

Summary Statement:

Everyone must earn a living. People typically fill this need by finding a job; especially in the United States where the employment rate is always under scrutiny the job hunt remains an important aspect of people's lives. LinkedIn provides a space for employers to connect to the talent pool by providing hiring software, job postings and a record of members' connections and relevant affiliates. This tool will be essential to the future of information as the job market evolves with the advent of artificial intelligence technologies. In the medical field, technology has become as accurate as and, in some cases, more accurate than doctors¹ which will alter the job responsibilities of medical professionals. Similarly, in the legal professional, there are algorithms that are used in the criminal sentencing process² therefore the talent pool will soon need to market different skills to employers to prove their competency for jobs. LinkedIn's news feed surfaces articles focusing on new trends and shifts in the job market based on the employers each member follows.

Not only do prospective employees benefit from LinkedIn's information, employers do as well. In the past, employers have been known to search for candidate's Facebook profiles to learn more about their background. Even though Facebook acts a main news source for its users to learn about politics³ and people it does not accurately gauge candidates' professional aptitude. Simply, googling candidates also does not yield useful information⁴ because most of the job market does not have a digital footprint large enough to index in top search results. LinkedIn

¹ Hannae Armitage, [AI matched, outperformed radiologists in screening X-rays for certain diseases](#), *Stanford Medicine News Center*, November 20, 2018

² Ellora Thadaneey Israni, [When an Algorithm Helps Send You to Prison](#), *New York Times*, October 26, 2017.

³ Alex C. Madrigal, [What Facebook Did to American Democracy](#), *Atlantic Monthly*, October 12, 2017.

⁴ Michael Lynch, [Googling Is Believing: Trumping the Informed Citizen](#), *New York Times*, March 9, 2016.

resolves this information hunt by operating as a space for candidates to create a professional digital profile and a centralized location for all the information that employers need to recruit. LinkedIn profiles are a distinctly professional digital identity which prevents the confounding of social identities and work identities and thus provides a fairer perception of candidates' competency. Moreover, LinkedIn provides a new form of online verification for companies and contributes to digital literacy strategies. It helps verify the *authority* in the RADCAB⁵ analysis where verified employers are distinguished by a professional page, number of followers and ranking on LinkedIn's '[top company list](#)'. This will drive where LinkedIn members apply and ultimately sway job market trends and application culture. Overall the future of the job market, industry size and company rankings and credibility will be influenced by LinkedIn.

A) Scale and Scope of Information

LinkedIn offers a wide range of information to its users including open job postings, user generated articles, links to external articles and background information on potential connections. All of this information reaches half a billion users⁶ with over 260 million daily active users. Furthermore, LinkedIn operates in over 200 countries and territories exemplifying the vastness of the reach of LinkedIn's information.

Job Postings

Users can learn about recent job postings from the separate tab on the home bar that allows users to search for positions by location and industry. It also suggests recent job listings that a user might be interested in given their preferences, connections in their network and search history. Preferences are not simply ascertained by LinkedIn's algorithm but also inputted directly by the user. Within the 'career interests' tab (Figure 1.1), members can specify their stage in the

⁵ Mike Caulfield, [Yes, Digital Literacy But Which One?](#) Hapgood [Blog], December

⁶ <http://fortune.com/2017/04/24/linkedin-users/>

job search, location preference, as well as industry preference. Recruiters can access this information if candidates authorize LinkedIn to share it. Around 90% of recruiters regularly use LinkedIn searching for talent⁷ meaning this information is constantly under evaluation and thus closely tied to users' potential to be employed. Network connections at the companies searched for also appear in the results (See Figure 1.2) clueing users to their first step towards securing a job.

Figure 1.1

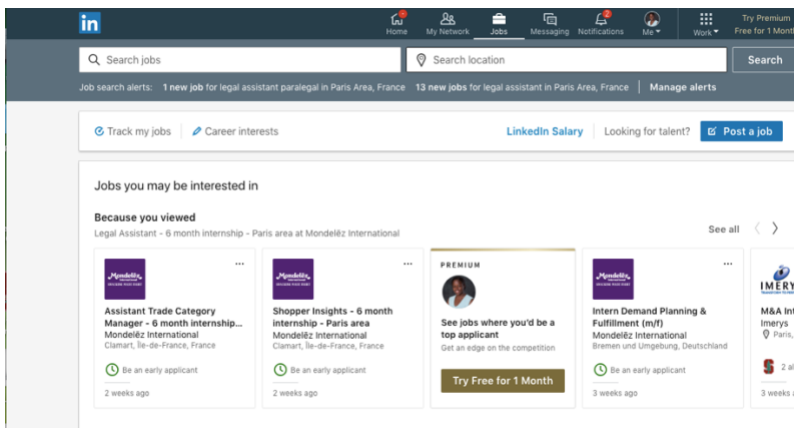
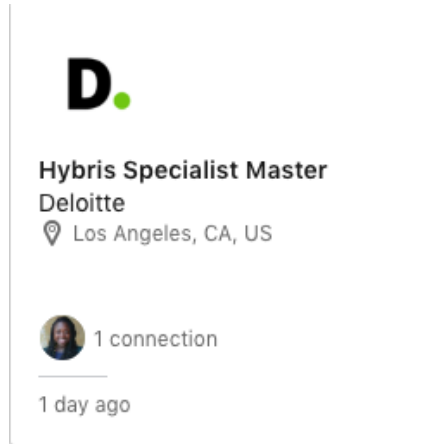


Figure 1.2

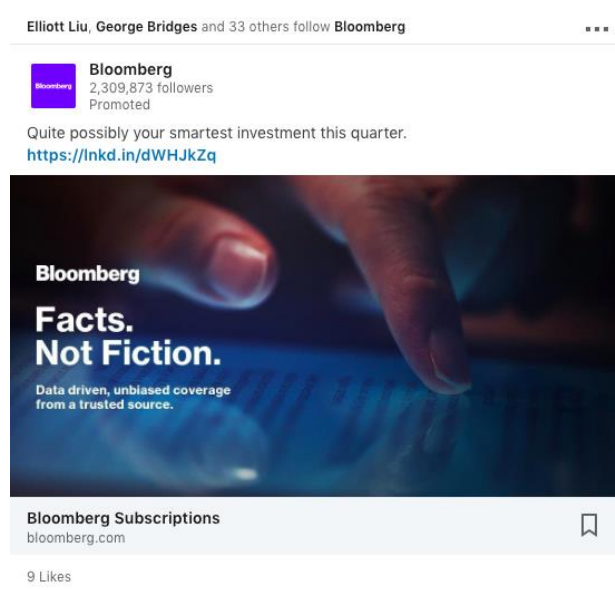
⁷ <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/linkedin-statistics/>



User Generated Articles/Shared Articles

On personal newsfeeds, LinkedIn members will see a myriad of articles that have been shared by their connections, written by their connections or suggested by the algorithm. The last type of article usually links to external articles regarding a user's company of interest in the news (Figure 1.3). User generated articles do not undergo any vetting or fact checking process which LinkedIn should consider especially those that make claims about companies. This would ensure the integrity of the information that users consume on their feed.

Figure 1.3



Connections

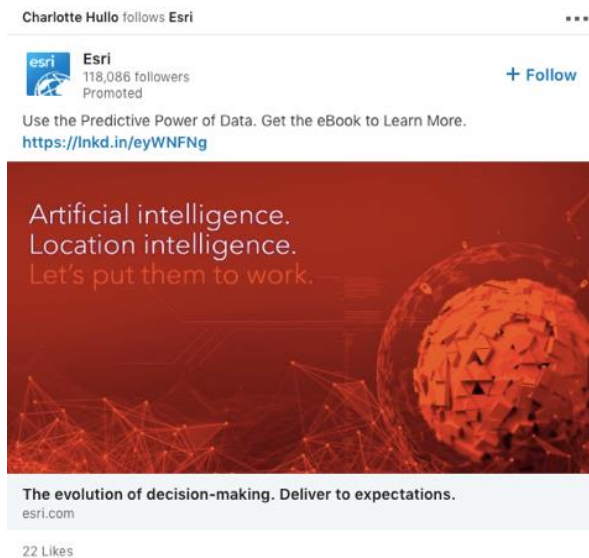
When searching for new connections on LinkedIn the results are indexed by their proximity to a user's network. Thus, any new connection must be a couple of degrees of separation from the actual user ensuring that they are "linked." This feature makes it easier to find potential contacts because it searches through an already established network rather than the entire world at large. Outside of the platform, LinkedIn indexes very high within Google itself, accounting for all the results on the first page. Evidently, it has established itself as a household name. Yet when searching for jobs through Google, its own system indexes rather than LinkedIn. If LinkedIn strives to provide economic opportunity to all it should negotiate with Google to index higher when users search for certain words such as "job", "recruiter" etc.

B) Quality of Information

Though the newsfeed surfaces credible information to users, it really depends on members' networks, preferred industries and favorite companies. However, for the average LinkedIn user, much of the information from external sources originate from Forbes, New York Times, Washington Post and the like. In original articles, there are often credible citations if the user is affiliated with a major media outlet. Yet the information in the "promoted" posts about companies published by companies are not easily verifiable (see Figure 2.1). Companies will pay for that information to surface in newsfeeds biasing the spread of favorable publicity and information about itself. Also, LinkedIn does not verify users' personal profiles. Authentication of affiliations comes when users try to join closed groups to which they must be accepted. People in their network can also leave recommendations on the profiles of their page. With these methods recruiters and other members can verify the information of a person's profile. Moreover, LinkedIn offers a limited scope of information to a narrow section of the job market.

Most of the job listings are for opportunities in the private sector geared towards candidates with college degrees meaning that those looking for hourly wage jobs or non-career-oriented jobs do not benefit as much.

Figure 2.1



C) History and Structure

LinkedIn was founded in 2003 by Reid Hoffman, Allen Blue, Konstantin Guericke and Jean-Luc Vaillant. It was marketed to the professional world by stressing the value of a network: “Your network is bigger than you think,”⁸. The company gains traction at the end of 2003 by earning an investment from Sequoia Capital. Gradually, the site started implementing new features including “address book uploads,” and “groups” to better connect members. By 2005, LinkedIn becomes a forum not only for individual professionals but also for businesses to business interactions. “Jobs” and “Subscription” features are introduced to the platform to facilitate the new exchange. In 2006, LinkedIn launches the public profile, officially branding it the professional profile of record. This is the year the company becomes profitable. At the

⁸ <https://ourstory.linkedin.com/>; (First image)

beginning of the new decade, LinkedIn saw tremendous growth by expanding globally and completely redesigning the user interface (Figure 3.2). Today the vision of the site has been refined to create economic opportunity for every member of the global work force⁹.

Figure 3.1

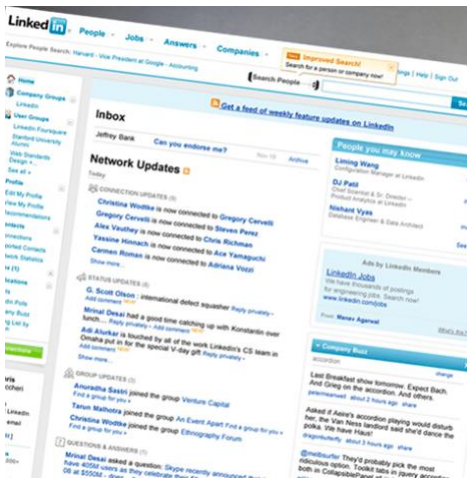
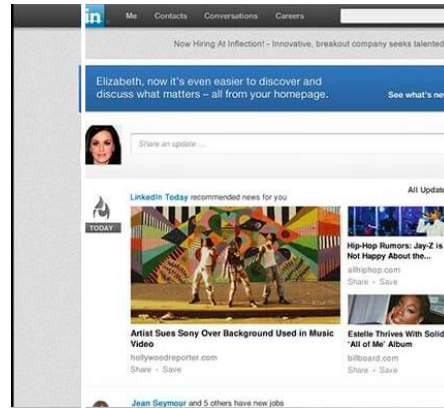


Figure 3.2



The structure of LinkedIn reassembles that of typical Fortune 500 company. At the top is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Jeff Weiner. His direct reports are the Chief Financial Officer, Vice President of Marketing and Vice President of Engineering Solutions. Beneath the executive positions are the various organizations that comprise the company lead by senior managers and their direct reports.

D) Financial Structure

Initially, LinkedIn was funded by seed money from Venture Capitalist firms and investors. It then became a publicly traded company (LNKD) on the New York Stock exchange where anyone could pour capital into the business. Recently, LinkedIn was acquired by Microsoft and as such trades under Microsoft's ticker (MSFT)¹⁰. However, as a stand-alone service LinkedIn still retains its own profit models. It offers subscriptions and membership privileges such as

⁹ <https://about.linkedin.com/>

¹⁰ <https://www.investopedia.com/news/linkedin-delist-nyse-dec-19-lnkd-msft/>

Premium Membership and Sales Navigator accounting for 11% (\$162 Million) of its quarterly revenue. Additionally, LinkedIn sells advertising space to businesses contributing to 18% (\$109 Million) of its quarterly revenue. The largest chunk of its revenue comes from selling recruitment services to businesses. This service totals about 65% (\$960 Million) of LinkedIn's quarterly revenue.¹¹ A revenue model such as LinkedIn's provides stable and guaranteed money flow to the company so long as employers have job postings and candidates seek jobs. In a healthy economy that will always be true meaning there should always be a market for LinkedIn.

E) Connection to Information Services

Within the realm of job searching sites LinkedIn ranks well. According to Forbes, LinkedIn sits in the top ten sites to help launch a career because it offers "invaluable research" tools¹². A company's LinkedIn page reveals information about the diversity of its workforce, management structure and most importantly, who in a user's network works there. "Networking is perhaps the most powerful way to use LinkedIn," the article claims but other comparable job sites offer other services that LinkedIn lacks. For example, [PayScale](#) calculates users' market value and anticipated salary for specific jobs. Additionally, [themuse](#) offers insider knowledge about the culture and expectations of a company with video interviews from senior managers and current employees. The videos are incredibly useful guidance for job seekers. For example, the article discussed how TripAdvisor senior managers explained in a video on themuse that people who do not work well in fast paced environments would not fare well at the company. This type of insight allows job seekers to tailor their applications and search to find roles for which they would be top candidates.

F) Examples of Information in Use

¹¹ <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/120214/how-does-linkedin-lnk-d-make-money.asp>

¹² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffkaufman/2016/10/10/10-websites-to-jumpstart-your-career-in-2017/#454c086f6b2e>

Even though LinkedIn does not provide every feature of a job search engine/career portal, the information it provides still is valuable for members. The most common way to use the information on LinkedIn is to create or leverage a connection. For example, in my own experience I have searched for opportunities at legal technology companies in France. First, I conducted a search for companies of that type in the LinkedIn, which revealed that I had a connection at a legal tech company in France already. This contact was also connected to three other individuals in my network with whom I was very close. That prompted me to reach out directly to the legal tech employee to ask for an informational interview. Now, I have a pending interview for the company in April (Figure 6.1).

Employers also use the information from my LinkedIn profile to make decisions. One example of this also comes from a personal experience. On my profile I highlight my experience at Google as a business intern, my joint major in French and Science, Technology and Society and my interest in data. These key terms spurred interest from a Microsoft recruiter who invited me to interview for a role similar to the one I did at Google (Figure 6.2). Thus, the information from personal profiles also is used to match candidates to positions creating opportunities for LinkedIn members.

Figure 6.1

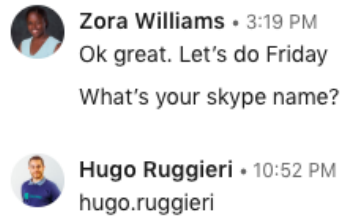


Figure 6.2



G) Media Coverage

Often when the media covers LinkedIn it discusses its new features including updates to its privacy policies¹³ and its “mentioned in the news” feature. CBS News also profiled LinkedIn users who found tremendous success with the platform.¹⁴ However, the information and connectedness of LinkedIn has lent itself to more nefarious uses as well. The New York Times covered a story of how the Chinese government allegedly used LinkedIn to reach out to members

¹³ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/boon-or-bane-new-linkedin-privacy-setting-blocks-others-from-exporting-your-email-address/articleshow/66759767.cms>

¹⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/linkedin-5-job-search-success-stories/>

of political organizations to recruit spies ¹⁵. Consequently, the professional information on the website can be used to connect but also to target candidates.

Seeing that LinkedIn has become a centralized space for the work force including top level executives it is crucial that the company manage the verifiability of the information on its platform. In the future this information could be used not only for the job market but to verify people's employability and past. If LinkedIn reaches government credibility standards, information on people's job history and their network could be used as eligibility for loans and even as part of the deliberation process in court¹⁶. Though the information on LinkedIn will prove valuable for the job force, it has the potential to become a determining factor for key societal decisions.

¹⁵ https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/linkedin-working-to-halt-chinese-spying-ford-cancels-import-plan-from-china/2018/08/31/700501c4-ad46-11e8-b1da-ff7faa680710_story.html?utm_term=.64d06d9459cf

¹⁶ <https://university.pretial.org/HigherLogic/System/DownloadDocumentFile.ashx?DocumentFileKey=a955ef37-7d11-4a99-df59-a9dcd0de4a0a>; California uses employment history to evaluate defendant's risk of recidivism.