



THE QUICK START GUIDE  
**TO LINKEDIN REFERRALS**



# The Quick Start Guide to LinkedIn Referrals



By **Claire Akin**, MBA, author of *The 2016 LinkedIn Guide for Financial Advisors* and **Bill Cates**, CSP, CPAE, President Referral Coach International


## Why You Should Read this Report

While social media platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter can be good tools for creating awareness and word of mouth, the best social media platform for creating introductions is The Big Blue Introductions Machine... that is... LinkedIn.

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!



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*Claire Akin, Indigo Marketing Agency*  
*The 2016 LinkedIn Guide for Financial Advisors*



# How to Get Started on LinkedIn in One Hour

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)

Go to LinkedIn.com and click on "Join Today." Enter your first name, last name, email address, and password, then click "Join Now." Locate the verification email that LinkedIn sends automatically and click on the link to verify your account.

## 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. See Bill Cates' special report to help you with this: [www.AuthenticValuePropositionFormula.com](http://www.AuthenticValuePropositionFormula.com)

- 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)

➤ 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.

➤ 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.

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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:

## 1. 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.

**2. 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.

**3. 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 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. 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.

**4. 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.

**5. 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.

**6. 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.

**7. 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.

**8. 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.

**9. 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.

**10. 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.

# LinkedIn Referral Optimizer Checklist

LinkedIn is merely a link in the chain (pardon the pun) of what it takes to build a thriving business through referrals and personal introductions. Before I get into the checklist of actions you can take to use LinkedIn as an ongoing source of new clients through introductions, we need to cover a few basic principles that need to be kept in mind to be most effective.

## You Must Be Referable

Before asking someone for referrals or introductions you want to ensure that you are referable. One barometer of your referability is that you are receiving unsolicited referrals. Another way to know if you're referable is by conducting Value Discussions. The Value Discussion is the first and most important step in our VIPS Method™ for asking for referrals without pushing or begging. At a review meeting, it would sound something like this, "Laura, let's put the market aside. Let's put the economy aside and talk about something we CAN control – namely – our communication and overall working relationship. First off, is there anything not working for you that I should know about? Anyone drop the ball at any point in time? (After that discuss – if anything...) Tell me what is working for you. How do we continue to earn your loyalty?"

## You Must Leverage Borrowed Trust

A key ingredient in this process is the trust and respect that exists between the referral source and the new prospect. The higher in regard the prospect holds the referral source, then the more likely the recommendation or introduction will pique the interest of the prospect and lead to an exploration of your value. At one of our most recent

Referral Champions Training Camps, one of the attendees said, "When I'm discussing introductions with my clients. I always suggest, 'Let's see if we can come up with one or two people who would take my call just because you asked them to.'" He's clearly going for high-trust relationships. That's not a bad idea.

## You Need to Turn Someone's Willingness to Refer into a Solid Introduction

Referrals are worthless if you haven't been introduced in some way to the new prospect. Without a strong introduction the connection is never made. And by introduction, I don't mean your prospect telling their colleague, "George – Bill is going to call you." I mean an electronic handshake where your referral source jointly emails or texts you and their colleague. A great email or text introduction always has a little "insistence" built in. "George – I strongly urge you to take Bill's call – to meeting with him if it make sense. It will be worth your time." Getting a solid introduction is a collaborative process with your referral source. Make sure whatever you do, all parties feel comfortable, and your referral source at least piques the interest of the prospect – enough to take your call or respond to your email.

**1.** Your profile should be as complete and up to date as you can make it. In the Summary or Experience section, talk about your WHY. Why are you excited about your business, the benefits you bring, and the company for which you work? People will be more willing to work with you if you connect with them on two levels at the same time. They have to connect with your value; believe that you have the experience and knowledge to help them. And they have to connect with you as a person. Sharing your “personal why” will help you connect on the emotional level that’s so important. People considering doing business with you need to think or feel, “I can trust this person.”

**2.** Make your Professional Headline benefit oriented. Forget your title. Put that in the Experience sections. Put your simple branding statement here – but make sure you speak to tangible benefits. This is your branding statement. You do have one don’t you? “Helping my client stay clear and confident about their financial future.”

**3.** Connect with all of your clients and centers of influence. Connect with any clients with whom you have a growing relationship – you’ve met or spoken a few times and connected well.

Make your invitation personal – not the standard LinkedIn template. If you just spoke with a prospect on the phone – making a pretty nice connection. Now you can invite them to connect with you on LinkedIn. “George – I enjoyed our conversation this morning. Let’s get connected on LinkedIn. I often post short articles, news, and ideas I think you’ll find valuable.”

**4.** Post valuable information to your account at least once per week. If you’re a financial professional, make sure they are “compliance friendly.” Make sure this brings real value to the reader and not just something promotional.

**5.** Use your clients’ 1st Level connections for possible introductions. Start with the people who have endorsed or recommended them. Check out their profiles. As a financial advisor, you can’t accept LinkedIn recommendations or endorsements, but your clients can – and do. These are usually good, possibly high-trust relationships. Of course, you want to do searches on LinkedIn for different terms that match the criteria of your idea clients. Then look and see what 1st level connections your clients have with the search results.

## Your LinkedIn Referral Optimizer Checklist (cont.)

6. Once you identify possible introductions from clients and centers of influence to people on their profile, take your request offline. While you can use LI to ask for the introduction, you'll be much more effective asking either in person or over the phone. Don't make the mistake of hiding behind the technology. Using email and LinkedIn messages will significantly reduce your results. Once you see the connections – give your clients a call or wait until you meet with them to suggest the introductions.

7. When you begin to suggest possible introductions to your clients and COIs, start by acknowledging the fact you are connected on LI. Ask them if they are using LI for their business. By asking them about their experience in using LinkedIn will help you feel less like you're stalking your clients. The truth is that anyone who puts a profile up on LinkedIn understands that others may be looking at their connections. It's the whole point of LinkedIn. So you don't ever need to feel like you're stalking your clients. With that said, I've run into this quite a bit with my coaching clients. Advisors don't want to feel like they're stalking their clients. Entering into this request in this way, should feel more comfortable for you – so you'll actually do it.

8. Once your client or COI has agreed to introduce you to one or more people, formalize the introduction a bit. Discuss method, message, and time frame. This is often where the process breaks down for some. Attend to a good introduction. You" can say something like, "Laura – I suspect that George would much prefer to hear from you before he hears from me. Let's craft an approach that will feel comfortable for the two of you and, hopefully, pique his interest in hearing from me."

9. If you aren't already connected with me (Bill Cates), make sure you connect to my LinkedIn account and that you are receiving my free weekly tips designed to help you acquire more high-level clients through referrals and personal introductions.

**LinkedIn was built for introductions. More and more advisors are using LinkedIn to create connections; that turn into introductions; that turn into new clients. Stop dabbling with LinkedIn and make a commitment to make it work for you.**

*Bill Cates, CSP, CPAE*

*President Referral Coach International*

# Claire Akin

## Marketing Consultant



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.

# Bill Cates

CSP, CPAE



While trekking through the Himalayas, Andes and the Alps; while camping in the Arctic Circle and living on a houseboat in Kashmir, India, Bill Cates built and sold a successful publishing company. For the past 20 years, his mission has been helping professionals and companies create exponential growth through referrals and introductions.

Bill Cates, president of Referral Coach International and founder of The Referral Coach Academy has spoken to over 250,000 professionals worldwide and has trained over 20,000 in his system.

Bill has authored three books published by McGraw-Hill:

Get More Referral Now!  
Don't Keep Me a Secret  
Beyond Referrals

Bill's Referral Advantage Program® will give you a proven process and the confidence to use that process to grow your top-line revenue and bottom-line profitability.

[www.ReferralCoach.com](http://www.ReferralCoach.com)