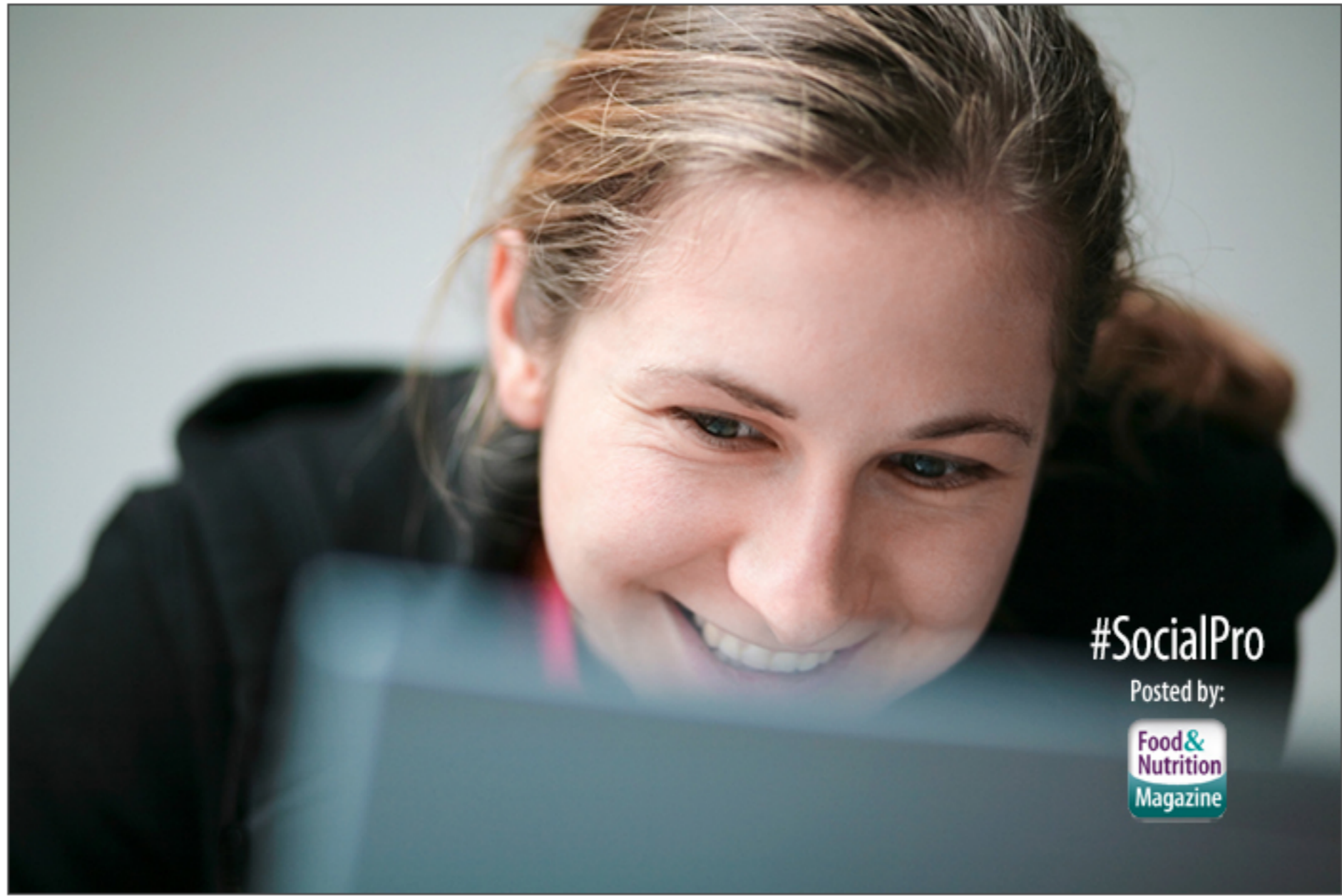


Features

SocialPro: How to Create and Manage a LinkedIn Group

By Matt Alderton | Published: Monday, April 29, 2013



LinkedIn Groups can help RDNs build and brand their businesses. Here's how to create and manage an active group.

Joining LinkedIn just to create a profile is like attending a networking event just to shake hands: It's fun, but rarely fruitful. To make the most of their LinkedIn experience, RDNs should make the most of the social network's many features — among the most popular of which is LinkedIn Groups, which allows LinkedIn users to form virtual communities around topics of shared interest. Create, curate and manage a LinkedIn group with these tips.

Creating Your Group

Starting your own LinkedIn Group is easy. Simply choose "Create a Group" from the "Groups" menu on your LinkedIn homepage, then follow the directions for creating your group. Key decisions you'll have to make include:

- **Topic:** LinkedIn Groups can be based on common professional interests, experience, affiliations or even goals. They can range from general to specific and could be themed around a job (e.g., Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Business Owners), subject matter expertise (e.g., Sports, Cardiovascular and Wellness Nutrition), objective (e.g., Food Trends Think Tank) or patient population (e.g., Families with Food Allergies). Keep in mind that the best groups relate to their creators' businesses, but aren't about it.
- **Name and Description:** Your group's name and description should communicate exactly what your group is and whom it's for. Overly creative names could cause confusion. Instead, be explanatory and use strategic keywords that will place your group in relevant search results.
- **Membership:** LinkedIn Groups can be open or closed. Anyone can join an open group and the group's discussions are visible to the public. Closed groups, on the other hand, are private, which means the group owner must approve a request to join. Both groups have advantages. Open groups, for instance, grow bigger, faster, allowing you to maximize your exposure and contacts. Also, open groups' discussions are indexed by search engines, which could help you build your personal brand. Because they're more exclusive, on the other hand, closed groups might attract more engaged members — including high-level executives or contacts who may feel more comfortable participating in private discussions.
- **Rules:** Establish rules for how your group will operate. A common rule, for example, is prohibiting spam and self-promotion. Whatever your rules, craft a policy that explains who qualifies for group membership, what members can expect to get out of the group, and what behaviors will and won't be tolerated. The goal is facilitating a community that serves members without selling to them.

Promoting Your Group

Build your LinkedIn Group by reaching out to prospective members using these techniques and tools:

- **Groups Directory:** Although you can keep it private, including your group in the [Groups Directory](#) will make it easy for people to find.
- **Your website:** LinkedIn offers badges you can post on your website, blog or even in your email newsletters to drive group traffic.
- **Invitations:** Instead of spamming your entire network, strategically send personalized messages to relevant individuals. Explain why you want them to join, what you think they could contribute and how you think they could benefit.
- **Cross-marketing:** Every time you promote yourself or your business is an opportunity to promote your group. If you do public speaking, for instance, mention your LinkedIn Group during your presentation. If you attend trade shows and meetings, put your LinkedIn Group on your business cards. Use other social media platforms like Twitter or Facebook to post about interesting discussions taking place within the group.

Engaging Your Group

Without your active participation, your LinkedIn Group will wither. Drive engagement in your group by:

- **Contributing content:** You should be not only facilitating group discussion, but also adding to it. Pose a weekly question to the group, start new discussion threads, share links or job leads, comment on discussions or use the [LinkedIn Polls](#) application.
- **Curating membership:** You can individually approve who is accepted into your group as well as what can be posted. Although it's time consuming, this allows you to create a high-quality group. Many groups, for instance, only approve LinkedIn members who meet certain criteria, such as location or job description. Likewise, many groups maintain high-quality content by moderating discussions and removing off-topic posts.
- **Featuring good discussions:** You have the ability to mark discussion threads as "featured," which pins them at the top of your group's discussion board. This allows you to promote the most valuable group content, enhancing the group's value.
- **Sending group announcements:** Using the LinkedIn Group Announcements feature, you can send up to one email announcement per week to your group members. Your weekly email could highlight active discussion threads; your personal blog, website or podcast; or webinars and events you're hosting. Just make sure the information is relevant to your readers. The emails will come from LinkedIn — not you — so recipients and their email servers are more likely to recognize them as trusted communications.



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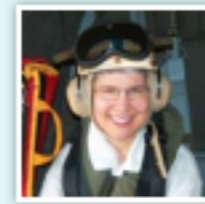
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