

# INDIGO

*Marketing Agency*



## The Quick Start Guide to LinkedIn Referrals

By Claire Akin, MBA, author of The 2016 LinkedIn Guide for  
Financial Advisors

Today, seven out of ten financial advisors are using social media for marketing, according to a study conducted by FTI Consulting. Of those advisors, 90% use LinkedIn as their primary platform. Of the advisors actively using LinkedIn, 60% gained new clients as a result. One third of these advisors generated \$1 million or more in assets under management through their efforts.

In our work helping hundreds of advisors with their marketing, we find that about 20% of traffic to their website comes from their activity on LinkedIn. This traffic is made up of over 50% of new visitors, meaning individuals who they do not already have a relationship with. When it comes to generating new leads, LinkedIn can be more powerful and cost effective than any other channel including paid advertising, direct mail, seminars, and search engine optimization.

We also know that a strong LinkedIn presence helps support your referral process. Research from Kitces.com indicates that nine out of ten investors who are referred to an advisor by a friend or a family member will type the advisor's name into Google before they make an appointment. Google gives preferential treatment to LinkedIn profiles when returning search results. For this reason, if you Google your name, your LinkedIn profile is as likely to come up as your website.

By having an up-to-date LinkedIn profile, you help prospects find you online, see who you are connected to, and feel more confident placing their trust in your firm. In today's world, advisors can't afford not to be on LinkedIn!

## How to Get Started on LinkedIn in One Hour

Creating an incredible LinkedIn profile that will impress for a lifetime takes hours. But you can come up with a basic profile to create a nice presence in less than sixty minutes. This way, your absence will not hurt your credibility and you will have a strong foundation to build upon.

Here are the simple steps to get started in one hour. Set a timer and challenge yourself to get the steps done on time. Once you've completed this exercise, we'll dig deeper into exactly how to build on the base you've created to make your profile outstanding.



## 1. Create Your Account (3 minutes)

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## 2. Craft a Keyword-Rich Summary (15 mins)

Don't worry about adding work experience or uploading your resume yet. The most important part of your profile is your summary, so start there. A good place to begin in writing your summary is the "About" section of your website.

You or someone in your firm likely has already invested some thought into this endeavor. Copy and paste the text from that page into your word processor, then make sure the details are up to date. Set a timer for 10 minutes and do the following:

- Don't try to reinvent the wheel and avoid writer's block caused by perfectionism. Just focus on getting a strong profile written by borrowing from existing sources of information.
- Answer in the simplest terms, what you do and who you do it for. List your specialties, areas of expertise, and the locations that you serve so that your profile will come up for keyword searches including these terms.
- Explain what makes your firm different in the same way you would answer at a cocktail party – short and to the point.
- Add a paragraph or two from your bio to explain your relevant credentials and experience.

Once you have a good rough draft, take a couple of minutes to tie the words together and run a spell check. Then, cut and paste into your summary section and click "Save."

## 3. Enter Your Contact Information (5 minutes)

Always direct traffic back to your website by listing your site's URL in the "Website" section of your profile under "Contact Info." Be sure to list your email and phone number so your connections can reach you. Add your Twitter profile, if applicable, for cross-pollination and to give your profile an SEO boost. Most broker-dealers will require that you hyperlink to FIRNA.org and SIPC.org, so save yourself a step and add those to the website section as well

## 4. Upload a Headshot (2 mins)

Right click on your photo from your website and save it to your desktop. Then, upload and use the built-in LinkedIn photo editing tool to crop from the shoulders up. Profiles with photos get 13 times more views, so this step is essential.

## 5. Enter Education and Work Experience (10 mins)

1. Click "Add Education," select your college and degree, and enter your graduation dates. List any extracurricular activities or honors. If you have a post-graduate degree, repeat the process.

2. Click "Add Position" and list your three most relevant roles. Don't worry about listing that job from high school; this isn't a background check, it's simply a way to highlight your experience and the positions you're most proud of.

## 6. Join Three LinkedIn Groups (5 mins)

Think about your hobbies and interests. Then think about your ideal clients' hobbies and interests. Join three groups where there is overlap. This is how you can interact with prospects you don't already have a relationship with, but may fit into your firm's model.

To search for groups, type a keyword into the main search bar at the very top of LinkedIn and press enter. Once the results are displayed, look over on the left side and click on "Groups" to display all of the groups that fit this keyword. In a search for "Equestrian," LinkedIn returns groups for Professional Equestrians, Equestrian Enthusiasts, Real Estate Equestrians, Equestrian Business Owners, and more. Try a few searches and join at least three groups. Don't forget to search for your town or neighborhood and join local groups.

## 7. Connect with Your Network (15 mins)

LinkedIn makes it easy to upload your email contacts and connect with all clients and prospects. Don't be shy! Most folks are happy to receive an invitation and expand their network. Be sure to add the email addresses for centers of influence, such as CPAs and attorneys, with whom you work.

On the top of the page, click on "Connections," and then "Add Connections." Use the built-in interface to integrate with your email server such as Outlook. You can also upload a .CSV file of your email addresses. Navigate to your email system, go to "Contacts," and click "Export." If you export as an Excel Spreadsheet, you can open the spreadsheet and convert it to a .CSV file, typically under File - Export To. If you get stuck, Google the instructions for your particular email system, as there are often good step-by-step instructions online.



## 8. Submit to Compliance and Celebrate (5 mins)

To export your profile and submit to compliance, click on Profile on the top navigation. Once you are viewing your own profile, there's a button that reads "View Profile As." Just to the right of that button is a carrot drop down menu. The fourth option is "Save to PDF." This will automatically download a PDF of your profile that you can submit to compliance. If you completed the process on time, pat yourself on the back and move on!

Now that you have a profile, it's time to start using LinkedIn to grow your presence and generate referrals!

## What To Do on LinkedIn Every Day

Being successful on LinkedIn is a lot like staying fit. To keep in shape, you have to put diet and exercise as a priority on a consistent basis. LinkedIn works best if you put a few minutes towards your efforts on a regular basis, not all at once. I recommend spending your first cup of coffee at the office on LinkedIn. Here's what to do:



- **Connect with everyone you meet.** The first step of strengthening your online networking muscles is to always work toward expanding your network. Be sure to connect with all clients, not just your top clients, as well as everyone you meet while networking or socializing. The larger your network, the more opportunities you have to find qualified prospects. My rule of thumb for who to connect with is anyone who you have met in person, worked with virtually, or would feel comfortable introducing to someone else in your network.
- **Reach out to referral partners.** Spend some time each week to reach out to CPAs, estate planning attorneys, lawyers, real estate agents, and other potential referral partners. Send a quick message introducing yourself and explaining who you work with and how you can help. Ask about their unique specialty to understand what they do best.

- **Seek out centers of influence.** Centers of influence, or COIs, are the movers and shakers in your locality. The mayor, the top business leaders, the lady who works at the coffee cart and has her finger on the pulse of your town. Make sure these folks know exactly what you do so they can introduce you to others and share your information. One trick to helping them understand your firm is to invite them in for a “mock client meeting” so they get an introduction to your philosophy, your process, and your team.
- **Share valuable content.** Content is at the core of our LinkedIn strategy, and we’ll dig deep into that topic in the next chapter. But each day, you’ll want to spend a minute or two sharing content that your network will find valuable.
- **Respond to all messages.** The etiquette for responding to Facebook messages is about 24 hours, 48 hours for LinkedIn, and only two hours for Twitter messages. For this reason, I caution advisors from pursuing a Twitter-centric strategy unless they can commit to quick responses every day. To keep up-to-date and have good LinkedIn manners, be sure to check and respond to your messages on at least Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- **Engage with others.** Similar to offering praise, engaging with others is a nice way to show that you are interested in what they're doing. Read their articles, “like” their posts, and comment on their discussions. This also helps you understand what your clients and prospects are reading, sharing, and consuming online, which is helpful when we create your custom content strategy in the next chapter.



- **Discuss within groups.** LinkedIn groups are powerful because they allow you to interact with people you don't know. Spend some time perusing the discussions within your groups, sharing content, and offering your two cents. I recently landed a big speaking engagement after an industry leader read a blog post I shared within one of our mutual groups. Don't limit your groups to business, and keep it fun by discussing your passions in groups of like-minded enthusiasts. One of my clients spends this time chatting in LinkedIn classic car groups.

- **Follow key influencers.** One of my advisors likes to say, "I've never had a new idea in my life, so if you steal from me, you're stealing twice." Following key influencers is an excellent opportunity to learn what top networkers are doing and copy what works. You can follow people without being connected to them by clicking the "Follow" button on the dropdown menu next to "Connect." You can also get exposure by liking and commenting on key influencers' content, because other folks in their network will see your activity.
- **Browse the news.** Your LinkedIn newsfeed is a great place to read articles, see what people are sharing, and watch videos. It's not designed for breaking news, but there is a treasure trove of specific, insightful content that experts in your network publish directly to LinkedIn!
- **Make introductions!** You can actually introduce two people in your network directly through LinkedIn by going to one contact's profile and clicking on the drop down next to "Message" and selecting "Share." This automatically sends a message offering to introduce the recipient to contact you shared. This is great for helping someone in your network with a job search or introducing two business colleagues. The downside is that both folks have to be relatively proficient with LinkedIn, so I only use the feature when I'm sure they are pretty active on the site.



For more information on how to use LinkedIn to identify qualified prospects and generate referrals, purchase [The 2016 LinkedIn Guide for Financial Advisors](#) today!

## The 2016 LinkedIn Guide For Financial Advisors

This handy step-by-step book makes the complex and powerful networking platform simple, even for the most technology-challenged advisors. With easy to follow explanations, strategies, and checklists, advisors can harness the power of LinkedIn to grow their network and generate high-value referrals. The simple checklists include:

- What is LinkedIn and why do you need it?
- Getting started on LinkedIn
- How to optimize your LinkedIn Profile
- Advanced search techniques to qualify prospects
- Content marketing on LinkedIn
- InMail Messages and LinkedIn paid ads
- Examples and success stories from real advisors

Order your copy of The 2016 LinkedIn Guide for Financial Advisors today [here](#). To learn more about marketing strategies for independent advisors, [subscribe to my newsletter](#), [follow my blog](#), and [connect with me on LinkedIn](#) for exclusive tips.

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## About Claire Akin

Claire Akin runs [Indigo Marketing Agency](#), a full-service marketing firm serving a handful of top independent advisors. She is an author, speaker, and expert in content marketing for financial services. Claire is a former Investment Advisor Representative who holds her MBA in Marketing from the Rady School of Management at UC San Diego as well as a BA in Economics from UC Davis.

It's her goal to help advisors leverage content marketing to grow their businesses. She lives in San Diego with her toxicologist husband (Josh), their dog (Wally), and their two American Paint Horses (Harley and Brandy). She has climbed Mt. Whitney three times and won a blue ribbon at the Del Mar Fair for her "Happy Hiker" trail mix.



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