

LinkedIn expands for high school students, universities

August 20 2013, by Brandon Bailey



Hoping to attract younger users, career-oriented social network LinkedIn announced Monday that it's adding a feature for universities to promote themselves and will allow students as young as 14 to open accounts.

"This is a way we can engage kids in their future," said LinkedIn product manager Christina Allen. "We've done a huge amount of research with parents and universities, and we saw how powerful it is to give these insights to students."

LinkedIn has been aimed at an audience of professionals and college students aged 18 or older, Allen said, but 14 "is really about when kids these days are starting to think about colleges."

The network's new "university pages," which resemble the "company pages" that many employers maintain on the site, are designed to let users follow news from different schools, find information and ask questions of faculty or students. They include tools for sorting

LinkedIn's membership data to researching things like the kind of jobs a particular school's graduates have landed, or where employees of a particular company earned their degrees.

Skeptics might question how many 14-year-olds are making serious career plans, but analysts say it makes sense for LinkedIn to expand its [target audience](#). With more than 238 million members worldwide, LinkedIn says its users already include 30 million college students and recent graduates, which it describes as its fastest-growing demographic.

LinkedIn offers free membership; it makes money from showing ads to users and by providing software that employers and recruiters use to search the site for job candidates. The company already offers tools for recruiters to reach college students.

"That pre-college group is going to become [college students](#) pretty quickly, so it does sort of feed the machine in terms of promoting growth," said Susan Etlinger, an industry analyst who studies social media for Altimeter Group.

The new university pages could be a valuable resource for students, Etlinger added. But as with other social networks, she said, teens should be mindful that anything they post might be seen by admissions officers or prospective employers.

While some [colleges](#) already have pages on Facebook, Etlinger said LinkedIn's move may put pressure on more schools to increase their social media efforts. A LinkedIn spokeswoman said universities won't pay to have [pages](#) on the network, which plans to start with 200 schools and add more in coming weeks.

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