the job with followers, it doesn't make for an appealing page to sign up to. All pages allow for the upload of an image as a banner, with the following tabs:

- **Home**
  The home page enables the posting of content to sell the value of following and connecting. Given the relevant nature of the LinkedIn audience, and the journey users are taking to view and apply for jobs, the Company Page should be considered at least as important as the company website, with the same level of investment. The home tab has sections covering:

- A high-level overview of the business.

- Company posts on topics ranging from company announcements to product releases to industry news.

- Friends & colleagues who are connected to the business.

- **Careers**
  A paid for feature to display jobs outside of updates. If the company page is to be considered the website for the business, then the career tab is an essential investment. This marks the shift from considering LinkedIn as a sourcing channel, to a branding and networking channel, where people connect with companies through the personal updates of the employees, in this case, recruiters. To be most effective, jobs should enable applying with LinkedIn without leaving channel in order to get the best response.

- **Products and services**
  This tab is used to highlight products or services. Members will see:

- A showcase of products & services. This can include divisions or individual recruiters and their speciality.
- Recommendations from LinkedIn members.
- Links to the members making the recommendations.

- **Insights**
  This tab shows employees with new titles, departures, where employees worked before and after, and the most common employee skills.

The page admin also gets access to how the page is performing including notifications of new followers etc., in keeping with the social aspects which are becoming critical to success on LinkedIn. One of the other benefits of a paid for page is that you can target updates to groups of followers based on their data. LinkedIn has the most relevant professional data of all of the channels, based on the personal profiles, skills, location etc., and targeting of message and content beyond broadcasting to everyone brings a much better conversion rate to a call to action. The key word throughout this paper is relevance, because anything else is spam. If we consider LinkedIn as a data centre of professional information, and with networks both business and personal being built around professional interests, groups etc. makes the audience on LinkedIn is the most relevant for recruiters.

Mobile Web v Web - Quantcast.Com

LAST MONTH MAY 17, 2013 - JUN 15, 2013	**UNIQUES**	**PEOPLE**	**VISITS**	**PAGE VIEWS**
Web	63,482,264	46,538,144	157,751,584	1,168,886,528
Mobile web	4,229,593	-	7,141,320	63,482,264
Online	59,252,671	-	150,610,264	1,105,691,496

Month on month, visits to LinkedIn via the mobile web and the recently launched mobile application shows a clear picture that mobile and mobility should be a big consideration for recruiters. Any diverts out of channel need to be to mobile friendly sites, and profiles should be checked on both the mobile app and mobile devices. With more opportunity to add rich media content such as video and pictures, mobile should be a core consideration.

LinkedIn have been increasing news and content features like LinkedIn Today and Influencers. The recent acquisition of mobile news application Pulse shows LinkedIn's intent to become a serious destination for relevant content and news. As these features are developed and embedded in the channel, I would expect to see a continuing growth in the number of people using the channel as their source for news and updates in down time and on the move. The interesting thing to monitor will be the balance between mobile web and mobile app access. My feeling is that the app is going to win hands down. This changes the way content is consumed with people accessing updates and news on the move and in down time as a secondary task. This also changes the way invites are accepted or declined. The mobile app displays no message, just the professional headline, picture and basic data, emphasising the importance of getting the headline to be appealing beyond job title.

InMail and messaging

One of the biggest challenges faced by LinkedIn is the anti-social habits of many recruiters, in particular spam messaging of jobs with no relevance to the recipient, based on belonging to a network or having the desired job title, with little reference to seniority, pay, experience or location. The result of this has seen profiles moved to private or some data removed to create a more bland profile. If this trend continues it takes away some of the effectiveness of the channel but over 50% of LinkedIn revenue comes from recruiter products. The recipient has the opportunity to mark a message as spam, and the accounts I monitor show this is on the increase. In the same way as LinkedIn have taken stronger steps to take punitive action against spam in groups, i'm expecting the similar measures to be introduced over messaging, with an increased suspension of features and services from some users who get reported, with serial offenders being permanently blocked. It is important to remember that messages are largely viewed from the envelope icon on the home page or in the mobile app. This displays the professional headline, picture and the first line of the message, emphasising the importance of showing relevance in the opening line.

Looking at the messages that result in a successful response, the following are important considerations in all messaging:

- Relevance of message in the subject line
- A professional headline beyond job title
- Relevance of message to the recipient
- A clear link to why the message has been sent
- Reference and access to more information such as rich media on a profile or company page

The data we are tracking shows that a message is 5 times more likely to get a positive response where the company has a strong brand presence in channel driven by 4 factors:

- A company page with rich media updates
- Regular updates
- Mutual connections
- Regular contributions to groups

These 4 factors should be a blueprint for recruiter activity in channel, and emphasises the importance of network, updates, interaction, a paid for company page and contribution to groups. Whilst LinkedIn is heavily populated by recruiters, those without a strong brand presence will experience diminishing returns, and those who invest time, effort and money in to the channel will win out.

Summary

LinkedIn remains the main online channel for recruiters because of the quality of the data, and the availability of recruiter friendly products. The channel is in a constant state of change, with the biggest change being the move to being a destination and social channel rather than a giant source of leads for finding candidates. Recruiters need to adjust their approach accordingly, with branding, engagement and contribution becoming the critical factors. Users of the channel are becoming less and less receptive to messages and approaches from strangers, especially recruiters. The channel has found ways to reward those who contribute and play an active part in the eco-system, and to punish those who simply feed off it. LinkedIn is a giant data centre, the biggest source of professional data on the planet, and the days of considering it a job board or a CV database are long gone.

The data tells a story of the most effective candidate journey, from personal profile to company page to job. This should play an important part in LinkedIn thinking for recruiters, because those who focus time and invest money in to in channel branding and contribution will win out, and those that don't will find their returns falling away. Now is the time to rethink the recruiters approach to LinkedIn, and enjoy the rewards.

About the author

I never wear a suit and I always wear a hat. I was the first person in the UK to register a business with @ in the name when I launched @BillBoorman in 2009. I've always worked in and around recruiting for the last 30 years or so. I think others would describe me as challenging the norm in most of what I do. I take a different approach to recruiting and networking. I have a great posse of connections who I can call on, and who can call on me. I used to have a real job as Training and HR Director of a national recruitment business. I worked there for 12.5 years, before launching a traditional training business. When the recession came, I had no work and I discovered social media, the rest is history.

I'm Dad to 2 fantastic kids who inspire me in all I do. I can't describe what I do as work; I'm having far too much fun for that. John Sumser has described me as explosive chaos, and China Gorman as the "King of Social Recruiting." I'm flattered.

I operate in 5 key areas:

- **Product consulting** – I work with a range of companies advising on product, market and positioning including, Jobberate, Colleague RS, LabOfApps, RolePoint, Qandidate, and Apploi
- **Organising and hosting** #Tru (The Recruiting Unconference), events around the world. We usually host an event somewhere in the world every 2 weeks. You can find the next events on the #tru dates section of this blog.
- **Content production** – I produce a range of content from blog posts to white papers for technology companies. I write weekly for Colleague Software, Rolepoint and Work4Labs on their blogs.
- **Key-note speaking** – I speak on a host of recruiting, talent, technology and HR topics at events around the world, as well as acting as emcee. I have spoken in 12 countries and 4 continents. My SHRM presentation, Global HR, has been accredited for global credits.

Bill Boorman is product advisor and brand advocate for Colleague.

About Colleague Software

Operating since 1995 with an experienced and passionate team of technical staff, Colleague has a long and proud heritage of recruitment software innovation and a comprehensive understanding of the recruitment industry. Client-driven and made for recruiters by recruiters, Colleague is perfectly suited to the needs of your consultancy – offering a functional, flexible and intuitive recruitment system for managing your clients, contacts and candidates.

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