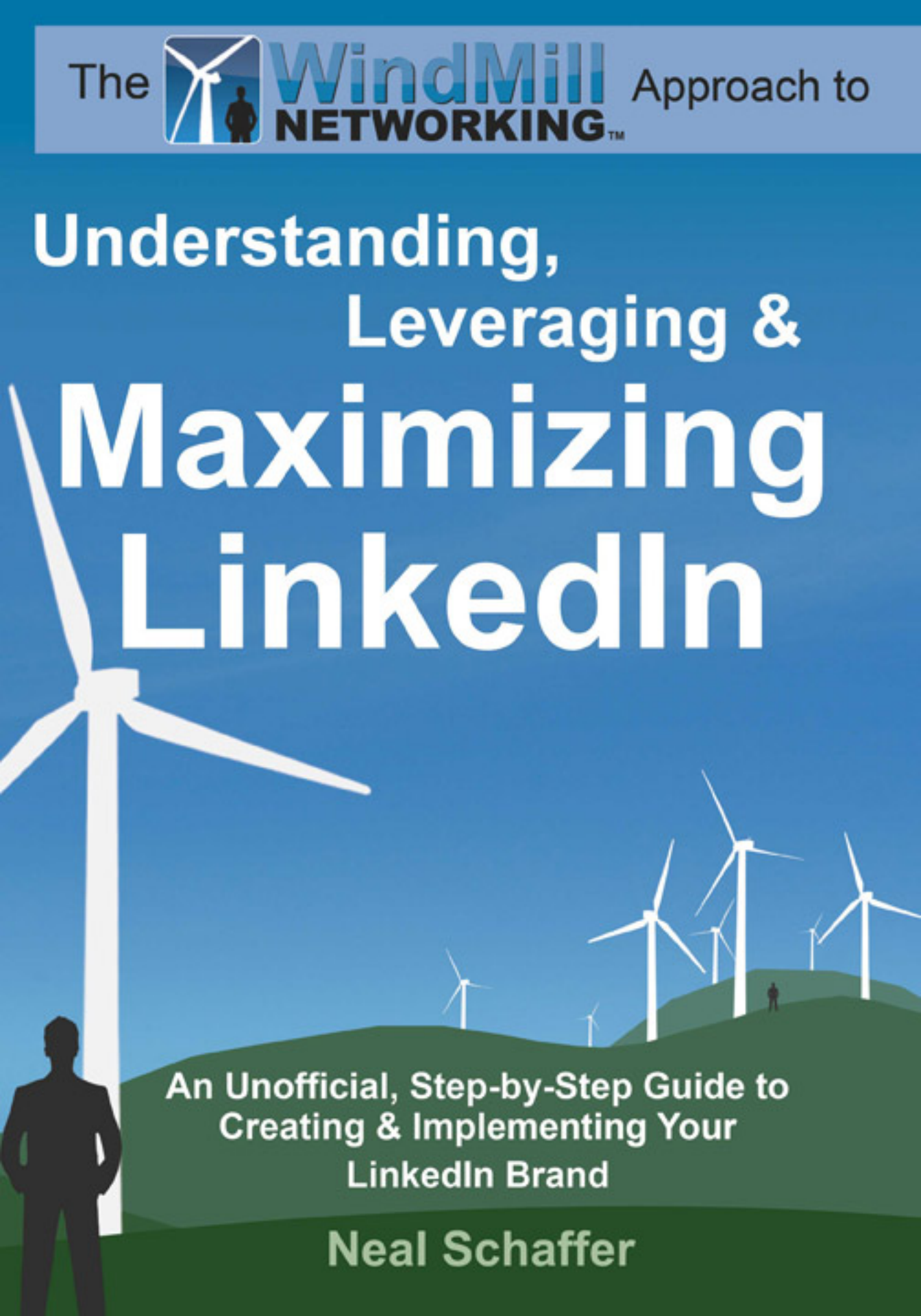


The  **WindMill**
NETWORKING™ Approach to

Understanding, Leveraging & Maximizing LinkedIn



An Unofficial, Step-by-Step Guide to
Creating & Implementing Your
LinkedIn Brand

Neal Schaffer

THE WINDMILL NETWORKING APPROACH TO

**Understanding,
Leveraging &
Maximizing
LinkedIn**

**AN UNOFFICIAL, STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATING
& IMPLEMENTING YOUR LINKEDIN BRAND**

SOCIAL NETWORKING IN A WEB 2.0 WORLD

Neal Schaffer

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Preface

“LinkedIn? I don’t get it.”

“Networking? That’s not for me.”

“Selling yourself on a social networking site? Isn’t that unprofessional?”

“I just think it’s a waste of time. I don’t see why I should be on LinkedIn to begin with.”

“I’ve been on for a year and haven’t gotten any value out of it.”

“LinkedIn is just for recruiters and people looking for work, isn’t it?”

The confusion about LinkedIn, social networking, and utilizing social media sites like LinkedIn to find a job, a candidate for your company, to sell something, or to expand your professional network is unprecedented. Mass media features stories about LinkedIn on a daily basis; however, many people still see little value in using the site. Nevertheless, everyone seems to want to understand what they *may* be missing by not using LinkedIn. After all, I am writing this in the midst of a severe recession, and the media says that being on LinkedIn will somehow help you find a job. With this in mind, shouldn’t someone write a book about understanding how LinkedIn can help them achieve career and professional objectives?

If you could reach your career and professional objectives through creating your own LinkedIn Brand, it follows that any book about LinkedIn should also help its readers brand themselves.

There are other books and online resources related to LinkedIn. I wanted to take the approach of providing a social networking framework to understand LinkedIn from within. Furthermore, I wanted to provide a thorough approach, combined with step-by-step advice, regarding how to use LinkedIn to reach your objectives. I also think, regardless if you are using LinkedIn for

Understanding, Leveraging & Maximizing LinkedIn

personal uses or on behalf of your employer, the idea of developing your own “LinkedIn Brand” goes hand-in-hand with reaching your LinkedIn Objective; it is an exercise that should be an essential part of any LinkedIn-related book. I want everyone to understand the role LinkedIn plays in the bigger picture.

Let’s take a look at the initial problem at hand: in my experience, most people do not fully understand what LinkedIn and social media are all about. Part of the problem why social media is sometimes misunderstood: the user interface on some of these social media sites is either too simple (Twitter), too complex (Facebook), or doesn’t offer enough hand-holding to help new users better leverage the site (LinkedIn). On the other hand, there are some generations that are *still* intimidated by *any* social networking site.

With that in mind, concentrating on LinkedIn, I wanted to write a book that not only gives strategic tips on navigating LinkedIn, but also helps you achieve specific objectives while utilizing the site. I decided to write this book because people lack an advanced understanding of the full value that LinkedIn, as well as other social networking sites, can provide. I also want to provide a framework for you, the reader, to better understand social networking. LinkedIn is one of many tools designed to help you achieve whatever objective you might have in terms of networking. The personal brand you develop for each site will undoubtedly be slightly different because of the different functionality, demographics and “atmosphere” each site creates.

I can share a fresh perspective on LinkedIn and social networking because I started from scratch. I spent most of my career overseas. When I was ready to look for a job for the first time in my native United States, I realized that the rules of the game had changed. My professional network revolved around Asia or at headquarters of companies that I worked for that aren’t located in my native Southern California. My friends were in the Bay Area or scattered across the country. I had no strategy to attack the so-called “hidden job market” which I had only learned about after reading *What Color is Your Parachute?* No recruiters were calling me because they didn’t know I existed.

“Neal, you just have to get your resume out there and let everyone know you exist,” one of my brothers advised me.

Preface

So what did I do? I registered at every single job site I could find on the Internet. 99% of the “jobs” that came my way were either below my level, irrelevant, or were trying to take me down a career path that I didn’t want to follow. My job search was going nowhere, and yet I was spending several hours a day on the computer surfing the Internet “looking” for something that just didn’t exist. I knew that I had to “network” but beyond contacting some ex-colleagues, I had no clue how to go about it. I was intimidated by networking events where I did not know anyone. What could I do?

At this point in my career, I went back to my roots as a seasoned sales executive. I realized I needed to reinvent my approach to searching for a job into an exercise about selling “me.”

In order to do so, I had to better define the following:

- **My Product** – me
- **My Brand** – what differentiates me from everyone else in the market; what are my unique strengths
- **My Market** – target industries, companies and titles
- **My Tools** – resume and web profiles
- **My Marketing Strategy** – how to get the message out and acquire leads

I had to imagine that I was starting a new business development role in a new industry for a new company, only this time the product was me. I did this by first concentrating on utilizing LinkedIn. I reached out to professional networking groups and other individuals that I met through LinkedIn.

This is when I really started becoming a heavy LinkedIn user. I used it to help expand my real and virtual networks. After finding a job and then dealing with the elimination of my position soon thereafter, I found myself ahead of the social networking game. I knew right away I had to be utilizing LinkedIn to attack the “hidden job market.”

Understanding, Leveraging & Maximizing LinkedIn

I began to realize that social networking is really a form of social insurance of which we all can never have enough. Somewhere along the way, I created my own style of networking, which is extremely effective in both understanding and utilizing social media:

Windmill Networking

You can waste a lot of time online on social media sites, so you first have to understand what it means to “network” online in a Web 2.0 context. That is what **Windmill Networking** is all about. With a particular objective in mind (which I will help you create) and a plan to implement your brand via LinkedIn, you can successfully sell yourself or your product.

Although I first defined *Windmill Networking* as a way to help me find a job, I realized that this process, along with other forms of social media, are about much more than career management. These resources encompass a whole range of professional activities.

Before proceeding, I would like to point out a disclaimer of this book. The historical perspective that comes with writing a book is almost irrelevant in today’s Web 2.0 world; change is constant due to the speed at which technological advances are implemented through the Internet. LinkedIn began in 2004, took a few years to gain membership in significant numbers, and now has grown its membership to 40 million people. Furthermore, just when you think you have LinkedIn figured out, significant functionalities like Applications or new Group features are introduced (which has forced me to rewrite a few chapters)! LinkedIn sometimes introduces these features without previously informing their free members. With that in mind, please understand that when you implement what I teach, the functionality may have been slightly altered.

In a constantly evolving medium like LinkedIn, where User Generated Content (UGC) is constantly changing the makeup of its user interface, it is difficult to summarize the historical perspective because we are developing it as we speak! I feel it is important to look at LinkedIn and the role it plays in social networking and the development of Web 2.0 technology. Doing so is my best effort to give some historical perspective to the reader and to “future-proof” the content of my book.

Preface

For real-time commentary that follows LinkedIn's changes as they happen, please visit my blog at www.WindmillNetworking.com. I created and maintained this blog (which was formerly located at <http://linkedinquestions.wordpress.com>) to keep readers informed of the latest developments. My blog also provides additional insight into the world of LinkedIn and social media. In addition to my blog, I hope to publish new editions of this book as LinkedIn evolves.

To be honest with you, I never thought I would “cross the chasm” from blogging to end up writing an actual book about LinkedIn. As time progressed and the economy worsened, more people came to me asking for advice not only about using LinkedIn, but also about looking for a job and utilizing LinkedIn for business. One day, my lovely wife mentioned, “E-books are becoming very popular, so why don't you write one?” Seeing that I was in transition at the time, I thought, why not write a *real* book! And so I did!

Through the process of writing this book, I am learning a great deal about LinkedIn, social networking, and myself. I consider myself a humble lifelong learner and am always excited to meet new people and have new experiences. I hope this book embodies this principle. In fact, I hope this book helps you understand how Windmill Networking can work for you. It is my dream that writing this book allows me to reach and potentially network with more people than I could ever reach using any one social networking site.

As you read this book, you will come to understand that I am sometimes critical of LinkedIn and opinionated about its different features. Let me state here there is no bigger fan of LinkedIn than me! Please take this criticism as exactly what it is—my constructive opinion of how LinkedIn can reach its full potential in the world of social networking. I will not paint a rosy picture of all of its features if I do not think the features are worthy of such praise. You, the reader, want to quickly understand how to leverage and maximize your LinkedIn user experience; I will help you do so by offering a guided tour, sprinkled with my colorful analysis, of the pros and cons of each feature through the lens of Windmill Networking. Once again, these are my personal opinions; however, they are based on real experiences of a power user whose only intention is to help you, the reader, quickly achieve your career and professional objectives using LinkedIn.

Understanding, Leveraging & Maximizing LinkedIn

Finally, where do the windmills fit in, you ask?

I was looking for a way to explain social networking to those who either do not understand it or seldom engage in it. I stumbled across this terminology one day while in the shower, in the midst of writing this book (I know it sounds corny but it's true)! I had subconsciously visualized a picture of a modern wind turbine farm for my LinkedIn blog site, and I knew there was some reason why I thought this was a striking image.

Figure 0.1 Discovering Windmill Networking



The concept of windmills illustrates how we as social creatures can reach our highest potential when plugging ourselves into common grids. Windmill Networking, as you will discover in coming chapters, is not only natural for us to grasp, but is also something the Web 2.0 world provides for us that earlier generations did not have. It should be cherished and used for maximum benefit.

Preface

I could not finish this Preface without giving thanks to all of the people who have supported me during this venture, beginning with the one who gave me the idea to begin it—my lovely wife Miwako. Luna and Kyle, my adorable children, were very understanding of daddy doing his “work” late in the evening. I also received tremendous love and support from my Mom & Dad, brothers and sisters Ira, Denise, Mike, Rina, Larry, Christie, Gary & Valerie. Cousins like Dylan Schaffer. Nephews like Jimmy Giokaris (who created the wonderful cover art, logos, illustrations, and formatting of this book—going way beyond my original expectations both in terms of quality as well as time invested!) and his girlfriend Whitney Sones. And Breanne Cooley, my super editor, who not only both surpassed my highest expectations with her excellent editing abilities, but also provided invaluable guidance and advice that greatly improved the way I communicate my message to you. Close behind is my proofreader, Norman Naylor, who blew me away with his deep understanding of the English language and his devotion to spending significant time in helping out a friend. Many close friends gave me their support, including Eric Ho, Eric Tom, James Wang, Larry Liu and Phil Ting. The people that inspired me to take on this task are also the people that I had not even met a year ago—the people who started out as part of my “virtual” LinkedIn network—who quickly became part of my real network. Real people volunteered their time to help me out, always with a “Pay It Forward” attitude. Sometimes, even though our meetings were brief, they often had a lasting impact and thus positively affected the creation of this book. There are way too many to list here, but the people who I am the most thankful for are: my Laguna Niguel Connectors friends Hank Blank and Randy Miller, for teaching me much about networking; Cindy Pickens, for her support and that of her tremendous CafeNet group; Kathy Simmons of Netshare, for giving me the confidence that I could write a great book; my awesome and inspiring Orange County Twitter friends Paul Tran, Ted Nguyen, Rochelle Veturis, and Diana Wei; networking friends like Sven Johnston (We are Orange County!), Raymond Wah, Paul Andrew, and Jeff Gaul; Mr. Pay It Forward himself Check Hester; all of my So Cal Sushi and Izakaya Club friends; Bob Fine from Cool Twitter Conferences; Tim Tyrell-Smith; along with way too many others to list. The above are only a few of the many people that I had the chance to physically meet. There were many, many more who I exchanged emails and sometimes phone calls with (including you, Mr. Gnarly Young Entrepreneur, Bradley Will!); I can only hope that when you read this you realize that it is you that I am also thanking.

PART I:

CREATING YOUR LINKEDIN BRAND

Your LinkedIn strategy and brand can only be properly formulated after understanding LinkedIn and the role it plays in social networking in the 21st century. I introduce the concept of Windmill Networking to help you “cross the chasm” and embrace LinkedIn, social networking, and social media. This section of the book will give you the framework through which you can begin thinking about what you want to achieve on LinkedIn, including examples of popular user scenarios. At the end of this section, assuming you have already registered as a user at www.linkedin.com, we will go through the creation of your user profile and help you begin to develop your own LinkedIn Brand.



Chapter 1

Introducing Windmill Networking

- **A Personal Introduction**
- **A Social Networking Primer**
- **Utilizing Windmill Networking to Understand Social Networking and LinkedIn**
- **Where Does Windmill Networking Fit In?**

A Personal Introduction

My LinkedIn Credentials

If you are reading this book, you may be standing where I stood a little more than a year ago—before putting pen to paper. Starting out on LinkedIn, you want to get to the next level, to understand what you might be missing, to make some sense of what you should be doing on LinkedIn. I don't intend this book to be a simple user's manual about LinkedIn. During the last year I have lived the "LinkedIn Life," starting out with a close network, slowly expanding it, and then becoming a LION, or a LinkedIn Open Networker. Along the way I created a filter, Windmill Networking, through which you can look to separate yourself from LinkedIn; using Windmill Networking, you can look at LinkedIn from a completely different, yet invaluable angle. The reader will find this experience, combined with this pre-requisite manual of LinkedIn's features, most valuable. He or she will then be able to reflect upon and implement their own LinkedIn Brand.

According to my own research, I currently now have the more LinkedIn connections than anyone else where I reside in Orange County, California. At my current level of nearly 17,000 connections in early August, I am almost in the top 50 of all LinkedIn users worldwide. But more importantly, while becoming connected to so many people, I have utilized LinkedIn to search for and apply to jobs, to research potential customers, to find sales channels, to learn a great deal about many subjects, and to create my own groups to find like-minded professionals. I have also reestablished contact with old colleagues while helping people in various ways. I have most importantly made acquaintances with many people who are willing to spend a lot of time helping others. It has been a magical adventure I hope you all have a chance to experience on your own. That is really the motivation for me to write this book, to share as others have shared with me, and to give back to the wonderful LinkedIn community. As I will mention in the concluding chapter of this book, the more we connect with each other and become better

A Personal Introduction

LinkedIn users and better networkers, the positive effects and increased value will be passed on to everyone within our networks.

Like many of you, I received my first LinkedIn invitation a few years ago from someone whom I cannot remember. I signed up one day in 2004 (turns out that I am member number 235,001, as indicated by the key code in my URL), but I really didn't do anything with the site aside from accepting invitations from people that I knew. I remember having a long email conversation with one person who invited me that I did not know. I remember feeling that somehow my privacy had been violated—a feeling that I have not forgotten.

That all changed in 2008. After building my career in Asia and looking for a job for the first time in the US—without an established network—I took the plunge and decided to use LinkedIn as my primary networking tool. I couldn't attack the “hidden job market,” a market where some people say 70% of the jobs are “found” or “created,” without becoming a better “networker.” Thus, my LinkedIn journey began, and I soon became a heavy user and increased my connections from 100+ to the now 17,000+.

As I started becoming a heavy user, I began connecting to people beyond my immediate group of friends and co-workers while actively reaching out to recruiters. I started to become the “go to” person for LinkedIn in my close physical network of family and friends. Many acquaintances had never heard of or did not understand LinkedIn to the same degree that I did. I could look at the official LinkedIn Q&A sections and begin answering questions about how to use LinkedIn. Finally, as I built out my network to encompass thousands of direct connections, I would offer to help anyone if they had a question about LinkedIn by saying so in an email. Whenever I invited someone to connect or accepted their invitation, I addressed them personally. Many people seemed to find value in what I had to say. I decided to begin a LinkedIn blog to provide a consistent place to publish my knowledge and tips. That blog now resides at www.WindmillNetworking.com.

Through this book, I hope to share all of this information with everyone to pay back the community for what it has given me. When I started my blog, a friend recommended that I write a book. At the time, I scoffed at his suggestion, yet here I am, a year later, putting the final edits to my work.

Understanding, Leveraging & Maximizing LinkedIn

Am I uniquely qualified to be writing a book on a site that has 40 million users? Hey, I always believed that anyone has enough unique and valuable life experiences to write a good book. Is there information you can gain from me that you can't find on the official LinkedIn site? Most definitely, because any information is based on personal experience. Will reading this book help you become a better networker, find a job or candidate quicker, sell more effectively, and deepen your understanding of LinkedIn? I am confident that it will.

Most importantly, I hope to fill the “information vacuum” that exists around LinkedIn. This really is the missing manual that I couldn't find, and thus decided to create. When I first began my LinkedIn journey, I was surprised at the limited amount of “useful” information there was about LinkedIn on the site itself. It seemed that the people utilizing LinkedIn were either not sharing the “insider” information or didn't know for themselves. At that time there was only one “real” LinkedIn book available. As time progressed, I started receiving many questions; I also began seeing many other questions appear within the official LinkedIn “Answers” section. I realized the timing was right and the audience was there; I was now ready to communicate my approach to using LinkedIn. Since I began writing this book, a few new publications about LinkedIn have appeared. This book, however, provides more than strategic and useful information for the beginner and the expert to use throughout the process: it also creates a framework through which you can better understand and more effectively utilize LinkedIn. For me, the mechanics of LinkedIn are a prerequisite, but you need to look at LinkedIn through the eyes of Windmill Networking and create your own LinkedIn Brand to really fully harness its value.

As a brief introduction to how I've organized this book, I begin with an attempt to help you better understand social networking, Windmill Networking, and what potential value LinkedIn has for you. I also go through potential user scenarios and provide you with a hands-on guide to create your own LinkedIn Brand. I follow this map throughout the “meat” of the book, which details the different sections of interest in LinkedIn. I have decided to focus and delve deeply into those areas that I believe will be of the most value to readers. While the book may not be 100% comprehensive, I have tried my best to provide detailed and unique insight into all of the latest features of LinkedIn that are relevant to you as a user. For instance, I purposefully do not

A Personal Introduction

go into length about features that are part of the paid service, nor do I explore utilizing optional toolbars. As the wording implies, these are not features that everyone uses (you may have a free account) or has access to (you may use the unsupported Google Chrome for your Internet browsing and/or use Gmail instead of Outlook for email management).

The final sections of the book offer strategic tips you can use to leverage the power of LinkedIn. I also provide closing commentary that will give you additional food for thought about how to make LinkedIn and social media work for you.

First-time or limited LinkedIn users will get the most out of this book; however, there are enough tips that I recommend any experienced LinkedIn user read this book from cover to cover. I have sprinkled even the basic sections with information I have gleaned from my thousands of hours utilizing LinkedIn. The data I have gathered through my personal experiences will provide insight, even for heavy LinkedIn users. Most importantly, the attitude I want to instill in LinkedIn users through covering the concepts of Windmill Networking will be invaluable to even the most advanced LinkedIn user.

Finally, if you have not connected with me yet, please feel free to send me an invitation through my profile at:

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/nealschaffer>

Thank you and hope to connect with you soon!

A Social Networking Primer

Human beings are social animals. I don't pretend to be an expert in the field, but it is pretty evident that people like to meet up and communicate with each other. It feels good to connect and help others. Seeing my own little children makes me realize that socializing and social networking begins very early in life. It is apparent that social networking is a basic human function.

How then does social networking evolve as we grow up? How has technology influenced the social networking world? Within this social networking world, where does social media like LinkedIn fit in?

The strongest network that we create in our lives is our own families and caretakers. As children, we rely on our parents, or those who are raising us, for everything. They are the first members of the network that we create, and although we tend to distance ourselves from this network as we enter our teenage years, the extended family often becomes our most valuable network for advice and support throughout our lives.

Going beyond the family network, we go through school creating an extended circle comprising classmates and friends. Through this network, we are able to fulfill our needs for emotional support, entertainment, company, and advice. Some people move during their school years and have to then recreate their network in each neighborhood and school. By the time we graduate from high school, we have already created a group of friends that often become our most valuable networking contacts for life.

For those who go on to a college or to a university, this network continues to grow, adding new classmates and acquaintances. Just as your high school years give you a strong network of friends, the same can be said for your college years.

A Social Networking Primer

After graduating, some meet new people in a variety of ways—through work, community or professional associations, new neighborhoods, and introductions through friends. We often befriend parents of our children’s classmates as well. Some people end up greatly enlarging their networks, especially if their work environment is a large, socially stimulating environment. If their career requires them to be networkers, within sales, for instance, networks expand even more rapidly.

An interesting thing happens upon entering the work force. Until we begin working, our networks are continually growing as we meet new people in new classes and at social gatherings; however, the trend begins to diminish as we grow older. Some people simply do not invest the time to keep in touch with old friends and colleagues and have lost contact. Others work at smaller companies or have occupations that do not allow them to interact with many people. Growing a family makes some of us more insular. For whatever reason, there are many people whose networks primarily rely on old college and high school friends.



Regardless of the size of our networks, it is important to realize the following:

- **We all have networks**
- **We are all natural networkers**
- **Social networking is not some difficult thing to comprehend—it is a basic human function**

Every time we ask a friend for advice we are, in essence, networking. Networking should come naturally to all of us once we realize this fact.

Understanding, Leveraging & Maximizing LinkedIn

Over the past 20 years, as new jobs are created in the centers of population that we know as megacities across the United States, people tend to be more spread out and move to where opportunity lies. This is by no means a new phenomenon. The advent of more convenient transportation alternatives and the lower cost and greater quality of telecommunications services has allowed us to be further spread out across the country—all while keeping in good touch with our networks.

Similarly, with the explosive growth of the Internet over the last 20 years, we can not only stay in better touch with our network, but we can actually create a new “virtual” network with people that we meet online. This is truly the era that has fostered the creation of *Windmill Networking*.

My first experience with virtual networks was in the old chat rooms at AOL. I was blown away by the experience that I could discuss a topic that interested me from my computer, with a complete stranger. Those were the “wild west” days of social networking on the Internet. The potential for “virtual” networking to become mainstream was there, as younger generations became comfortable and adopted the technology.

The MySpace and Facebook phenomenon are built upon this technology, with younger generations creating vast virtual networks based on similar hobbies or common interests in things like gaming or music. As with social networking, most people start out by creating their home page on either site, adding their favorite photos, music, etc. to share with their close friends. These networks tend to grow to include “virtual” members who they have never met personally. This growth helps create virtual communities where people are interacting in ways that are not possible in a physical world. People from different countries who have never met before can play interactive role-playing games, engage in real-time discussions, and share photos at the same time.

Social groups are a lot “looser” and more geographically dispersed than they used to be. The Internet and all of its related technologies, combined with social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, have given people a chance to connect to others with similar interests, regardless of how well they know them or where they live. It is only a matter of time before this looseness extends to the professional networking world.

A Social Networking Primer

We are pioneers at the tip of the iceberg. We are extending the future boundaries of professional social networking by utilizing LinkedIn to execute Windmill Networking. Networking in person is ideal; however, reaching out online through a virtual network is the only way to network across the globe when you cannot physically meet someone. A key to being successful is to refuse to limit yourself geographically nor to a narrow group of people you already know.

For me, networking is a type of social insurance that everyone needs and you can never have enough of it. You never know when someone in your network, someone who may have never helped you out before, can provide invaluable advice or connections during a time of need. The more diverse your network is, the higher the likelihood that someone will give you advice for your particular situation. Although your current physical network of friends/family is also a great source for advice, it is limited in size and may lack the type of real-life experience that applies to your situation.

Going beyond the “Internet Era,” MySpace and Facebook have begun the **User-Generated Content (UGC)** revolution that defines our Web 2.0 era. UGC basically means that users are generating content and contributing to the website; essentially, they are the creators of the website. Amazon Recommendations, Wikipedia, and the plethora of blogs that exist are all examples of sites that rely on User-Generated Content. This dependence has generated new types of social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Twitter. **What is the key difference between social media and traditional media? Within traditional media, we are told what to read; within social media, you and other users actually create the content that you read.**

If you think of social networking in terms of having a “real” network and a virtual network, you can see why there are people on LinkedIn (including myself) who have large networks filled with people whom they have never met. Don’t get me wrong—your “real” network will usually be the most dependable network; however, you would be surprised how a virtual network can supplement the real network you have built. As you have not met everyone in your virtual network, they may not always be willing to help you. Nevertheless, other Windmill Networkers and I have found there are more

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than enough good people in this world with a “Pay It Forward” attitude who are willing to help you.

Understanding this virtual networking concept will help you view LinkedIn in a new light. This new perspective will allow you to maximize the benefits of using its professional network. This is what Windmill Networking is really all about. As the MySpace and Facebook generations graduate from college and start working, it is only a matter of time until this type of “loose” or virtual networking begins to dominate the professional networking world. It is no coincidence that LinkedIn recently created a special learning center for graduates, as well as a LinkedIn Group just for “’09 Grads” to help facilitate this transition.

Note that LinkedIn and sites like it are only tools to facilitate networking in person, which is the ideal form of communication. A virtual network serves as an extension of your traditional network, giving you additional opportunities to meet people. When you can’t physically meet someone in person, reaching out online is the next best way to network across the globe. This form of online communication is key to becoming successful in 21st century professional networking. By doing so, you are geographically expanding your reach, instead of limiting yourself to a narrow group of people that you know. More specifically, using **LinkedIn** to begin this expansion is essential. If you are an ambitious professional, or hope to become one, there is no better place to be than LinkedIn.

On a final note, as we embark on our LinkedIn journey, never forget about “The Personal Touch.” Whatever your LinkedIn Objective is, your chances of being successful are greatly higher if you are real and genuine. Personalize the message you send to each person based on their background, any common interests, and what your objective is in communicating with them. Show that you are interested in them. By displaying each member’s profile information in varying degrees of detail, LinkedIn gives you a myriad of opportunities to personally connect and expand your virtual network. LinkedIn fosters Windmill Networking.

Utilizing Windmill Networking to Understand Social Networking & LinkedIn

Below I provide a more detailed definition of what I refer to as *Windmill Networking*:



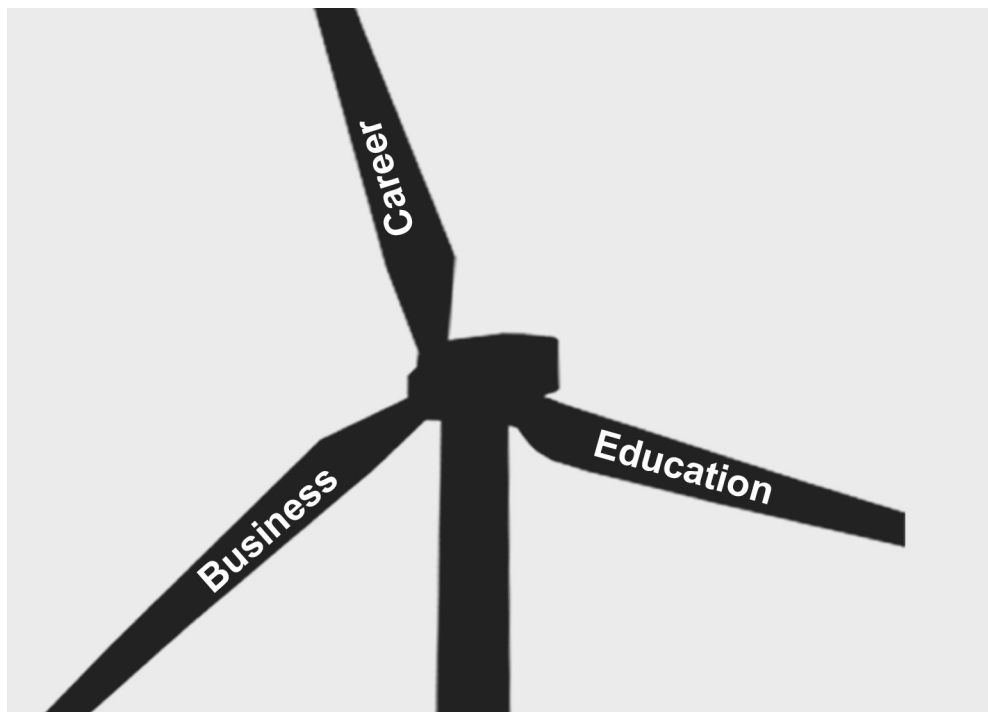
Windmill Networking involves understanding the unique value of creating and utilizing a virtual network through Web 2.0 social networking sites such as, but not limited to, LinkedIn. Windmill Networkers build up a sometimes virtual Trusted Network of Advisors to contact for help when necessary, while helping others in their network with a Pay It Forward attitude. It is “Digging Your Well Before You’re Thirsty” on a scale that is only possible through social media. Windmill Networking is about being authentic, and never forgetting the importance of “The Personal Touch.” It is rooted in the belief that the more you genuinely give, the more you will receive when you really need it. By Plugging Your Windmill into the Grid, YOU determine your networking potential which far exceeds anything that a limited physical network can provide. With a clear objective, supported by time and energy, you will undoubtedly connect with, and help, others while finding those who may be of assistance to you.

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As I wrote this book, I searched for an easy way to think about social media, LinkedIn, and how you should utilize it. I wanted a methodology, with a visual, that would allow anyone to understand the value in connecting. On a warm Southern California day, it hit me—**Windmill Networking**.

We, as people, are all stand-alone windmills. Our various blades represent aspects of our life, like family, work, and interests. We spin our windmills around and around each day, constantly generating enough electricity for us to get by. I will label the three blades “Career,” “Education” and “Business,” as I believe these are the three primary areas in which LinkedIn, as well as any other social networking site, can add value.

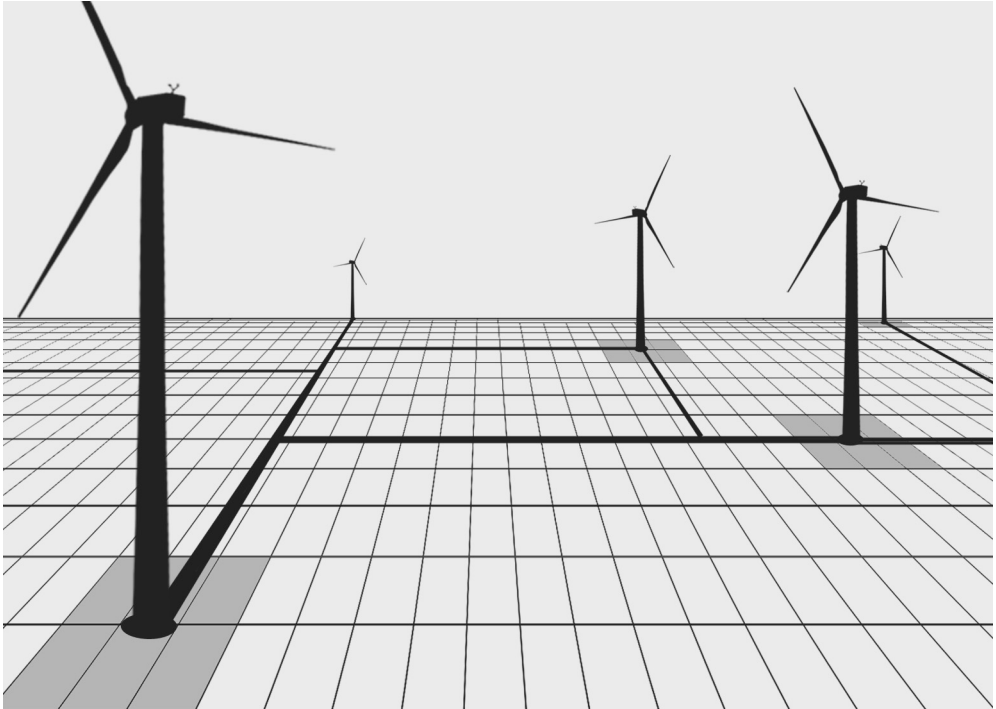
Figure 1.1. The Blades of Our Windmills



What happens when we plug ourselves into a grid and connect our windmills? Not only can we share our electricity with others; when we need a boost, we can also obtain fresh energy from new sources to which we connect. There is a natural advantage for us to be connected with others, as we are able to both give and receive.

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Figure 1.2. Windmills Plugging into the Windmill Networking Grid



Life is composed of, among other things, health, family, work, friends, community, and religion, which I compare in a broader sense to our windmill blades. In order to allocate the time and energy these activities require, we need to draw energy and expertise from other windmills to keep our blades spinning. Combining this collaborative approach with our natural desire to connect is the strongest form of Windmill Networking, as we then find ourselves plugging into the grid on a daily basis.

Traditionally, once we generate enough electricity for our own windmills, we can only then give energy to windmills that are physically connected to us on a grid—windmills that are close in proximity. More recently, we have developed the ability to travel to each other’s windmills via the Internet. Moreover, we have the ability to *hear* each other’s windmills on the end of a phone line. Some windmills may have moved to other locations; however, modern communication now affords us the luxury of continuing our relationship with a previously close-by physical connection. Because all of

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these relationships began from a relationship of physical proximity, these are examples of a traditional “physical” network.

Power plants not only generate electricity for local customers; they also pass electricity along a grid, providing electricity to someone far away—someone who is not even within driving distance of the plant. If our local plants go over capacity or there is a breakdown in the power line, electricity can be moved through the power grid; you can then get your energy from a “virtual,” or far-away power source. Once we begin to trust and rely on the grid—those far away sources of energy, or windmills—we can start to understand the power of a virtual network.



All windmills are connected to the power grid in some way. Think of the Internet as a type of power grid, connecting all of us through its network of servers, hubs, and routers. You can see that we are all windmills who are connected to each other, though we may not even realize it. Social media like LinkedIn makes it easy for us to “find” each other on this large grid that we share through its embedded functionality.

While reading this book, I ask you to take a leap of faith. Leap from this old, traditional world of windmills—where connections were only made within a present or one-time local relationship—to the virtual grid of today.

You do not have to have a close physical connection with a windmill to both give and receive its energy.

There obviously needs to be some sort of connection; you have to know how you want to help each other generate electricity. There has to be some synergy, even if it simply means that two parties want to help each other. This is where LinkedIn steps in to help foster this process.

LinkedIn provides users with a growing map of the power grid. This map includes profile information that will guide users to far-away windmills that

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may share common interests. So how do you connect on the power grid with these far away windmills? LinkedIn gives you the tools to do so.

You must have a purpose or objective when using LinkedIn; without a plan, LinkedIn may not provide much value. In order to devise this plan, you need to understand yourself and what your windmill strategy is. To the many people who ask me “How can I use LinkedIn better?” I *always* answer, “What is your objective?”

As you start reading this book, think of your own windmill and what objective you have when connecting with other windmills. Once you have defined your objective for using LinkedIn, your success with this site will come soon thereafter.

I will go one step further in this book; I will ask you to define your *LinkedIn Brand*. This starts with defining your LinkedIn Objective. I will provide the tools you need to then implement your strategy through a branded approach.

Until the appearance of LinkedIn and other social networking sites, it was almost impossible to Windmill Network with others that lived far away. Meeting someone in person will always bring your relationship to a brand new level; meeting face to face is ideal. Think of Windmill Networking with virtual connections as supplementing your existing physical network.

Most of us are still very new to social networking and LinkedIn, as many of LinkedIn’s members joined within the last two years. If you are new to LinkedIn, you may be apprehensive about meeting someone you have become virtually connected with in person. As one of my LinkedIn connections put it, some of you may have a natural defense mechanism that kicks in, telling you to think things over before continuing *any* conversation with a stranger.

If you have experienced this feeling, the fact that you bought and are reading this book proves that you want to overcome this fear.

I too have experienced this uneasy feeling. I remember feeling afraid to go to any meeting that had the word "networking" attached to it. I just didn't think they were for me. So how did I overcome this fear?

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Well, I used to be afraid of flying. I'd get sweaty palms while on the runway. I clearly remember my nerves slowly beginning to take over every time we approached the runway for takeoff. But then I remember coming to an important realization: if it wasn't for the airplane, I would never have the chance to meet so many amazing people—especially my Japanese wife! My father always said he was envious of my generation in that we could easily travel the world at an early age because of modern aviation. I overcame my fear of flying by focusing on the positives that modern aviation has brought into my life. I would have never had the enlightening experiences I have had if it weren't for this amazing technological advance.

To me, meeting people via LinkedIn is a similar type of technological advance. With so many benefits, it is simply counter productive to fear Windmill Networking. There are countless benefits to reap from proactive virtual networking in addition to meeting with people. It is wise to always be Windmill Networking; Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty! The longer you are plugged in and are developing new relationships, the more the other windmills will spin in your favor.

Where Does Windmill Networking Fit In?

Before delving into specifics regarding LinkedIn, I want to ensure that you firmly grasp the concept of Windmill Networking. In this section, we will review some common social networking concepts; we will then examine what a unique strategy Windmill Networking really is in relation to these approaches.



Windmill Networking is understanding the unique value of creating and utilizing a virtual network through Web 2.0 social networking sites such as, but not limited to, LinkedIn; Windmill Networkers build up a sometimes virtual Trusted Network of Advisors to contact for help when necessary, while helping others in their network with a Pay It Forward attitude.

A **virtual network** is a network through which you are connected not by physical means but by *virtual* means. This connection can be made through the Internet; more specifically, the connection is made through a social networking site such as LinkedIn. Scott Allen and David Teten's book *The Virtual Handshake* takes a revolutionary look at how one can develop and close business deals online. I take this notion of a virtual network to be utilized for anything you would use a personal network for. Your objective for Windmill Networking can be anything you want it to be.

Your **Trusted Network of Advisors** are those people you contact when you need advice, whether it be personal or professional in nature, regarding a specific subject matter in which you do not possess expertise. For example, you could have a friend who is a handyman who always gives you free advice, eliminating the need to hire a costly service provider. Creating a large and

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diverse virtual network ensures that someone who could potentially become part of your Trusted Network of Advisors is only an email or phone call away. One of the benefits of Windmill Networking is facilitating your creation of your own virtual but truly diverse **Trusted Network of Advisors**.

Pay It Forward is the name of a novel by Catherine Ryan Hyde that describes how a 12-year old, as part of an extra-credit assignment for school, tries to change the world through positive action. Upon doing a good deed for someone, the 12-year old then asks them to “Pay It Forward” by doing good deeds for someone else in return. In terms of social networking, this means first doing something for someone in your network without asking for anything in return. People do not forget when you do something good for them. Windmill Networking will be most successful when you practice it with a Pay It Forward attitude; your own good deeds will extend beyond your own virtual network and will attract even more connections and valuable relationships.



It is “Digging Your Well Before You’re Thirsty” on a scale that is only possible through social media. Windmill Networking is about being authentic, and never forgetting the importance of “The Personal Touch.” It is rooted in the belief that the more you genuinely give, the more you will receive when you really need it.

Dig Your Well Before You’re Thirsty is a classic networking book written by Harvey Mackay. It illustrates how you can build up a network that will always be just one phone call away to help with whatever need you may have. By adding value to others and keeping in touch—by doing something for someone without the promise of personal gain—you take an important step towards creating a future network that will serve as your support system. Creating your Windmill Network is built upon the premise of digging your well before you need it.

The Personal Touch is about being real and genuine. It is about being truthful when writing your online profiles. It is about being genuine in your willingness to help someone. Finally, The Personal Touch involves going the

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extra mile and showing that you care. The Personal Touch is the key to adding a sense of warmth to online connections that can often seem cold and distant. Being genuine can make potential connections within your virtual network feel they have already met you. This is especially important if your LinkedIn Objective relates to business. People buy from people they like, not from those who send them a random email. The Personal Touch really does differentiate the successful from the failures in social media, because so many are tempted to send you irrelevant communications, which is easy to do through LinkedIn.



By Plugging Your Windmill into the Grid, YOU determine your networking potential, which far exceeds anything that a limited physical network can provide. With a clear objective, supported by time and energy, you will undoubtedly connect with, and help, others while finding those who may be of assistance to you.

You plug your windmill into the grid when you sign up for a social networking site, introduce yourself to the community in a meaningful way, and then establish connections with people that are not part of your physical network. It is this last action that is crucial to fully plugging your windmill into the grid. Without making a personal connection with someone, your Windmill is simply visible on the map. Without action, it will simply remain in the same dormant position. This action should be guided by objective.

When using a social networking site like LinkedIn, it is important to decide what style of Windmill Networking best fits your needs. But without connecting with others and “networking,” you may be missing out on fully exploiting all of what Web 2.0 has to offer. It is only in the last several months that the pieces of the social media puzzle are coming together in a way that is beneficial for those that understand them. Reading this book will help you understand the concept of Windmill Networking and how it can be used to gain value from LinkedIn. You will become one of the growing numbers of pioneers who can truly harness the power of social networking in a Web 2.0 world.