



To Link or Not to Link, That is the Question: A Primer on LinkedIn Etiquette

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Of all the social media sites that exist today, LinkedIn remains the most used site for professional networking. In my opinion, if you complete your profile on the site, LinkedIn can serve as an "online brochure" for your business. When you link with someone, you provide them with access to that information. In other words, a LinkedIn connection can be more valuable to strengthen a new professional relationship than a simple follow-up thank you email.

LinkedIn can be a great site for online networking, which begs the question:

what should you do when you receive a connection request from someone you have not met in person?

One thing not to do is to boast of your numerous connections, invite others to connect with you, and then castigate those who you deem "unworthy." That's what's Kelly Blazek did, and her actions have irreparably and adversely affected her reputation. Blazek runs a popular online job bank for marketing professionals in Cleveland, Ohio, and she was named 2013's "Communicator of the Year" by Cleveland's branch of the

International Association of Business Communicators.

Blazek's response to an e-mail and LinkedIn request from Diana Mekota, a 26-year-old planning to move to Cleveland this summer, has made the rounds on Reddit, BuzzFeed and other viral hotspots after Mekota posted it to her Imgur account.

Mekota's original e-mail, sent February 19, was a short message detailing her education, professional and volunteer activities and asking to join the 7,300-member jobs list.

"Your invite to connect is inappropriate, beneficial only to you, and tacky," Blazek wrote, according to Mekota's post. "Wow, I cannot wait to let every 26-year-old jobseeker mine my top-tier marketing connections to help them land a job."

Ms. Blazek did not end there.

"I love the sense of entitlement in your generation," she wrote. "You're welcome for your humility lesson for the year. Don't ever reach out to senior practitioners again and assume their carefully curated list of connections is available to you, just because you want to build your network."

She wrapped up with: "Don't ever write me again."

After privately responding to apologize, Ms. Mekota heard nothing further from Ms. Blazek, so she did what everyone seems to do these days – she made Ms. Blazek's response public via the aforementioned social media sites, which ultimately forced Blazek to make a formal apology in an attempt to quell the backlash.

The question of whether to connect with new people has to be answered by each person based upon their own circumstances. Should you turn down someone's connection request, it is best to simply

click the "no" button, rather than respond in a manner such as Kelly Blazek did, especially when you hold yourself out as being an important connection. ■

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