

# LinkedIn – Creating a profile, why and how to use it

Why LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is home to over 575 million professionals. Enhancing your profile can give you an advantage so that recruiters, consultants, entrepreneurs and hiring authorities can't resist connecting with you.

LinkedIn is not a place for social networking; it is strictly for professional networking and for staying informed about your contacts and industry. It's a place where you can exchange information, ideas and opportunities.

As the website says, LinkedIn is to reconnect with your past and present colleagues and classmates; it is to help power your career; and it is to share advice and expertise with other professionals in your industry.

- LinkedIn serves as a calling card
- Today's businesses use it as a culling tool when hiring new employees, if you're not here, you may not get the job
- Many employers won't even consider you without a profile
- Recruiters use it to find qualified candidates for open positions
- Can help you find jobs and keep up with industry trends
- Provides an outstanding resource with which to meet people and network within your chosen field
- Some employers use LinkedIn as a source to find candidates before posting a position

Now, let's get started.

## Creating a LinkedIn Profile That Attracts Attention

Sales professionals know the importance of branding, but not all students think of themselves as a brand. However, your online presence does represent you as a personal brand, so you need to make sure you are leveraging social platforms in the best possible way.

The summary section on your LinkedIn profile is by far the most important piece of information there. It has your value proposition and your branding statement. It is wise to research and identify the keywords and terminologies in your industry and include them in your profile. You can also make use of the summary section to identify your strengths and core capabilities. The content in your profile must come across as compelling information presented in a grammatically correct and coherent way, so you must proofread your account. LinkedIn offers the opportunity to ask for recommendations or endorsements from your former colleagues. This can be a useful tool in providing evidence of real world experience and work ethics. Including your email or phone number is a personal call, if you want to be contacted via telephone or email leave that info in the top 1/3rd of your profile. Be clear on the reason you are on LinkedIn.

Your LinkedIn profile is one of the most valuable tools in the spectrum of social networks. And there are a number of ways you can make it more buyer-centric to ensure that it attracts the right people: your prospects. Here are some key questions to think about while you're building your LinkedIn profile.

### **1. Do you have a professional and approachable photo?**

Your profile photo is one of the first impressions people will have of you. Eye-tracking software shows that it's almost always the first thing people's eyes are drawn to when they land on your page. Make sure you choose a photo that is professional but also friendly and welcoming. Straight-on head shots work best.

### **2. Is your profile informative?**

Sparse profiles leave people wondering what you do, what your qualifications are, and what you're leaving out. Make sure to fill out all the different areas of your profile to make the value you have to offer instantly apparent. With 88 percent of B2B professionals in the United States using LinkedIn, sales reps need to make sure their profiles are packed with engaging information and content.

### **3. Do your profile, summary and heading communicate the value that you offer?**

What industry are you in? What services do you offer? That should be immediately apparent from the second someone lands on your profile and reads your heading and summary. You want to give them a reason to stick around and contact you.

### **4. Does your summary statement resonate with your audience?**

You want your prospects to see your profile and see that you understand their business and have some valuable insight or information to offer them. Write a summary statement that resonates with your audience. Jen Mahon suggests something like: "These are some top challenges my previous clients were facing..."

### **5. What can you offer that is different or better than other people in your profession?**

Your profile should answer this question and leave the buyer with a clear understanding of how your solution stands out from others. Get specific with this, and mention how you have helped solve challenges for past clients. Make sure your profile is less of a resume about you and more about the buyer.

### **6. Is it easy for people to connect with you?**

Your profile should invite buyers to reach out to you. Include your email and other relevant contact information, and add links to your Twitter handle, blog or other networks you use for professional purposes.

### **7. Do you share new information and keep your profile current?**

Find and share content your prospects will find interesting. You can follow influencers, share your thoughts and point of view or start discussions in other ways. Members who join conversations on LinkedIn at least once a week are nearly 10 times more likely to be contacted for new business opportunities.

# Linked In checklist

**Write a compelling headline.** Your headline is the text below your name and above your location. It's "the most important piece of real estate on your entire LinkedIn profile," writes millennial workplace expert Lindsay Pollak in her book, "Becoming the Boss: New Rules for the Next Generation of Leaders." Along with your photo, this headline is the first item recruiters, hiring managers and other professional contacts will see – so use these 120 characters wisely.

Catherine Fisher, senior director of corporate communications at LinkedIn, suggest this template for a headline: "what you're doing now" plus "what you hope to do." She gives a few examples: "2015 USC Grad Seeking Entertainment Marketing Position," "Marketing Grad and Social Media Branding Specialist Seeking Internship" or, if you're still in school, "Econ Major and Aspiring Financial Analyst" If you get stuck, Pollak advises looking at the profiles of other people in your industry whom you admire. How do they describe themselves in their headlines?

**Upload a professional photo.** Great news: Potential employers are searching LinkedIn for someone with your skill set and experience. Bad news: They don't want to hire a mysterious gray avatar. Upload a photo of you, alone, in at least semi-professional gear. Take this step, and your profile will be 14 times more likely to be viewed, Fisher says.

**Summarize your story.** While a résumé distills you to a black-and-white list of bullet points, a LinkedIn profile allows you to show some personality and tell your story in its summary section. "This is the way to stand out and make recruiters want to meet you," writes U.S. News blogger Marcelle Yeager, in a post about [quick ways to improve your LinkedIn profile](#).

As LinkedIn itself suggests on the helpful resource, [students.linkedin.com](#), use the summary to "[d]escribe what motivates you, what you're skilled at and what's next."

**List your work experience.** Include internships and jobs – including part-time gigs – here. And don't be shy about showing off what you learned. "[Students] should be confident in the skills they've acquired, and they can really show them off in their profiles," Fisher says. Say you wrote press releases, [learned how to code](#) or managed social media in your internship or part-time job. Show off that hard work by listing it in your experience.

Results speak volumes, too, Fisher adds. Did you streamline the process for press release approvals, code a website or add 500 new Twitter followers? Include those results in your profile, or even upload relevant documents, like the press release you're most proud of.

**Add your skills.** You have the opportunity to add skills below the Experience section, so – go on – add coding or social media. When you do, your connections can publicly endorse you for those talents.

**Don't forget to include your education.** What was that you've been doing for the last four (or five or six) years? Oh, yeah. Filling out your Education section yields 10 times more profile views than leaving it blank, Fisher says. In addition to adding your university and areas of study, Fisher suggests uploading impressive examples of school work. (Even if you want to keep writing press releases, that term paper about oil in the Persian Gulf shows you're a critical thinker with writing skills.)

**Describe your volunteer work.** [Give some, get some](#): More than 40 percent of hiring managers perusing LinkedIn view volunteer work as work experience, Fisher says.

**Show off honors and awards, organizations and projects.** The opportunities to boast on LinkedIn are endless. Don't be shy about flaunting your points of pride. If you feel good about these experiences, there's a good chance employers will feel the same – and they won't know about these achievements unless you spell them out in your profile.

## The Extra Credit

**Continually update your profile.** "Don't build your profile and then abandon it," Fisher says. As you gain new skills and experiences – no doubt thanks to your standout LinkedIn profile – add them.

**Ask for recommendations.** Good: You wrote in your profile that you're skilled at writing press releases. Even better: Another professional publicly attests to this skill, too. "[A recommendation] serves as that seal of approval from your connections and offers credibility to your professional brand," Fisher says. She suggests asking peers, mentors and former managers and professors for recommendations. And give them some guidance, she adds. For example: "I'd appreciate if you could provide examples of how I excel in team environments."

**Join groups.** Fisher suggests searching for LinkedIn groups related to your target industry. For one, she says, you can likely learn a lot by reading what industry experts have to say. And two, if you share something relevant in a group discussion, hiring managers, future co-workers and other [professionals who can help your career](#) will see it. "It's really about being present and showing up to where the people are," Fisher says.

**Publish posts and status updates.** Take advantage of the publisher feature to write short-form blog posts about industry trends you've noticed, news items you're following and assignments you've

been working on. Sound daunting? Fisher points out that can you start by writing much shorter status updates, which, say, link to an interesting article you read.

Yes, this is extra work, but by sharing updates, engaging in groups and accruing a few A+ recommendations, you show potential employers that you're a serious (and hireable) professional. As Fisher puts it: "If you take the time to be thoughtful about how you show up on LinkedIn, it'll pay off."

## LinkedIn Connection Requests: The Valentine of the Professional World

Feb 16, 2016

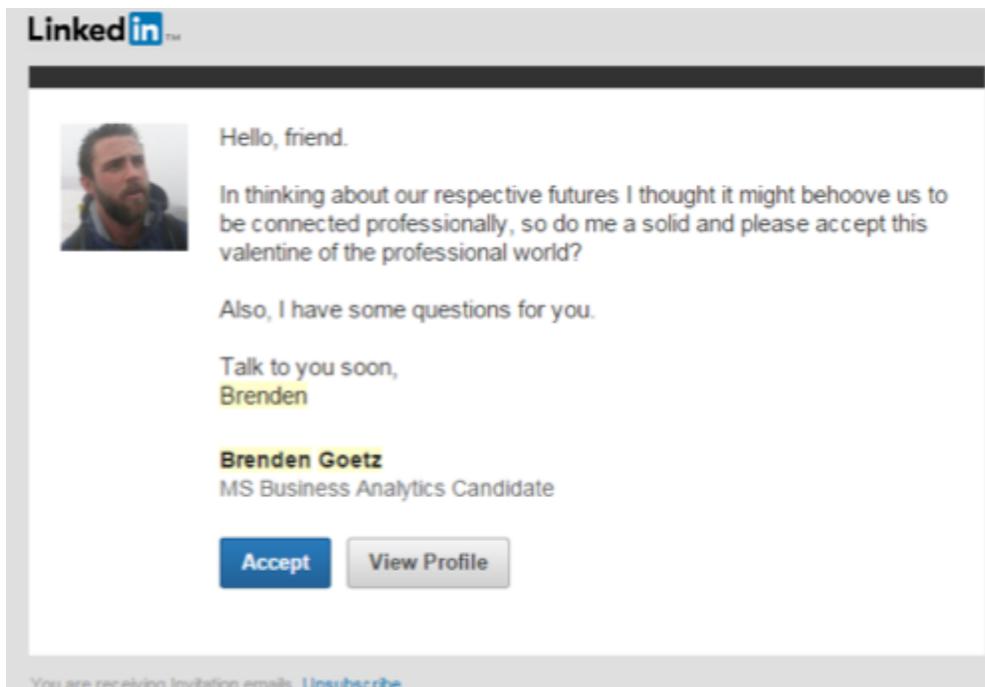


[Lindsey Day](#)

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In honor of Valentine's Day, Brenden, my friend and former co-worker, sent me what I consider to be the best LinkedIn Connection Request of all time.



Brenden took advantage of the ability to customize LinkedIn requests up to 200 characters. While I LOVE this invitation, making jokes can be a risk if you are reaching out to new contacts.

As a full-time Career Coach and the University of Denver's (DU) [LinkedIn expert](#), I frequently get questions about how to reach out to contacts through LinkedIn.

LinkedIn Connection Requests aren't just about what you write, but rather, writing the appropriate message given the context of the relationship.

There are three types of LinkedIn Connections:

- People You Already Know
- People You Know, but Not Very Well
- People You Don't Know, but Want to Get to Know

While it's always preferable to extend LinkedIn connection requests to people you have met before, learning the appropriate ways to customize LinkedIn invitations to new connections or [weak ties](#) can have a significant impact on your ability to create or grow your professional network.

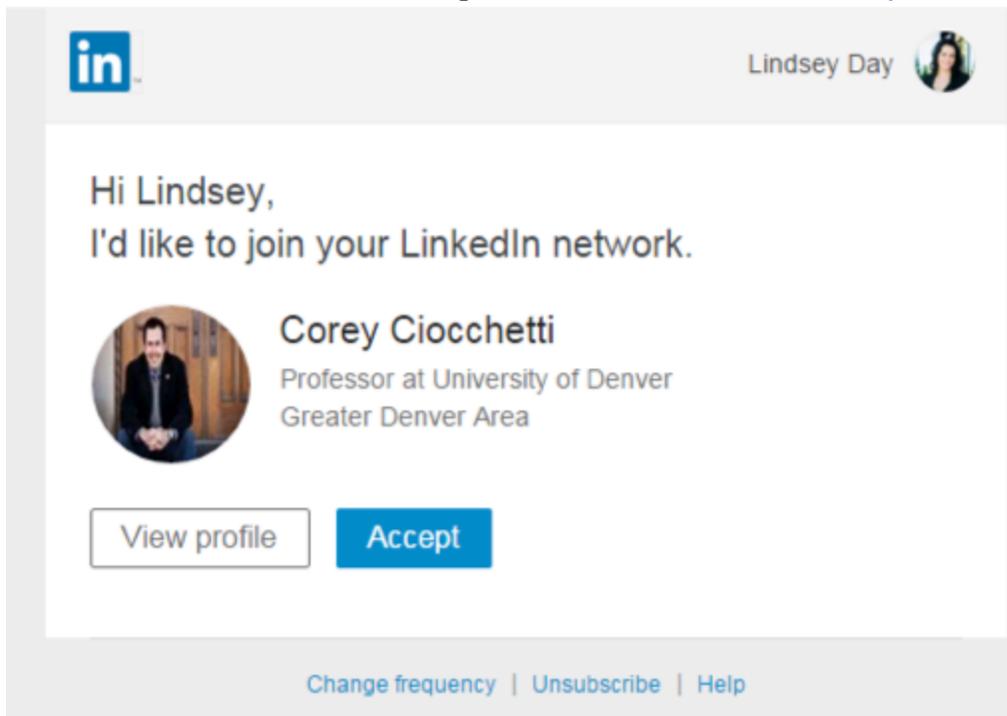
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### **People You Already Know:**

When you already know a connection well, there is less pressure on the text of your invitation. You can either use LinkedIn's default request or create an informal, "business casual" invitation, such as the message Brendan sent to me listed above.

#### *The Default Request:*

Take this default connection request from [DU Professor Corey Ciocchetti](#).



In this case, Professor C and I already know one another, so the default invitation is appropriate; however, note his professional photo and headline statement. These small details can make a huge difference in your success with LinkedIn. They demonstrate a professional image and remind me both who you are and how we know one another. Lucky for Professor C, I accepted his invitation.

### **People You Know, but Not Very Well**

If you have met a new contact and want to connect with them on LinkedIn to stay in touch, it might be appropriate to send them a connection request; however, keep in mind that some individuals, especially experienced, senior level professionals, prefer to keep their LinkedIn networks small with professionals they know well.

Keeping these tips in mind could increase your chances of getting new contacts to accept your request:

- At the event, ask if they are on LinkedIn and willing to connect with you to stay in touch. If they are expecting your request they are more likely to confirm your invitation when it comes.
- When you reach out, customize the connection request:
  1. Introduce yourself
  2. Remind them where you met them
  3. Clarify why you would like to stay in contact
  4. Send the invitation within 48 hours of meeting the contact so you stay top of mind

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“I am a member of the Denver Publishing Institute this year and have enjoyed your presentation and Tuesday lunches. Thanks for all the stellar advice and willingness to help! I’d love to stay in touch!”

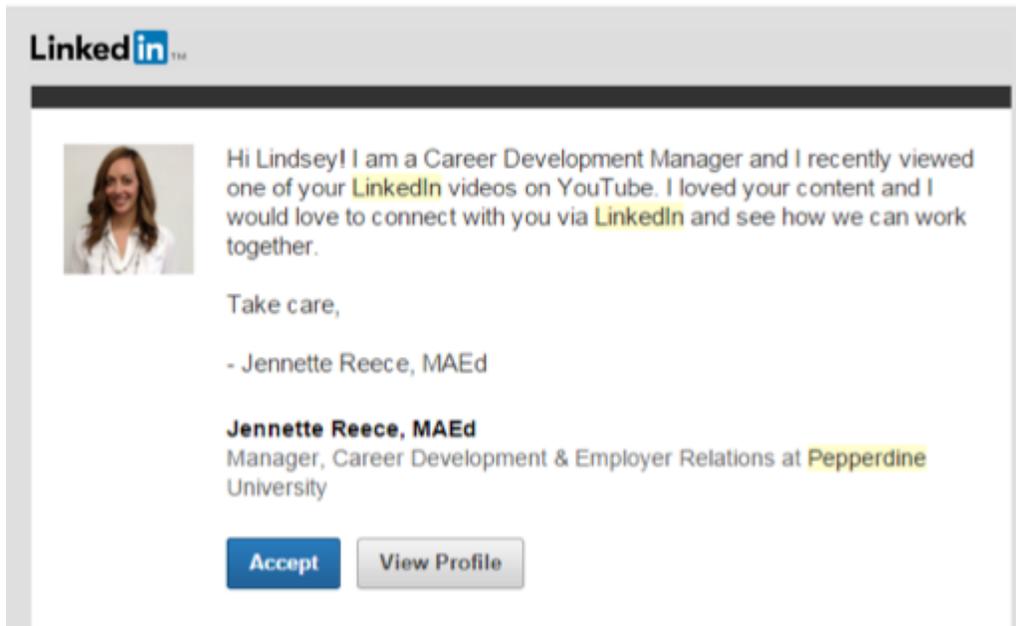
### **People You Don’t Know, but Want to Get to Know**

Many professionals simply are not comfortable accepting LinkedIn connection requests from people they don’t know. Don’t take this personally or confuse it to mean they aren’t willing to talk with you. Focus on the big picture question: What’s the best way to initiate contact with this new professional?

Even if you find this contact through LinkedIn, LinkedIn is often not the best way to message them. Creating a custom LinkedIn message signaling your intentions is an absolute must in this circumstance; however, it also could be advantageous to contact the professional through a different medium.

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Take this invitation I got requesting a possible speaking engagement.



Although I

had never met Jennette, she clarified that [she found me on YouTube](#) and explained why she wanted to connect. This “signaling” gesture clarified to me that she wasn’t a spammer.

If you are student, try something like:

“Hello Joe,

I am an English major at DU and we are looking for panelists to come to class and discuss careers in teaching. Are you open to speaking with students regarding your experience? If so, I’d love to connect!

-Ben Moore”

This method is especially effective when you have a clear-cut goal for why you need to contact this individual.

### *Message, Don't Connect*

Remember your overall goal in creating a LinkedIn network: building relationships.

Rather than sending them a connection request, consider sending them a message requesting [an informational interview](#). You can send this message through LinkedIn or email. This gesture is less threatening to new contacts and, *after* you meet them, then you can consider if you would like to add them to your network.

### **General Guidelines:**

When building your network on LinkedIn, keep the following guidelines in mind to maximize your chances of getting a response and making a new contact.

- LinkedIn is a powerful tool to find new connections in your field; However, finding a possible connection on LinkedIn, doesn't mean you should send them a LinkedIn connection request
- Many professionals do not like to connect with professionals they don't know
- Use LinkedIn to *find* possible contacts, but reach out to professionals you don't already know by using email or LinkedIn messages
- If you have no other choice but to send a connection request to someone you don't know be sure to:
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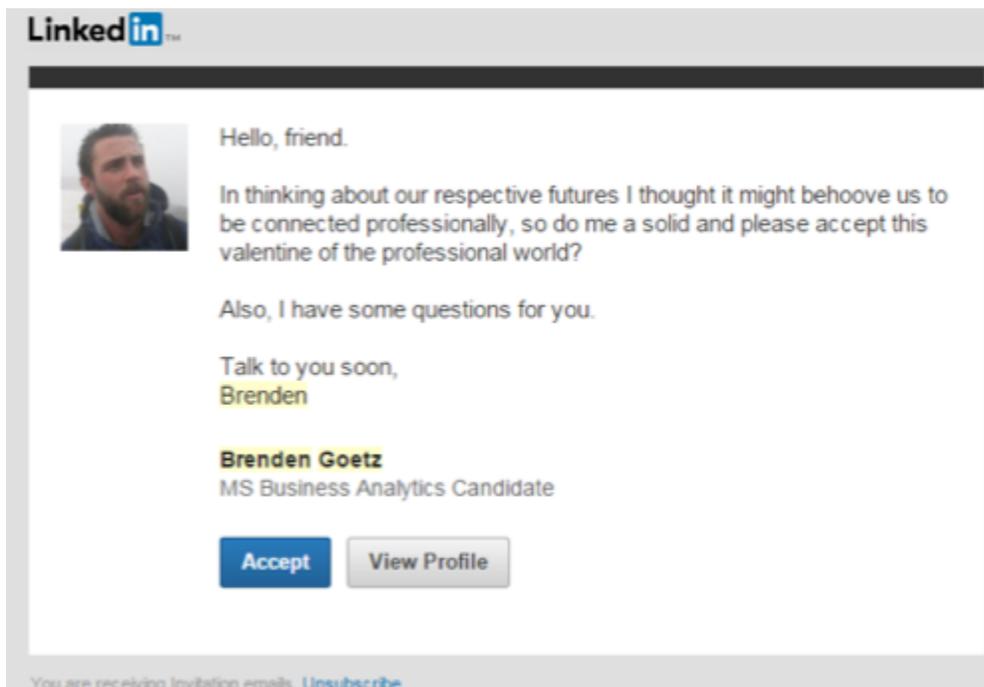


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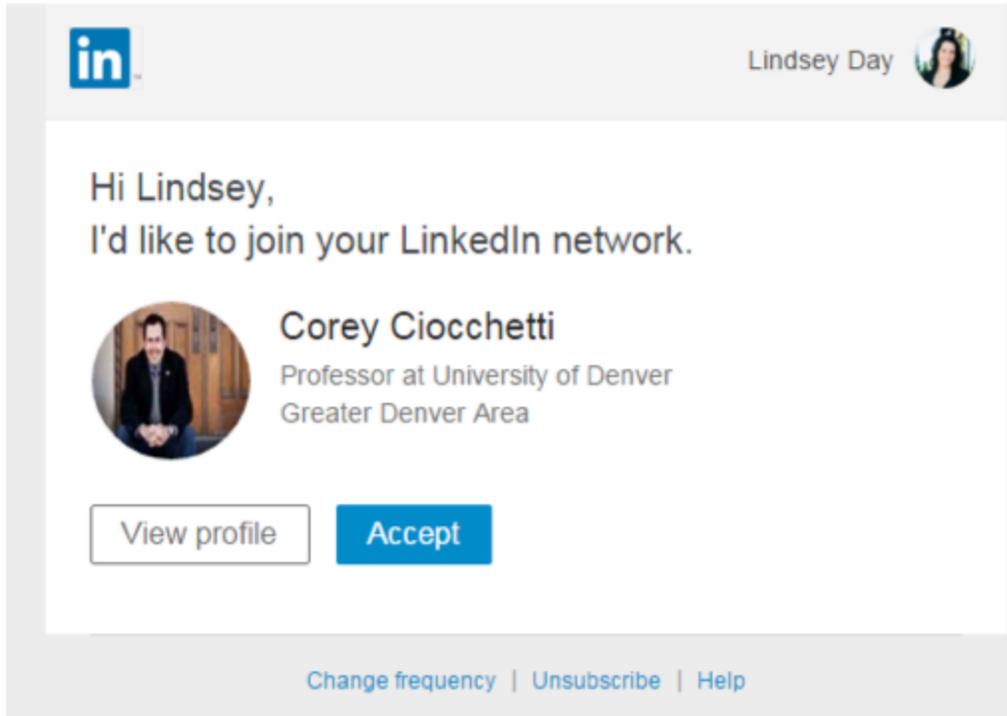
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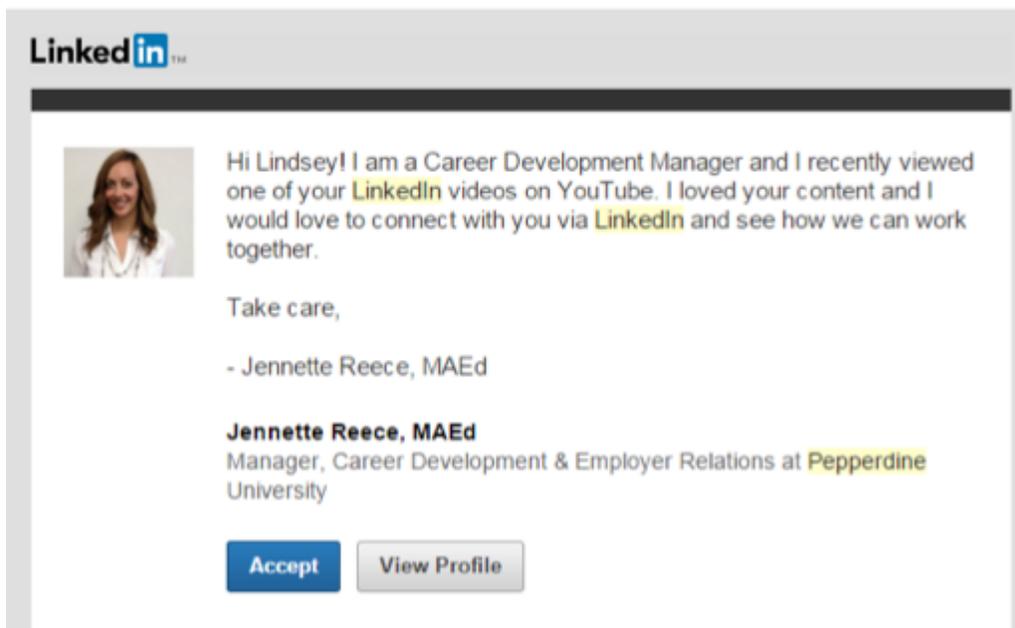
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