



Local Enterprise Office Clare

LinkedIn for Beginners: A Beginner's Guide

Course Summary

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Prepared by The Marketing Crowd *with the help of one of our AI colleagues* 😊

Course Overview

Introduction and course framing

A poll at the start showed that none of the participants considered themselves knowledgeable about using LinkedIn for marketing. Around 69% had used LinkedIn but weren't sure how to use it for marketing, and roughly 31% had never used it. Evan noted this is a beginner's course, but not a basic one. It gets more sophisticated as it progresses. The course was structured around a four-step framework for using LinkedIn for marketing:

1. Optimise your profile
2. Grow your network
3. Post content and get found in search
4. Generate inquiries and sales

Getting your bearings: the main areas of LinkedIn

Before going into detail, Evan gave an overview of LinkedIn's main areas.

Signing up: go to [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com) and click Sign Up. You join as a person, not as a business, filling in current company, job title, and previous roles.

Home/feed: logging in takes you to your feed, made up of posts and videos from your connections, similar to Facebook or Instagram.

Profile: this is your business representation on LinkedIn. It includes a cover photo, profile photo, name, headline (the one-line summary that appears wherever you show up on LinkedIn), an About section, a Featured section, your activity, work experience, education, skills, and recommendations (testimonials).

Network and connection levels: LinkedIn has three levels of connection.

- First-level (1): people you're directly connected to. Their posts can appear in your feed and yours in theirs, and you can private message them and view all their connections.
- Second-level (2): connections of your first-level connections (friend of a friend). Easy to send a connection request to.
- Third-level (3): connections of your second-level connections. Still within your network and easy to connect with.

Only first-level connections give you posting reach, private messaging, and the ability to request a testimonial from that person.

Searching for people: searching a name (Evan demonstrated with "Mark Murphy") lets you filter by connection level and shows a Connect, Message, or Follow button depending on your relationship to that person.

Company pages: businesses can have their own pages, separate from personal profiles. Following a page means their posts may appear in your feed.

Groups: like online forums, with over a million on LinkedIn covering almost any topic or industry (Evan gave examples of a Digital Marketing Professionals group with 102,000

members, a niche cheese marketing group with 6,000 members, and the Kerry Business Network with over 1,000 members). Some groups auto-accept members, others vet applications. Members of the same group can message each other even without being first-level connections.

Jobs: LinkedIn has a full jobs section with filters for seniority, location type (on-site/remote/hybrid), and posting date, plus the ability to set alerts and apply directly through the platform. Evan noted this wasn't the focus of the course but flagged it as useful if anyone is job hunting or knows someone who is.

Advertising: covered briefly at the very end (see Step 4 below).

Evan stressed that LinkedIn is not a hard-selling environment. It's a networking and content platform for business people who go there for information and interesting content, not sales pitches. Promotion works best when subtle: sharing good news, useful videos, or helpful tips rather than direct offers.

Step 1: Optimise your profile

Privacy and account settings (Settings and Privacy, accessed via the profile dropdown)

- **Visibility when viewing other profiles:** choose between showing your name and headline, showing "someone at [company/institution]," or fully anonymous ("private mode"). Trade-off: if you hide your identity from people you visit, you also won't be told who visits your profile. Evan uses private mode by default but switches to name-and-headline when he wants to deliberately get on a potential customer's radar (visiting their profile prompts them to check him out in return).
- **Public profile settings:** controls whether your profile appears in Google search results, and what non-connections ("strangers") can see (background photo, experience, education, recommendations, etc.). First-level connections always see everything regardless of this setting.
- **Custom profile URL:** you can set a clean URL (e.g. [linkedin.com/in/evanmangan](https://www.linkedin.com/in/evanmangan)) instead of a default string of numbers, useful for linking from a website.
- **Email visibility:** Evan restricts this to first-level connections only.
- **Connections visibility:** by default, your first-level connections can see who else you're connected to. Evan leaves this on because it's helpful for others in his network, but noted that people like recruitment consultants often switch it off to protect valuable contacts from being "raided" by competitors.
- **Follow vs Connect button:** by default your profile shows a Connect button. You can switch this to make Follow the primary action instead (via Settings and Privacy > Visibility > Followers > "Make follow primary"). People who want to build an audience without necessarily connecting with everyone often do this.

Building out the profile itself

- **Profile photo and cover image:** essential — a profile with no photo signals inactivity. Cover images can be a plain uploaded photo, or a custom-designed image with text made in Canva (select "LinkedIn Background Photo" as the template size, upload your image, use "Set image as background" via right-click, then add a text

heading). Evan cautioned against cluttered designs — a busy background with unreadable overlaid text looks worse than a clean photo.

- **Headline:** appears wherever your name shows up across LinkedIn. Should convey who you are, what you do, and your company in a short line. Evan's tip: ask ChatGPT (or Gemini/Claude) to "act like an expert in LinkedIn profiles for marketing" and suggest 5 headline options, then pick and adapt one. LinkedIn's built-in "Get AI suggestions" feature requires Premium (around €60/month), so external AI tools are a free alternative.
- **Contact info:** add phone, website, and links to other platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Visibility of this is controlled by the earlier privacy settings.
- **Prominent website link** (appears at the top of the profile, e.g. "Watch my courses online"): edited via the pencil icon, scroll to the bottom, "Website — add a link that will appear at the top of your profile." Note: one participant (Noreen) did not have this option visible on her profile; Evan suspected LinkedIn may be phasing it out for accounts that haven't used it, and asked others to check whether they had it (unresolved during the session).
- **About section:** the "elevator pitch," read by many visitors within about 30 seconds of landing on the profile. Should be framed around how you help people if you're using LinkedIn for business generation (e.g. "I help businesses increase their sales through AI and digital marketing"), rather than just a CV-style summary. Evan's own About section leads with what he does, adds a credibility marker (20,000+ Irish businesses trained), a little personal/career background, then a soft call to action to visit the website. Can be drafted with ChatGPT, but Evan was clear it should always be edited to sound like the individual, not an obviously AI-written block of text.
- **Featured section:** highly visible, appears near the top of the profile. Used to pin previous posts/videos (via the three-dot menu on a post under Activity, "Feature on top of profile") or to add a link to any external page (via Add a Link, paste the URL, LinkedIn pulls in a thumbnail image which can be replaced with a custom one). Evan uses this to drive people to his one-to-one coaching page and to his Digital Marketing School.
- **Activity section:** shows visitors your recent posts, comments, and videos — a good indicator of how active and engaged you are. Evan noted that comments you leave on others' posts are also visible here, so be mindful of what you comment on.
- **Experience (work history):** add roles via "Add a role." Evan advised tailoring the level of detail to what's useful for credibility — he goes into real detail on his own past roles since his background is part of his value proposition, but said this is optional and business-dependent (e.g. a guesthouse owner might not need much detail on prior unrelated jobs). Media (images, videos, documents, links) can be attached to each role — Evan attached links to his coaching and staff training pages under his current role as a third way of driving profile visitors to his website (in addition to the top link and the Featured section).
- **Education, Skills, and other optional sections:** added via "Add a Section." Skills can be endorsed by first-level connections. Other optional sections include volunteer experience, awards, languages, and causes supported.
- **Recommendations (testimonials):** requested via a first-level connection's profile (three-dot menu > "Request a recommendation," only available for first-level connections). The request form asks for the nature of the relationship (e.g. client, manager) and lets you write a personalised message — Evan strongly recommended

writing a specific, thoughtful request rather than a generic one-liner, and suggested asking the person to spend "60 seconds" on it to make the ask feel manageable. The person receives an email notification; once submitted, the recommendation goes to the profile owner for review before it's published, so you stay in control of what appears.

Evan's overarching advice for this step: decide what you want to get out of LinkedIn first (job-seeking/networking vs generating business), and let that decision shape every part of the profile, especially the links and calls to action.

Step 2: Grow your network

- **Closed vs open networking:** closed networkers only connect with people they know personally (useful for those using LinkedIn purely for job/recruitment purposes). Open networkers connect broadly, treating connections as a marketing audience. Evan uses an open approach since founding his own business, having previously been a closed networker while employed by larger companies.
- **Why network size matters:** only first-level connections are likely to see your posts in their feed. Evan illustrated the compounding effect: with 10 first-level connections each having 100 connections of their own, a second-level network of 1,000 and third-level of 100,000 is reachable and easy to connect into — but your posts are still only directly seen by your 10 first-level connections. With 1,000 first-level connections, the reach (and the compounding second/third-level network) is dramatically larger.
- **How to find people to connect with:**
 1. Search for a specific person by name (as demonstrated with Mark Murphy), then filter by connection level.
 2. Browse a well-connected first-level connection's full connections list (click on their connection count) to find new second-level people to invite.
 3. Search by company and role (e.g. "Fexco Marketing"), then refine using the "Current companies" and location filters to target people who currently work somewhere relevant, in a particular office/region.
 4. Browse the member list of a relevant group (e.g. Kerry Business Network) — members of the same group can message each other even without being connected, and can be sent connection requests directly.
- **Personalised connection requests:** when sending a request, you can add a personal note rather than the generic template. Free LinkedIn accounts are limited to 5 personalised invitations per month, so Evan advised saving these for the connections that matter most (e.g. a specific target company contact) and using the generic template for lower-priority ones (e.g. someone met briefly at a conference).
- **AI prompt for connection strategy:** ask ChatGPT (or similar) something like: "I am a [role] in [location], and I want to grow my connections. Act like a LinkedIn expert and brainstorm 20 tactics I could employ to grow my connections." Evan also demonstrated asking for advice tailored to a specific business type (e.g. a parenting coach), which generated suggestions like connecting with HR managers and school principals as potential referral sources.
- **Posting frequency Q&A:** a participant asked whether there's a recommended posting frequency. Evan's answer: there's no fixed rule — post whenever you have genuinely interesting content, rather than sticking to an arbitrary schedule. Posting

more often can help visibility and the algorithm while you're building a presence, but low-quality or overly frequent salesy content will be suppressed by the algorithm regardless of frequency.

Step 3: Post content and get found

How the LinkedIn algorithm works

Evan explained this in the context of how all major social platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) operate: an AI algorithm profiles what each user finds engaging (based on watch time, likes, comments, shares, saves) and uses that to decide what to show them, while separately evaluating each piece of new content by testing it with a small audience first and expanding distribution if engagement is strong (a "snowball" effect). Content that is overtly salesy tends to get suppressed because it generates poor engagement; helpful, interesting content performs better and, in turn, supports subtle promotion.

Types of posts

- **Standard post:** text (up to 3,000 characters — around one and a half A4 pages, versus Instagram's 1,200-character limit) plus optional media. Created via "Start a post" on the home feed. Can include up to around 5 hashtags (not essential, but helpful for discoverability — clicking a hashtag shows all posts using it, and the words also function as searchable text). Posts can be scheduled for a future date/time, and audience can be restricted to first-level connections only or opened to everyone (and even shared into a specific group). Posts can be edited or deleted at any time via the three-dot menu, either from the feed or from your profile's Activity section.
- **Image posts:** Evan recommended using a 4:5 aspect ratio (Canva template: "Instagram post 4x5") as a format that works well across Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and stands out more in the feed than a smaller landscape image.
- **Video posts:** maximum length 10 minutes, but Evan advised keeping videos short, since the algorithm rewards videos that are watched to completion or rewatched, which is far more likely with short-form content. Portrait-orientation video takes up more feed space and draws more attention than landscape video.
- **Multi-image posts:** attach several images to one post; viewers browse through them. Evan warned this format doesn't work well for images that are designed with a lot of text (e.g. slide-style graphics), since they can get visually cropped or lost.
- **Carousels (swipeable posts):** these are not a distinct native format — created by attaching a PDF document to a post (via "Add a document," not "Add media"), where each page of the PDF becomes a swipeable slide. Evan demonstrated building one in Canva (Instagram 4x5 template, multiple pages, each with an image set as background), then downloading as "PDF Standard" rather than individual PNGs, and attaching that PDF to a LinkedIn post.
- **Articles:** a longer-form option similar to a blog post, created via "Write an article." Supports a cover image (recommended dimensions 1920x1080px), rich text formatting (bold, italics, headings, bullet points), and embedded images, videos (including YouTube embeds via "Add embed"), and hyperlinked text. Useful for more substantial or highly visual content that a standard post can't accommodate. The cover image becomes the thumbnail shown in connections' feeds when the article is shared.

Company pages

Company pages are separate from personal profiles and are created via "For Business" > "Create a company page," selecting "Company" (as opposed to Showcase, for a specific product, or Education, for a school/college). Setup involves uploading a logo, cover image, description, and tagline (all editable later via "Edit Page"). Pages can publish the same post types as personal profiles (image, video, carousel, article) and can be previewed via "View as Member."

Key limitation: unlike a personal profile, a company page cannot search for people and send connection or follow invitations directly, and cannot send private messages. The one exception is the "Invite to Follow" feature (found bottom-left on the page when viewing as admin), which lets you invite your own first-level personal connections to follow the page — capped at 50 invitations per month.

Should you have one? Evan's guidance: for a one-person or very small business, a company page is usually unnecessary extra overhead (another audience to build from scratch) with limited added benefit, since the personal profile already offers more functionality (searching, connecting, private messaging). Company pages make more sense for larger businesses with multiple staff who don't want to use their personal profiles for company promotion, businesses that expect to be searched for directly, or those wanting to post jobs and build broader PR presence.

Step 4: Generate inquiries and sales (recap and extension)

This step largely drew together points made earlier in the course:

- Keep the profile focused on driving visitors toward one or two key products or services.
- It's fine to occasionally post more overtly promotional content (e.g. about an upcoming course), but Evan suggested this should be a small minority of posts (around 10-20%), with the majority being genuinely helpful or interesting content.
- **Lead generation via a free offer:** Evan demonstrated his own approach — a free mini-course (e.g. on Google Gemini) that requires visitors to sign up with their email, which also opts them into email marketing, described as "helpful, informative, but occasionally salesy." This can be shared via LinkedIn posts or in relevant groups.
- **LinkedIn advertising:** available only to accounts with a company page. Demonstrated via the "Boost" button on an existing page post, which converts it into an ad. Targeting options include location (country or narrower, e.g. specific counties), industry, job function, and seniority level. Evan ran a live example targeting senior marketing professionals in Ireland: LinkedIn suggested a daily minimum spend of \$10, offering reach of roughly 1,900-2,000 people for around €70. For comparison, Evan noted that on Facebook, roughly €5 can reach around 3,000 people, and typical costs per click on Facebook/Instagram (25 cent-€1) are far lower than on LinkedIn (€4-7). His conclusion: LinkedIn advertising tends to suit larger businesses selling higher-value products or services where a single customer is worth a significant amount, and is generally too expensive to be cost-effective for most small businesses.

Closing Q&A

- **Social media scheduling tools:** asked to recommend a tool to post across multiple platforms at once. Evan suggested Buffer (buffer.com) for beginners as simpler to use, noting Hootsuite is also well regarded but more complex and typically needs its own training. Buffer connects to Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and TikTok, and allows captions to be tailored per platform even when posting to all at once.

This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues 😊