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LinkedIn is the world's #1 professional networking site with over 760 million users. ([Kinsta](#))

LinkedIn Power-Networking for the COVID Economy



Tim Ventura [Follow](#)

Nov 26, 2020 · 14 min read ★

The COVID-19 pandemic has left millions without jobs, but in today's digital workplace they're not without hope. We're joined today by Joe Frankie III, a West Point graduate, seasoned executive, and the award-winning co-author of [LinkedIn: The 5-Minute Drill for Executive Networking Success](#). Learn the insider tips, tricks & best-practices to empower your career using LinkedIn, the world's #1 social networking platform for professionals.

Joe, welcome! We're talking about LinkedIn today, so let's begin by asking how you got started with LinkedIn, and what inspired you down the path that led to you become an expert-level user?

When I transitioned out of the military in 2004, I came out as a 52-year-old Colonel and it became apparent that it would be really hard to jump right into a job in corporate America. Back then, job hunting still meant knocking on doors to get your resume in front of recruiters, and it took a lot of footwork & sweat equity to find the right job. LinkedIn was in its infancy, but a colleague of mine was excited about it and thought it might help with my transition.



Joe Frankie III, LinkedIn Coach, Speaker & Consultant. ([LinkedIn](#))

Back then, LinkedIn wasn't anything like the platform you see today, but I started playing with it and before long realized how powerful it was. You can use it to build a network of professional contacts that are either in your area of expertise or another area you wanted to break into, which is what I focused on using it for initially.

Initially, I was LinkedIn for networking, but as I developed proficiency I began coaching transitioning military personnel on their job search efforts. Later on, when I got into the executive search business, it became apparent that executives had just as much trouble merchandising themselves as transitioning military personnel did, so I began coaching them as well.

Having a world-class LinkedIn profile is just as important for an experienced CEO as for other professionals, so when the word got out that I was getting results for them, I started getting phone calls in the morning and the evening. It wasn't before my wife finally said, "Hey, Joe, either take this hobby and make it a profession or get back to your day job."

There are millions of people with LinkedIn profiles, thousands of them spend considerable time on it. What separates them from power players like you?

The results you get from LinkedIn are directly related to how you use it. In my case, I use it daily for coaching, helping people through a transition process, and other client work. Now, not everyone needs to use LinkedIn that often —many people just use it as a tool now and then. You don't need to be a power-player to get results with LinkedIn, but you do need a plan.

In today's world, every professional in today's world has a direct responsibility to make sure that they're show-ready at a moment's notice. The latest drill we're going through with the pandemic demonstrates that nobody is as secure as they'd like to believe.

Right now, a lot of my calls are 911 calls from people saying, "Hey Joe, I've got a family, I've lost my job, and I need to get back to work ASAP." A lot of these people hadn't changed jobs in the last five or six years, and most of them weren't planning to change. However, the world changed around them and now their resume is outdated, so part of my work is helping them adapt & present themselves so that everybody knows what they bring to the table.



The COVID-19 pandemic has left millions of Americans without jobs. ([Fortune](#))

In terms of your expertise, you wrote the book on LinkedIn, or at least one of the better ones out there on it. What's in the book, who should buy it, and what makes it a best-seller?

Who should buy it? Anybody age 15 to 84. Right now, 15-year-olds are using a LinkedIn profile to get into extremely competitive high schools, and my book is being considered by at least one superintendent for high school business classes. The book is written for adult professionals, but it's short & to the point, which explains the appeal for younger readers as well.

The book is a one-hour read, which is probably the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. It's incredibly difficult to write concisely without cutting out key details. Churchill had a saying about that, "I'm sorry, I wrote you a long letter — if I had more time it would be short".

In the first three pages of the book, we explain the five-minute drill and give you a checklist. When we were planning it, I told my coauthor, Lori, that we needed to give you the critical information right upfront. That way, if you don't read past the first few pages, you'll still get the important concepts — and everything after that elaborates on

them. Our goal was to write a book you could read and internalize on an airplane flight and put it to use when you land.



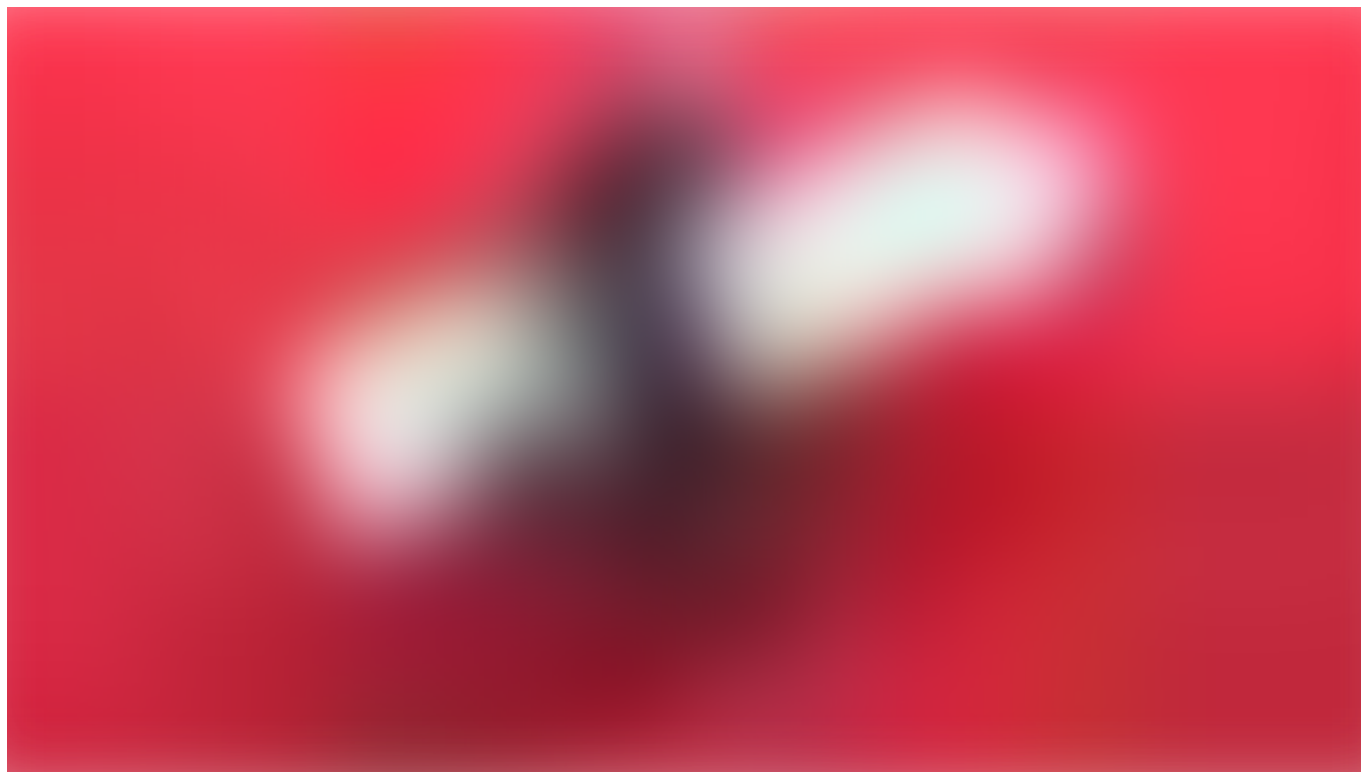
LinkedIn: The 5-Minute Drill for Executive Networking Success ([Amazon](#))

You've coached & mentored over 646 executives, veterans, and students on how to market themselves using LinkedIn. Can you tell me about some of the most common goals, needs, and common mistakes these folks tend to make?

Well, let's look at those classes of people. First of all, from a LinkedIn standpoint, I think most people either want to move from their current job to a new one, or they're out of a job and trying to land one. However, you've also got people who want to pivot and change sectors, others seeking a promotion in their current job, and finally, some who are creating jobs for themselves as entrepreneurs. Those are all goals we provide a methodology for — and it all begins with asking you to define where you're currently at.

If you can define where you're at, next you need to know where you want to go. What are your goals, and what do you want to achieve? If you can define those points, then there's a way to build a LinkedIn bridge to get you there — and there are different strategies to use based on what the goal is.

For example, if your goal is to be the President of the United States, then part of your LinkedIn strategy would include identifying the six jobs you need in the next 20 years to be competitive and make yourself a candidate and creating a timeline to get there. LinkedIn is a tool to showcase your skills and experience for the job, but you've got to do the work to be qualified for it first.



Having goals and a strategy to achieve them is crucial to a successful career path ([LinkedIn](#))

So, it sounds like this is more than just working on your resume or growing your a network. It sounds like you're coaching clients to develop strategic objectives, goals, and milestones on the LinkedIn platform.

Absolutely. Some people just want to reach the next level in their career — those are the easiest people for me to coach. Others are shooting two levels out, and in that case, we have to position them on a path to that objective.

In terms of career path, it's about more than having a good resume. We have to look at each successive job in their career as a way to gain critical experience. In some cases, you can get that in the public sector, in others it's in the private sector, but either way, it moves them forward.

You can see this strategy at work when you look at the LinkedIn profiles for successful executives. If you've ever wondered what it takes to become a CEO, take a look at the profiles for a few CEOs, and it becomes obvious. I mean, nobody put pixie dust out there to get them the job — they had to climb the ladder like anybody else, and survive some demanding jobs to get promoted to the next one.

Let's talk about COVID: it's put millions of professionals out of work, and many are using LinkedIn as part of their job search. What would you recommend they do with it?

If you're just an occasional user, then I would suggest that it depends on how much you know about LinkedIn. Again, take a look at, [LinkedIn: The 5-Minute Drill for Executive Networking Success](#). It's a short book & comes in handy — and if you still don't understand the LinkedIn body of knowledge, go back to Lori and Mike O'Neil's book, which is a [Rock The World with LinkedIn v2.1](#). It's the best breakout I've seen in terms of a LinkedIn body of knowledge.

Now, why do you need that? Well, if you were going into project management, you would have to understand the project management body of knowledge to function effectively. The same is true for the energy industry, the oil industry, you name it. You have to learn the concepts, the language, and what's important to people in that industry before you can make the leap.

So now, when I meet executives looking for introductions in a new industry, I'll take a look at my bookshelf, recommend titles for them to read, and tell them that I'll make introductions for them once they've finished some books. In other words, I'm not wasting my time and reputation referring you for a position until you're show-ready.

I get asked all the time what the shortest path is from being unemployed to having a job. If it's been a while, it's easy to forget the process. Simply put, when you come out of a job, you enter a funnel — and at the bottom of that funnel is accepting and finally reporting to work at your next job. While you're in that funnel, there are no shortcuts — and the only real lubricant for that funnel is LinkedIn because it forces you to get organized.



Rock The World with LinkedIn v2.1, by Mike O'Neill & Lori Ruff ([Amazon](#))

Do you favor using the “OpenToWork” symbol on your profile, or does that send the wrong signal to executives?

There are two sides to that coin. On the one hand, it says that you're open to work — nobody's going to miss that, right? However, LinkedIn's [Open Candidates](#) feature already gives you the option of silently saying that you're open to work while keeping it hidden so only recruiters see it.

You may feel like it helps to broadcast to the world that you're available, but ultimately finding & interviewing you is a recruiter's responsibility — and they're looking to find & retain the best talent they can, not just unemployed people. So, rather than focusing on an [#OpenToWork](#) sign & hoping it will get you interviews, you must have a competitive, show-ready LinkedIn profile, because that's what will make you appear in the search results and get calls for interviews.

OK, let's talk about “[Headlines](#)”. I understand you're a fan of using multiple job titles separated by pipe symbols to maximize recruiter searchability. Can you tell me your thoughts on headlines, and are titles like this only useful for job applicants, given that they're harder to read?

The most important thing is to think with the end in mind. If I'm a recruiter trying to find somebody for a position, I'm going to start by using the search box on LinkedIn, and I'll be searching with around 10 words based on the position specification I'm trying to fill.

So, the important question for a job-seeker is what those search keywords are. It could be job titles, key skills, or other short descriptions essential to the role that needs to be filled. Right now what I'm telling you is to put yourself into the recruiter's mindset, which essentially means using LinkedIn as a search engine to find candidates.

Now I'd like to give you my own opinion on the LinkedIn headline — and keep in mind that there are other views on this. LinkedIn recently increased the maximum length of the headline from 120 up to 220 characters, and typically it's not only highly visible to recruiters using LinkedIn search, but it comes up at the top of Google search as well. As far as I'm concerned, this is the most valuable real estate on the internet, and you need to use it wisely and appropriately, always with the end in mind.

Your headline is left-justified, which means that you need to put the most important keywords on the left, separated by the pipe symbol. You want to try and make use of that full 220 character headline string, and you want to use popular keywords. Try doing a job search for the keywords in your headline — if a lot of jobs come up, it's a fair bet they're popular terms and recruiters are searching for them as well. Use them correctly and the next time those recruiters search, they'll be finding you.



This LinkedIn headline example shows keywords on the left with a pipe separator. (Cultivated Culture)

Another important aspect of your profile is the “About” section. You’ve said that only a couple of sentences are displayed “above the fold” here, and if I remember right, this should include some demonstration of your actual results, right?

The [LinkedIn summary](#) or “about” section is the next most important part of your profile behind the headline. It gives you 2,000 characters to work with, but depending on what platform you’re viewing a profile on it will truncate that with a “read more” link to something much shorter — typically about 3 sentences worth of text.

In those first three sentences, you need to provide a holistic statement of value with metrics. For example, you might say, “I’m Bob, and in the last seven years I’ve been a world-class project manager responsible for 23 projects with teams of two to 27, valued at \$1.7 to \$263 million. All of those projects were on-time, under-budget, and netted our clients a profit of \$1 billion”.

Your summary doesn’t have to be as extreme as the example above, but what this tells anybody looking at your profile is that you’re show-ready — and it’s not the only thing that matters. You need a professional photo, a good headline, an impactful summary, and you need your entire profile to be as complete as possible. Remember, recruiters will only scan your profile for a few seconds before deciding if they want to move on to somebody else.



The “About” section of Joe’s Linked profile provides a holistic statement with metrics. ([LinkedIn](#))

Applying for jobs on LinkedIn versus networking for jobs are two very different things. Right now I know people who are sending out hundreds of resumes & job applications every month on LinkedIn, and I also know folks who are networking to create opportunities. The ones who are networking are getting better results. Is that normal, and should people be focused on networking rather than simply applying for jobs?

In today's environment, I would recommend both applying and networking, but before the pandemic, I would say you needed to network your way into a job. I've got two people that I'm coaching through a networking strategy right now. In one case, my client wants one of three different jobs in a major metropolitan area. He's very focused, knows the specific job number that he wants, and he's got an 18-month timeline to get that job. In his case, we're using LinkedIn to network him with people in the company structure around that job so that when he applies for it he's got friends on the inside.

For this client, we've created a taxonomy of the likely people that might be the hiring authority for that job, and we've done that for all three of the jobs he wants. His mission over the next 18 months is to establish communication, on LinkedIn, build relationships, and eventually have lunch with all of the key figures involved with those positions. We're using networking to build relationships with the ultimate goal of moving him into the role he wants.



Building your LinkedIn network strategically will help your career in the right direction. ([LinkedIn](#))

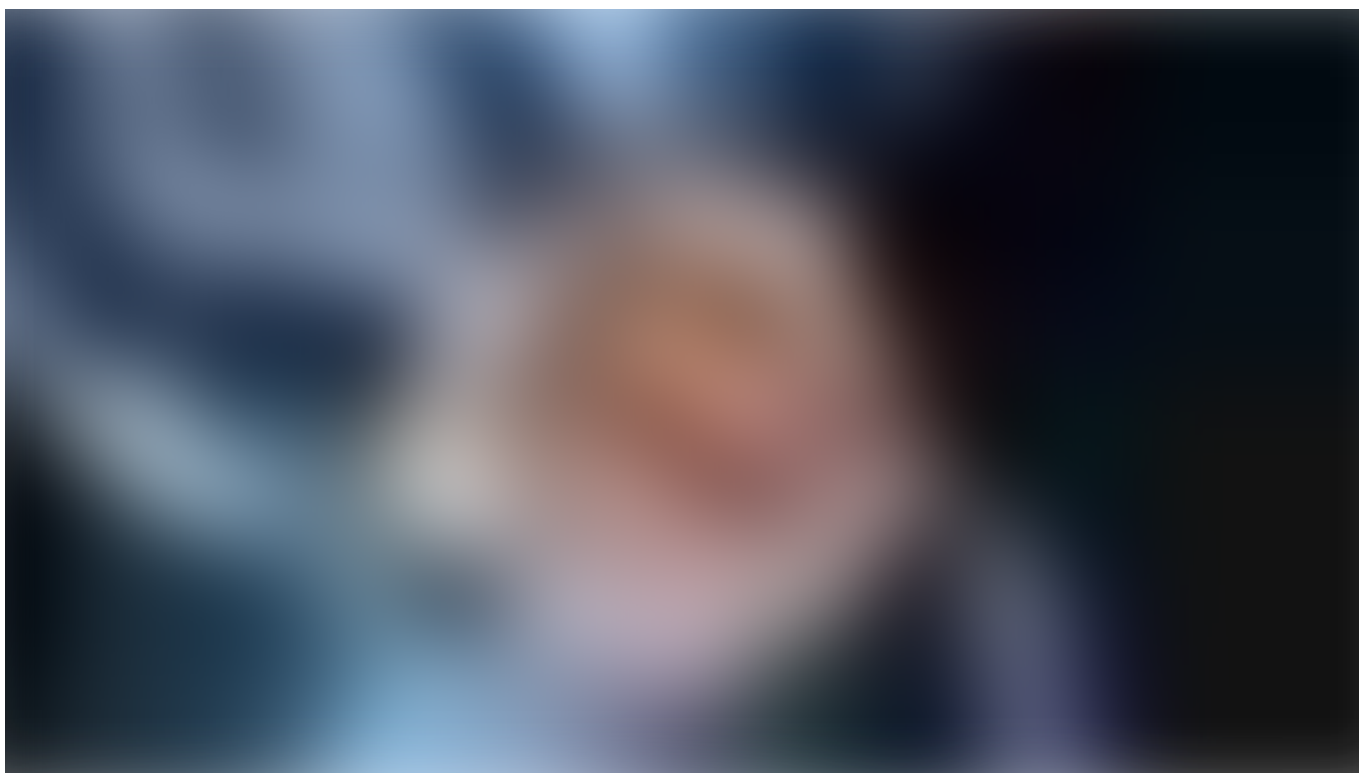
Let's say you're a professional on LinkedIn. You're active online, you post content, and you have a good network of executives & decision-makers. If you're COVID-

affected and haven't had results competing with millions of job-seekers submitting resumes, could reach out directly to ask these executives or decision-makers in your network about job-opportunities?

Yes, but you could do the same with a telephone call, right? You want to give it some thought before directly asking an executive for opportunities. They're busy, they typically don't do hiring directly, and you might be burning a bridge by wasting their time. LinkedIn is all about building bridges — not burning them.

Whatever you do, don't simply make contact with a person just to ask them for a job. That advice dates back to way before LinkedIn. Build a relationship first by getting to know them, learning about the company, and understanding their goals. Build a line of communication before you ask for something.

So, in terms of directly communicating with executive decision-makers, you want to build a relationship first and it helps to become proficient with LinkedIn itself before you ask for anything. When you're new to the platform, it's like you're swinging a sword with both hands, and it's not very accurate. Once you've developed proficiency with it, you can use it like a scalpel. As a LinkedIn coach, I see people every day that are trying to appendectomies with a sword and believe me, it doesn't go well.



It's typically bad etiquette to directly ask an executive for a job on LinkedIn. ([LinkedIn](#))

Let me close by asking about the employer side of things. Should executives and decision-makers try helping COVID-affected job seekers by hiring through their LinkedIn network connections, or should they rely on their HR staff to sort through resumes as they traditionally do?

You have to keep in mind that executives are just as challenged as the rest of us are right now, and don't trick yourself into thinking that hiring isn't happening. Hiring is happening faster right now than I've ever seen before — but we have to temper that remark with the realization that there's a huge population of job seekers in the market.

Companies are hiring — both directly as well as through third-party recruiters and headhunters. When a third party is involved, you won't even know that the company is looking for a position, which is why having a great LinkedIn profile matters. Remember, at its core, LinkedIn is a search engine.

If you build a great profile focused on your strengths and built around the best-practices we've talked about in our book, you'll get hits from recruiters. Remember to measure your productivity against your peers, and present yourself concisely, because recruiters skim rapidly through profiles. Focus your efforts on amplifying everything important to ensure those recruiters want to learn more. When it comes to LinkedIn, if you build it right, they will come.

About Our Guest

Joe Frankie III is a West Point graduate who had a full career in the U.S. Army as a warfighter and logistician for 30+ years. He commanded at all levels from platoon thru installation. Post military, he used his logistics skills to work on infrastructure projects in the US and internationally.

Currently, as an award-winning author, coach, and search consultant he advises executives and transitioning military leaders. Most often, he helps them better merchandise themselves by helping them build a LinkedIn bridge from where they are now to where they want to go.

Joe claims over 40 years of leading multifunctional teams worldwide in engineering, logistics, life sciences, technology, aviation and environmental services from startups to

Fortune 500 companies in both private and public sectors. Follow or connect with him on LinkedIn to learn more: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/joefrankieiii/>

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