How to find jobs and network using LinkedIn for Graduate Students

1. You must already have an account setup. This document is not on how to build a great LinkedIn profile (there are numerous sources for how to do this online) but I will outline the basics:
   - Have a clean professional looking profile picture; this makes you seem more personable to someone looking at your profile. If you do not have a picture like this, ask a friend with a camera to take some photos for you. Some departments and clubs at UTD may even have the cameras already that you could borrow or have someone take the photos for you.
   - Customize your LinkedIn profile URL. This shows you have put effort into the profile.
   - Have all the important sections of your LinkedIn profile filled out fully and have it double-checked by others to make sure it is grammatically correct and sounds professional. These sections are likely to be the Summary, Education, Experience, and Projects sections.
   - Only put information on your LinkedIn page that markets you towards jobs you are interested in. If you have very little experience then include whatever experience you have but make sure to include all of your responsibilities that put you in a positive light.
   - Get recommendations from people who have worked with you at jobs or on projects (these include school projects). Recommendations on LinkedIn show that someone is willing to publically promote you by putting their reputation at stake. GET RECOMMENDATIONS!
   - You can include projects and assignments from grad school in the projects section. Depending on the job and what specifically you hope to accomplish using your LinkedIn profile, you should probably not be as technical as possible in the descriptions so recruiters can understand what you did. Cater your profile towards the individuals who are hiring you. Make your profile easy to read and easy to understand.
   - Phrase everything in your profile in a way that makes it obvious to a recruiter or HR employee why you would be valuable at their company. Just because you can put something on your LinkedIn profile, does not mean it benefits you.
• Invite all your friends, colleagues, and reputable contacts to connect with you on LinkedIn. The people who you connect with on LinkedIn are called your network. It is important and useful to have a large network for reasons made clear later.

• Join a respectable number of relevant groups on LinkedIn. For example, if you want to be an analyst you might join groups with titles such as ‘Predictive Modeling’, ‘Advanced Analytics’, or ‘Statisticians Network’. It is better to join too many groups rather than not enough groups.

2. After you have joined a number of LinkedIn groups, start participating in the public areas so that people get used to seeing your face and can see how you contribute to discussions. This is how you build your reputation online. Only post meaningful content (or questions) and remember that this is a professional area. Some people may treat this like Facebook and may be inappropriate or curse but DO NOT do that. Your interview for a job starts with your LinkedIn profile and participation. This is a great way to make a fantastic impression before they have even met you face-to-face. Avoid saying anything negative about a person or company if possible. Treat anything you put on the Internet as if it was permanently available for all to see.

3. One option for getting jobs is to click on the jobs tab on LinkedIn and narrow down the job search by specifying geographic region, keyword of the job title, company, experience required, or any number of other important factors. Don’t put many restrictions. Many jobs don’t put all of the information you may care about in the description and you don’t want to miss out on an opportunity because you were too specific in your search. Additionally, job descriptions are not always a great representation of the actual job itself. It may be worth looking at jobs that aren’t exactly what you are looking for.

Apply for a ton of jobs. Most grad students do not have much (or any) experience and that is a severe disadvantage for us. Some jobs you can apply for using your LinkedIn profile and that only takes a second. The problem with this is that since it is so easy to apply, hundreds or thousands of people might apply for this open spot within a matter of days. Other postings make you go to the company website and fill out your information there (and often times you have to set up an account to apply). Although it is extremely time consuming, fewer people take the time to apply to these companies and fill
out their long applications. Take the time because any job you apply for could be the place you will end up getting hired. Treat every appropriate opportunity like it could be the one that works out. I have had situations where the job I was looking at didn’t work out but the company started pursuing me as a candidate for another role.

One option is searching for jobs that have been posted within the past 24 hours. Focus on these jobs so that you can be one of the first candidates viewed. This is an easy way to distinguish yourself as a candidate; it may be helpful to put aside some time for this every day.

There are various levels of LinkedIn membership (LinkedIn Premium for example). It does cost money to become a premium member but it is one way to further distinguish yourself from the other candidates. See LinkedIn for the numerous ways your account changes when you upgrade. If you do not want to pay a monthly fee start using your LinkedIn more actively. LinkedIn will offer you a free month of an upgraded membership, which you can then use for the month for free.

4. Filling out job application after job application online (while it should be done) is one of the less affective ways to find a position. One third of jobs filled are not even posted because employees recommended someone they knew to fill the spots. Since you currently do not know many people in industry it is your responsibility to fix that.

A 1st degree connection is someone you are connected to on LinkedIn.

A 2nd degree connection is an individual you are not connected to but is connected to someone who you are connected to.

A 3rd degree connection is someone who you are not connected to but you are connected to someone who is connected to someone who is connected to them (confusing I know).

LinkedIn will not let you ask to be connected with just any other LinkedIn user. Depending on various privacy settings of other users you may have to be a 2nd connection to someone or possibly in a same group as them in order to send them an invitation to connect. It is difficult to have a conversation with someone you are not connected to so try to just connect with him or her THEN have the conversation. This is why it is useful to be in as many
groups as possible and have as large of a network as possible. The more groups and the more connections, the more people you can speak to and try and connect with.

But, whom should you be connecting to and why would they want to connect with you (some random person they don’t know)?

You should reach out to people who are involved in a job you find interesting. Go to your groups that you have joined. Search the group members by the geographical region in which you would like to be working. Then look at each person’s job title. If their job title sounds interesting to you connect with them. There is a button that lets you send a generic message inviting them to connect. Do not use this. You are a stranger to this person. Everything you do in your job-hunt should be personalized. Choose to send them a personalized invitation with a personalized title. I came up with a message that was broadly applicable to all different positions I wanted and then just changed the message each time depending upon the name of the person I was trying to connect with. Here is an example message I might use:

Title: “Introductions and Advice”

Message:

“Jamie,

My name is Zach and I am close to the end of my Ph.D. in mathematics and am looking to find a predictive modeling (or related) post in NYC. Would you please connect with me so I could ask for some guidance?

Thank you for your time.

Zach”

In this message I have informed the other person:

- Who I am
- Why I am contacting them
- What I want form them (advice)
- Thanked them
People love helping students since they remember trying to find their first job after school and they feel like they are helping someone with little effort on their part.

I reached out to several hundred people by inviting them to connect with me on LinkedIn and only about 100 people accepted my invitation. That is perfectly fine. You need to accept that finding a job is a TON of work and not everyone has the time or interest in helping you on your quest.

After they have accepted your invitation you need to send them a personal sounding message. Make sure to send these quickly after they accept so that you can keep track of whom you have messaged and so that the receiver of the message doesn’t forget whom you are. I was looking for an analyst position in NYC so here is an example of my message:

“Jamie,

My name is Zach and I am close to the end of my Ph.D. in mathematics. I already have my M.S., an M.B.A., and this summer I'm interning at a consulting group called AlixPartners. My goal is to find a predictive modeling position (or related) position for September in New York City.

Here are my questions:

1. Since I am not a local candidate, how can I most efficiently search for and apply for predictive modeling (or related) jobs in NYC?

2. Besides connecting with and engaging people in discussions on LinkedIn groups, have you any recommendations on how to connect to people within the industry?

3. Do you know of any anyone who might have an appropriate position available?

4. Care to share any general advice for someone in my position just starting their career?

Thank you so much for your time.

Zach”
Notice that my message:

- Lets the reader know my academic background and what I am currently doing professionally.
- Lets the reader know what I am looking for.
- Asks for important and useful advice.
- Asks if they know of an appropriate position. They might say that they have a position or know of one that suits you. I got numerous interviews this way and have a job in the works through this method. You may be uncomfortable asking this question but stop that. LinkedIn is a professional networking website. It is appropriate and in your best interest to ask this question. Ask this question!
- Asks for general advice. There are bits of important information that you may not even have thought to ask. This also makes sure that when your question about appropriate positions is not one of the last things they read.
- Thank them again. Courtesy, smile, and a personal touch go a long way in the professional world.

Only about 40 of the people I reached out to responded with meaningful advice or job leads. These 40 people lead to about 5 interviews and one job (waiting to hear back any moment now).

This message leads to a discussion. Seem open-minded and talk to anyone they recommend. The more people who know you and what you are looking for, the more likely you are to find a job.

Feel free to ask to talk on the phone. If you are proficient in English this may be to your benefit since it helps develop a rapport. If you do talk on the phone make sure you know what you are going to say and have questions prepared. Don’t talk on the phone just because you can. Only do it to accomplish a goal and GET OFF the phone once you have accomplished what you need. Choose a quality conversation over a long conversation. This shows you understand what is important to ask and that you are respectful of their time.

5. You are going to make silly mistakes and errors in your job hunt. That is fine. Learn from your mistakes and figure out how to do better next time so you can avoid making them again.
6. Have your professional resume and cover letter prepared before reaching out to people so you can hand it out at a moment’s notice. There are free services at the school to help you build your resume and cover letter. Make sure to have the cover letter, not just your resume. It is an additional way to give companies more information about you and make you stand out.

7. Do not lie on your LinkedIn profile, resume, or cover letter. If you get caught you will not be hired by whoever caught you. Additionally, all communication with potential employers is frightening. It is hard to maintain whatever lie you created when trying to discuss it with a potential employer.

Also, if you overstate your skills and then end up hired, your employer is going to be angry when you cannot live up to the expectations you created.

8. Do not EVER be rude to anybody on LinkedIn publically or privately. You have no idea how influential someone you barely know can be in your life or career. A number of small coincidences lead to finding my internship and the job offer I anticipate receiving.

9. If you do not currently have a job and need a job, job searching is your full-time job. Hundreds (possibly thousands) of other people are interested in the positions you want. In order to find a position in the right geographical region with reasonable pay, reasonable expectations, correct field, and all of the other factors that are important to you, you need to work consistently and diligently on your hunt.

10. After you have found a position you are happy with prepare a general message to send out to everyone who you spoke with on your job hunt. This message should thank them for their time and guidance as well as informing them what sort of position you ended up in. This help builds a rapport with your network. While you may have just received a job you NEVER KNOW when a connection will be useful to have. This keeps communication open and shows that you are a respectful and appreciative person so the next time you are looking for a job, if they know of something they will be more eager and comfortable recommending you to HR.

Good luck!