

Gaining Referrals from LinkedIn Connections

How to convince strangers to help you get a job

There is one surefire way to increase your chances of landing a first-round job interview In an increasingly competitive job market, something that can be a major challenge. What you need is a referral from someone at the company you want to work for. What if you don't know anyone at that company?

Once strategy is to use your free one-month trial of LinkedIn Premium (the Recruiter Lite version) to ask relevant individuals at each company. Ask for a short phone call to hear about their experiences. At the end of the call ask them for a referral to work there. Here's the shocking part: *every single person will likely say yes.*

Step 1: Sign up for a free one-month trial of LinkedIn Premium

Every LinkedIn member is eligible for a free one-month trial of LinkedIn Premium, which provides a handful of features not available to free accounts. By far the best of these features is InMail, which allows you to send messages to anyone among the more than 500 million users on LinkedIn. As far as I'm aware, there has been nothing else in the entire course of human history that gives regular people the ability to directly contact such a large pool of individuals.

Step 2: Find people on LinkedIn that you want to contact

For each employer that you're interested in, you should use the Recruiter Lite search parameters to select 2-3 people that you might reach out to. Finding the right people is not an exact science, but here are some possible criteria:

- Currently at the company
- 1st-degree connections
- LinkedIn premium members
- Job title similarity.
- Seniority
- 2nd-degree connections
- University Alumni
- Anything else you have in common
- Location, college major, hometown, interests, and so on. Everything on their LinkedIn profile is fair game.

There are a lot of factors to consider, but it's important to not over-analyze each person's profile in an attempt to find the "perfect" referral. Spend 10 minutes choosing 5-10 people at a company and move on. To stay organized, you can set up a new "project" in the recruiter interface for saving profiles that you want to contact.

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Step 3: Send InMail to the people you've found

First, before reaching out to anyone, make sure that your LinkedIn profile is completely updated and looks as impressive as possible. Some of the people you contact will look at your profile.

When you are ready to send a message to someone, the content of the message is important. To maximize your chances of receiving a response, ask them for a 15-minute phone call to discuss their experiences with the company. *Example messages to come later. Keep reading....*

Resist the urge to add extra details that aren't 100% necessary. The recipient will be less likely to read the whole message.

It's important to remember that this process is inherently hit-and-miss. Some (most) of the people you reach out to will not respond, and that's okay. Do not over-analyze the situation or be discouraged.

Step 4: Plan out a time to talk

If the person replies, make sure to be prompt in your response to them. They'll often ask you to send a few time slots in which you're available. As a courtesy, provide a wide range of availability in their time-zone. This can be inferred from their location listed on their LinkedIn profile.

People will often want to talk during their work-hours, most commonly on Fridays. This is especially true for consultants, though there are exceptions.

Step 5: Talk to them on the phone

You should be prepared for the call with a few questions for them, as you will be expected to guide the conversation. As with in-person interviews, you want to ask subjective questions. Do not ask concrete questions that could be answered with a Google Search.

- "How does this role differ from this role at [similar companies]?"
- "Based on your experience, what is the company culture like compared to other places you've worked?"
- "How does this job compare to [previous job listed on their LinkedIn profile]?"
- "What does the day-to-day work look like in this role?"
- "If I were to receive this job or a similar job, how do you recommend that I prepare for it?"
- "Do you have any general advice for me in my job search process?"

Then, after 10–15 minutes, ask the following question:

- "I know that the role is super competitive, so do you think it would be valuable for me to seek out a referral from you or someone else at the company?"

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You'll be surprised how often they say yes.

If they agree, you should then ask about how the referral process works, because it varies between employers. In smaller companies, they'll usually just send your resume to a recruiter. At larger companies, there is often a simple form that they can fill out. In most cases, the company will want you to apply online also. However, employers vary on whether you should submit the application before or after the referral. Make sure you find out. Often, the person you're speaking with won't know the details of the referral process offhand, so they'll need some time to inquire.

Step 6: Follow up

Your communication with each person should continue beyond the initial referral. This is necessary because it facilitates future contact if necessary. Maybe you'll need a referral again someday, but more importantly, it shows them that their favor meant a lot to you.

I recommend following up the next day with a LinkedIn connection request. This allows you to contact them again in the future after your premium subscription is over), including a message like this one: "Once again, thank you so much for speaking with me yesterday and referring me to [their company]! I'll keep you updated on the outcome of the application process."

In addition, you should update them once the outcome of that specific application has been decided. They'll often be notified by the recruiter about whether you got the job, but it's also nice to communicate with them personally. Also you should contact them again once you accept a job offer somewhere.

Step 7: Pay it forward

In the grand scheme of things, this is the most important step. When others ask you for career-help in the future, remember the people who helped you. Give advice. Be a mentor. Go above and beyond for them. Then, further in the future, the people that you helped will do the same for others, and so on. If you get the chance, please respond in the comment section of this article to let me know how you were able to network to find a job. Eventually, I'd like to publish an updated version of this article that includes information from others too.

And above all else: never give up hope. Rejection will happen. Do not allow yourself to get discouraged. Good luck!

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Examples

Hi [their name],

My name is [your name]. I'm currently looking into [position type] roles, and I saw that there was a posting at [their company].

I don't know too much about what this role looks like at [their company], and I'd like to hear about your experiences. Would you be able to chat on the phone for ~15 minutes sometime this week?

Best-
[your name]

During the phone call, ask them several questions about their work that would apply if you're interested in the role. At the end, I ask if they could refer you to their manager or "Wow, your job sounds like something I would love to do and I think my skills really align with the job. Would a referral help get an interview/job in the company?"

You may also try to target higher-level connections, by asking a friend or the first connection to refer you. I've seen some success in reaching out directly as well.

Also, make sure you **ALWAYS** send a "note" when connecting with someone. I've received some compliments on sending a note with the "connect" request.

Here are some other examples of InMail Messages you could tweak to fit your interests/background:

"Hi _____,

My name is _____. I'm looking into jobs within business consulting and saw a posting at Capgemini for a Business Analyst.

I don't know too much about what this role looks like at Capgemini, and I'd love to hear about your experience working in consulting at Capgemini.

Best –

Hi _____,

My name is _____. I'm looking into jobs within business consulting at Capgemini.

I saw you also went to Miami and thought I'd connect! I'd love to hear about your experience working in consulting at Capgemini. Would you have time to connect via phone briefly this week?

Thanks,

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Hi _____,

I'm currently studying at _____ and am interested in management consulting. I saw you also attended RIT prior to your career in consulting.

I'd love to get your perspective on how you used your RIT education to get into management consulting and what tips you might have for a future grad.

Thank you,

If you connect with someone and they don't respond to your message, SEND THEM A FOLLOW-UP. You could say something like:

Hi _____,

Thank you for connecting! Like I mentioned previously, I'm currently looking into jobs within business/technology consulting, and I saw that there was a posting at Capgemini for a Business Analyst role.

I'd love to hear about your experience working in consulting at Capgemini. Would you be able to chat on the phone for ~15 minutes sometime this week?

Thanks,

Remember...

never give up hope. Rejection will happen. Do not allow yourself to get discouraged. Good luck!