

An Interview With Krista Canfield, P.R. Manager - LinkedIn

LS: Hello, my name is Lon Safko, co-author of *The Social Media Bible*, published with John Wiley & Sons, the largest book ever written on the subject of social media. Today we are here with Krista Canfield, the PR Manager for *LinkedIn*. How cool is this! We will be speaking about *LinkedIn* and social networks. So let's get started.

Krista, please tell our listeners who you are and what you do at *LinkedIn* and a little bit about what *LinkedIn* is.



KC: Sure, no problem. I'm the PR Manager for *LinkedIn* and *LinkedIn* is basically an online professional network. We have over 25 million members at this point. We are about evenly split between running our member base that is in the U.S, and globally, so it is a great way for professionals to get international experience and to get advice from professionals from all over the world.

LS: How cool! Lol. If you actually bumped into someone who did not know about *LinkedIn*, which would kind of be rare, what is the most important thing that you would want to tell them about the functions and the value of what *LinkedIn* does?

KC: Basically what *LinkedIn* does is it helps professionals accelerate their success. They can do that in any number of different ways, whether it be looking for employees and trying to get a bit more background information on them, and what they've done in the past and who they've worked with in the past. We've even had companies that have acquired other companies through the website. Small business owners are using the answers portion of *LinkedIn* to get advice on building their business and taking it to the next level.



So, it really depends on what "success" means to you, but *LinkedIn* can definitely help in a variety of different ways.

LS: That's pretty cool, and in a way it kind of answers the second question of how are people using *LinkedIn*. Companies are actually getting acquired through *LinkedIn*?

KC: Yeah, there was one company that actually got acquired by the Weather Channel, and *LinkedIn* helped facilitate that whole process. There was a guy and he knew that his company was going to be the perfect fit for the Weather Channel; he just wasn't sure how to get in front of the right person. So what he did was actually search for the person on *LinkedIn* that might be the right contact at the Weather Channel, sent him an email and began an email dialogue, and within a few months his company ended up getting acquired by the Weather Channel.

So this is a demonstration of how *LinkedIn* can get you in touch with the right people and to make sure you are getting your business ideas, your own personal "You Brand" in front of the right people.

LS: And that's what's amazing about this. And I have to be honest; I use *LinkedIn* all the time to make connections. I needed to set up a meeting with Microsoft, because one of my companies has a patent that I recently received, and we are talking about acquisition. And just by typing in Microsoft and looking through, I found the right people; same thing with Google and most recently to get to the CEO of Linden Labs, which

creates Second Life. I actually used *LinkedIn* and I'm only two degrees of separation away from the CEO! So, I'm in the process of using it right now.

KC: Very cool! And, you know, it's all about leveraging your relationships. I think the whole idea of creating LinkedIn in the first place was to keep in contact with all the different people that you've worked with in the past; friends, family members, co-workers, all those sorts of things. You know, a lot of times if you get someone's business card and you want to get in touch with them three years later down the line, and you do need that reference or you need that recommendation...a lot of times that person has switched roles and they're at a different company. So that email address, that phone number, may no longer be of use to you.

So, first and foremost, it was meant to be a way to stay in touch with all of the people that you have worked with in the past, even if they have changed positions or switched companies. But the other thing that it really enables you to do is to find the right person who is going to be the right contact for you, no matter what company that may be at. If you're working on the relationship that you already have, you never know who your best friend may know.

Your best friend, chances are, works at a totally different company in a totally different world from what you do, so they have a whole different network of people that you could probably utilize that might help you accomplish your goals. It's all about working off of those relationships it get things done.

LS: And I find that really true. One of the things about Social Media is "trusted network". When I was presenting *Social Media Bible* in Orlando, one of the people that was in the audience went into *LinkedIn*, and it turned out that one of my good friends here in Phoenix had been friends with this guy for 20 years. And now I am part of this "trusted network" because we have a friend, which we each respect, in common.

KC: Very cool!

LS: And one of the other things that's really exciting that we forget, often, is that this service is free. That's what is unbelievable.

KC: Yeah, a lot of people are always surprised. We do offer premium accounts for people that are looking to reach out reach out to more people outside of their network; but for the most part, that "free" version can actually help you get a lot done. Some people either jump in there with both feet and try it out, without having to worry about something you need to pay on a monthly basis, until you are ready for that level of commitment.

LS: And the premium services are absolutely worth the cost, because even the cost is not that much.

KC: Yeah, they start off at \$19.95 for a month, and then there's one level above that, and then we also have our "Corporate Solutions", which are meant for internal HR teams that are doing recruiting. So companies like Symantec and TiVo, use us to help recruit and find employees. Their internal teams use that.

LS: That's a great idea, too. I just kind of assumed that it was always open to the public and external. But, yeah, using it as an internal tool, too, would be really cool.

KC: Yes!

LS: Wow! I love this stuff! Lol. What are the types of people; what are the demographics? Could you describe the typical person using LinkedIn?

KC: Yeah, sure. The average user is around 41-years-old. They have a household income of just over \$110,000. But we also have everybody from like high level CEO's. Bill Gates is on LinkedIn. We have professional athletes, like Yao Ming, who has a profile on LinkedIn. Both presidential candidates have profiles on LinkedIn.

But we also have over 600,000 small business owners. So there's really a wide range of people that are on the website, and certainly professionally from every single industry.

LS: Wow! Those are really impressive numbers. You said the total number of people registered at LinkedIn is 25 million?

KC: Yes, over 25 million people across the world!

LS: Oh, gosh, that is so cool! So LinkedIn is really a premium social media kind of tool. Are there other ways that you can combine, maybe, some of the other social media tools that are out there with LinkedIn? Is there, like an interface, where you can match up?

KC: Well, yeah, we do actually have an API that a number of different sites use. So, if you go to, say, Business Week's website, or the New York Times' website, or if you go to CXO Media (which owns cio.com); there is another site called, "Simply Hired" that's using our API. What's really cool about the API is it will show you...if you are reading an article in Business Week (I think this is the way Business Weeks' API is set up) it reads the first company that appears in the headline of the article. And it will show you, if you give it permission to log into your account simultaneously while you are looking at that article, it will show you (if the article about Volkswagens) who you know in your network that knows someone who works at Volkswagen.

So it is very powerful to a professional who maybe looking at an article and saying, "Wow, my company's a great fit for Volkswagen". Or, "I think Volkswagen would be the perfect client for us". Or, "Wow, gee, I'd love to work at Volkswagen,"

To be able to sit there and say, "Oh, my friend, Joe, is connected to Susan who works at Volkswagen." So, it definitely makes the world a smaller place, and it really helps you get business done much more efficiently.

LS: That's an incredible concept where you can take all of this information that resides in your database and actually vertically market, vertically position it (as you just said, in an article). And even more vertical, Volkswagen, so that all this information is actually being presented in a very accurate context.

KC: Yep!

LS: I did not realize that you guys do that. That's pretty cool!

Can you tell me who actually started LinkedIn and why they started it?

KC: Yes. We have two founders, Reed Hoffman and Alan Bleu. And it seems the real reason they came up with it was Reed was one of those guys who has a huge network in Silicon Valley. And so, it just came to a point in time when he said, “Well, it’s getting difficult to keep track of everyone when they move around to different companies.” But it’s a small world and you know you are going to run into these people again, or you may want to work with them again.

So, it originally began as a way to stay in touch with everybody that you’ve worked with. And then beyond that, we started realizing that it is much easier to work off of relationships that you already have. I think any business person knows that it is a lot easier to get a deal done when you know someone that work’s at the company...or to get a job offer at your dream company when you know that your father knows someone who works at the company. So anytime you have that little extra edge, that extra something that helps you to get a foot in the door, that’s something that is going to make you life much easier and much simpler. So that’s where the original concept for LinkedIn came from.

LS: You hear the old adage, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.”

KC: Exactly! We firmly believe in that one!

LS: Yeah, that’s kind of like a corporate slogan. And that’s what I find, too. I mean, even when I’m looking for employees, or service providers, or vendors, I won’t just go out and pick anybody. I’ll always go through my network and ask, “Who have you used, do you trust them, do they do good work?” And it just seems to circumvent a lot of problems. And, again, that gets back to this “trusted network” that you provide this incredible tool for.

KC: Yeah, and I don’t know if you have had a chance to check out the “answer” section” on the website, but that’s extremely valuable, as well. Basically, you can ask any question, as long as it’s business or professionally related. And you can even make it a private question and send it to a few people, whether it be three or five, however many in your network that you really know, because you do not want everybody to know you’re asking a question.

Or you can make a question public. When you make a question public, that means that all 25 million users can go on and comment on it. The question’s up for about a week and usually that question gets a response 93% of the time. And the first response is within eight or nine hours. So we’ve seen people out there [10:40.6] from, “Should I buy a Mac or a PC. Do you know of an accountant that works in Las Vegas that you recommend?” All sorts of questions that are helping people build their business and making their work-like a lot easier day to day.

And the cool thing is, too, that when people respond to your questions you actually see their response and you see their name and their title and what company they work at. You can always go and click on that hyperlink of their name next to the response, and that will take you to that person’s profile.

So it also enables you, as a person with a question, to figure how much you really value that person’s response. If there is someone who’s saying you shouldn’t go with a competitors’ product, and you look and you see that their company’s a direct competitor, you may not value that as much as someone who’s got the same title as you at a similar firm in a similar industry.

So it is a very powerful tool.

LS: That's a really good point. In the answer sections you are looking at free consulting, free mentoring, and it actually creates kind of a Wiki, a database, a knowledge base.

KC: Yeah, and you can actually go ahead and search past questions, or past questions that have been asked and answered, as well, if you do not know how to exactly ask the question that you are looking for.

The other cool thing that we are seeing, too, is that a lot of small business owners, consultants, freelancers, are doing a search through the questions that are being asked. They will look, by key word or by industry, for things that they can comment on; because you can actually earn expertise by giving people good responses...because...by the end of that week the person asking that question actually gets to rate the responses.

So if you keep getting [12:09.7] answers or [12:12.0] responses in the same categories, you end up earning expertise, which is another thing that you can kind of present on you "professional brand" when you are looking for clients or have people interested in your services or products.

LS: That adds a lot of value to your profile in there, as well as people making actual recommendations for you.

KC: Yeah, the recommendations are huge. We are seeing a lot of people that are using those very strategically, as well. And the thing is when you ask for a recommendation, I always tell people that it's a good idea to, kind of, let the person know first of all you'd be very gracious if you could get a recommendation from them...but also say, "Hey, I would love it if you could comment on some of the work that I did with "client X"...or whatever thing you really want to spotlight on your profile.

And I find that people do not mind when you kind of point them in the direction that you want to go in, and it helps if you explain why you want that recommendation. So, maybe, you are looking at building up that particular vertical that you work in, and you really want people to be commenting on your work in that vertical, so that clients see that.

So it doesn't have to be that specific when you ask for them, but we're finding that a lot of people are using them and we are seeing a great deal of value in them.

LS: That is a great deal of value. I never even thought about that as actually working the vertical, and becoming known for what you specifically work in, such as "*Social Media Bible*", that that's really a valuable tool.

KC: Yeah, and we are seeing a lot of journalist, reporters, writers using it and you can actually add websites on your profile. If you have, like three [13:47.1] slots for websites. So when it's a journalist, you'll see a lot of people will put their companies' link in, and they will put links to their most recent article or their most recent blog post, or I am sure in your case, your most recent podcast.

But as small business owners we are seeing people use those slots for different things. So they may have their company website as one, and then for those other two, they might include links to articles that were written about their company...or maybe links to customers, let say.

There is a lot of different things that you can do there. You can spotlight the different work that you do and kind of showcase that in a way that's easily digestible for potential clients or potential employers.

LS: And it's really handy, because everything is right there, all the information. People that you know, what you're famous for, your recommendations, you links to your website...it's kind of like a "one-stop-shop" for anybody who is trying to do some research on you.

KC: Yeah, and the other thing that is really cool, too, is you can actually search for people by title or by company or by industry or location. So, having the power to do that...even if you're someone who is not at a super-high level in their career and you are looking kind of to see where you need to get going in your career in order to move up the corporate ladder...it's neat to do a search for CMO's, and maybe that's the title you, one day, want to hold...to be a CMO...you would search for different CMO's that are in the industry that you like to work in. Take a look at their profile and without even contacting anyone, you can get a lot of information for someone's profile. You can see what position's they have held; what school they went to. And you may be surprised that they did not stay in marketing the entire time, that they might have headed another industry or been in another world, before they attained that position.

Sections like that are valuable feedback when it comes to how long someone needs to hold a role right before they become a CMO. So there is a lot of interesting research that you can view there, even if you are just someone starting off in that career.

LS: That's incredible advice. And one of the things that I'm hearing stories about is HR using LinkedIn to research potential employees.

KC: Yeah, yeah, we're seeing people from across every single vertical, every single title using it in different ways that are helpful to them. Another way of using, that we added a few months ago, is linking company profiles. So we have profiles for over 160,000 companies. So there is a lot of interesting information that you can get from there. There is, like, a basic description on the company. It will show you where employees most likely worked before they came to that company...and where they are most likely to leave and go to, afterwards.

LS: Umm.

KC: For someone in HR, that is really interesting, because you sit there and you know the top five companies that most of your employees have come from, you probably want to take a harder look at those potential employees when they come in for interviews...because you know you already hire from that company a lot.

Conversely, if you see that there's five companies that your employees usually leave and go to...you're really going to want to take a look and see what sort of things that they are...what incentive are they offering your employees; what are your employees attracted to in that company; if you can kind of combat that aspect. That information, even though it is the same information, can be used in a totally different way, for someone who is looking for a job.

Because for you, maybe you cannot work at Apple today because you know that that's a big leap for you to get a job there. But if you know the five companies that Apple employees came from before they went to Apple, maybe you want to check out those five companies and use that as a stepping stone to your job that you hope to, one day, get at Apple.

So, a lot of interesting and useful information there as well.

LS: That's an incredible observation. I never really thought about using LinkedIn kind of as an employee-market research tool, basically.

KC: Oh, yeah. Those profiles have a lot of interesting information. They have the top schools that employees are most likely to have graduated from. So, if you have a kid that's a high school student that wants to work at Google one day, or work at Nike one day, being able to see what schools a lot of those current employees are alumni of is very...that can be very useful, as well.

It also gives you a breakdown, such as what the average age of the employees are. And that can be useful information, too, because you may not want to work at a place where the average age is 22, or where it's 65. It all kind of depends on your comfort level, but that kind of information is something you're not going to find on the everyday corporate website. So it gives you a unique perspective into a company.

LS: That's really a good point, too, as well; the age demographic. Recently I was at the headquarters of Google, and we're talking college kids, we're talking flip-flops and jeans and sweatshirts and Starbucks coffee cups...and it reminded me of the old days of Apple, when they first started out in the 80's and early 90's. But then a month later, I was up at the world headquarters of Microsoft, and it was a completely different atmosphere...people wearing shirts and ties...and definitely different types of personalities. One would not clearly fit into the other.

KC: Yeah, and then while you have all this information there, and that gives you one kind of view of their world that might exist in that company. It also gives you info like, who in your network is connected to people at whatever that company is (the company that you're looking at the profile of), and that can be extremely useful, too, because we are talking about...if you are looking at a potential client or a partner or a vendor...but it's also useful as an employee because I know, and I think that maybe I'm the woman who is returning to the workforce after having a kid, you know, I'm not really sure how to get a new job or what I need to be doing. I really could think that Company X is a perfect fit for me. It seems like a good fit, but going to an interview can be time-consuming so maybe you will want to check it out and do a little more do diligence before you even walk through the interview doors.

One thing you can do is reach out to people in your network that know people that work at the company. Ask them what their real work experience at that company is like. Do they have a work-life balance? Are they working 18-hour days? Because if they are, as a new mom coming back to the workforce, maybe that's not a good fit for you. It might seem like the right company, but maybe the work-life balance isn't the right fit.

So getting that kind of opinion from someone who actually currently works there can be very valuable.

LS: That's a really great tip for LinkedIn users. I never even would have thought of that. That's really cool. And one of the things that you have mentioned earlier, that doesn't come to mind, is searching schools and organizations. And an example is that, again, I needed to get into a Fortune 500 company. And one of the companies that I own, my partner is both a Naval graduate and he's also graduated MIT. And the MIT group is a very tight-knit organization and they really will bend over backwards to help one another.

We just typed in “MIT” and, honest to goodness, it took us less than 10 minutes and we found two of the contacts and they turned out to be the best contacts possible because of that relationship.

KC: Yeah, it’s just a wealth of information. The things we have talked about today are just a couple of the [20:47.6] Like I’ve said, a lot of that information depends on what success means to you and where you want your career to go, and how you want to use that information to best help you. I mean even simple email. I just think that it is amazing that you can look for the right person, like you did in your case, but you can also take a look at their profile and see if there is any similarities between you and this person before you reach out to them.

So, in your case, it may have been that you were graduates of the same school. In someone else’s case, it might be that they see under their hobbies that they enjoy sailing and that they use to live on the East Coast. You can kind of start off and email them, and that way you make it a lot more personalized. People are always going to respond much better when you give them something that is personalized versus something that’s generic. Let’s connect and share a network.

LS: Absolutely true! And again, one of the terms used in *Social Media* is “trusted network”; to immediately find common ground, something you have in common with that other person.

KC: Absolutely, and we are always a big advocate of telling our users to only connect to people that they actually really know and trust; to make sure they are people that you have worked with or that you actually have met in the past. If it is someone that you have met at a conference and you really did not hit it off with them, you did not have anything in common...they were not interested in what you do but you sat on the same panel...there might not be a reason for you to connect to that person, because if you were in a rough spot and you needed a reference on an employee or you needed to get to this person’s friend who works at Apple...then maybe they wouldn’t pass that request along. So you really want to make sure that you are being very vigilant about your network and who you are inviting in.

So, if it’s someone you met at a conference and you hit it off with them and they were really interested in your company and really excited about what were doing in your career, or what path you’ve taken...then that might make sense to connect to that person. But it’s important to think about that, because you’re really inviting these people into your network so they also network with your friends’ friends and co-workers and colleagues. So, it is also a reflection of you as a professional.

LS: That’s an incredible insight. Yesterday I interviewed for the podcast, David Nour, and he is the author of *Relationship Economics*. And I wasn’t familiar with that terminology and basically he said the very same thing that you just said, and that is, “Don’t connect with people just to get connections.” It’s not about the number of connections, it’s really not about the economics, and it’s about the quality of the connections.

KC: Yeah, I could not have said it any better. It’s not a popularity contest. I know a lot of people sit there and look at other networking sites and they kind of get a little nervous because they are saying, “Wow, I only have 30 friends and you people have 1,500; what does that mean? Am I doing this wrong? Is this not going to work for me?”

And the thing is that it's actually going to work better for you if you keep your network close to your heart and make sure that it's people you really know and trust; because those people are going to be more likely to help you in any one of those number of different scenarios that we were talking about earlier.

RS: Absolutely! And a colleague of mine actually was one of the first people ever to sign up for LinkedIn, and he kind of brags that he has over 6,000 links. Lol And, really, how many of those could you really count on to help you move...lol.

KC: Yeah, it's really...you want to think about it, and it's one thing to say you had a lot of connections...but you've got to think about it in terms of it being like having a group of friends. First your professional networks will probably be even a little larger, because that's going to include co-workers, bosses and your friends and family, and everyone else. So it should be a little bit larger than your day to day network. But if you think about it, it's one of those things where it should not be too out of control, because there is no way for you to manage all those relationships...or to keep them as good...it's like nurturing a plant. You want to make sure you are taking care of it, and that you are giving back to these people and helping them in professional ways, as well as asking them for advice and for feedback on different things that you are working on.

So you want to make sure that you are both giving to, and getting from, the network.

RS: Boy, that's a great summary. That's a great observation. Thank you. Lastly, is there anything else that you would like to share with our listeners about *LinkedIn* that you think might be helpful?

KC: I think it's all about getting out there and giving it a try and jumping in with both feet. One of the things I told someone the other day...one of the great things about *LinkedIn's* answer section is...he said, "You know, there is no dumb questions." And I said, "That's exactly right!" As long as it's related to your professional career or it is a business question, you can ask just about everything.

This guy was asking something about his small business and he said, "I don't know if I need an internet policy and I feel kind of silly even knowing if I should be asking. I feel like I should know this as a small business owner. But I'm going to post the question up there and see what happens."

And sure enough, people responded and said..."These are websites you might want to check out. He is an example of one that I wrote." So you would be amazed at the quality and quantity of responses you can get for virtually any business-related questions. But, conversely, make sure that you are also contributing to the network, so you might want to take a browse through some of the industries that you specialize in. See if you can offer someone else a lending hand.

LS: And that's really another good observation. Of the 72 million single-employee businesses in the United States, this is an incredible resource to be tied into where they can get that helping hand.

KC: Exactly!

LS: Wow. Okay, can you tell us where we can find out more information about *LinkedIn*?

KC: Well, you can go to www.linkedin.com, l-i-n-k-e-d-i-n, all one word, dot com. But if you're brand new to *LinkedIn* and you're not exactly sure how to get started, and you want kind of a helping hand through it, you

can also go to *Learn*, l-e-a-r-n, dot LinkedIn.com; that will be a site that will provide you with a little extra information and giving you some help getting started.

LS: I think I'm going to go there, as well, because just in this interview you brought a whole bunch of really great ideas I've never even thought of using this tool for. Thank you.

KC: No problem!

LS: I would really like to thank Krista Canfield, P.R. Manager at *LinkedIn*, for being here today, and for sharing those incredible, valuable insights for us all. This has been Lon Safko, the co-author of *The Social Media Bible*, published by John Wiley & Sons.

Be sure to check out our other valuable Social Media tactics, tools and strategies that can be found in *The Social Media Bible* book, and at our companion website, www.thesocialmediabible.com. For more information about me, Lon Safko, or to learn how I can speak at your company or at your next event, please visit my website at www.lonsafko.com.

Thank you, everyone, for being with us here today.