

# To stand out on LinkedIn, focus on journey, not achievements

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LinkedIn introductions that emphasize a professional "journey" rather than listing achievements make a stronger positive impression, according to new Cornell research.

Written stories including career ups and downs are also more effective at creating a connection than videos, the research found.

"We define '[journey](#)' as a long and often difficult process of going from one point to another, which reflects a determination to learn, an acquisition of skills, and a sense of growth and development," said Ovul Sezer, assistant professor at the Cornell Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration and co-author of "It's the Journey, Not Just the Destination: Conveying Interpersonal Warmth in Written Introductions," which published in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

"For example, obstacles one faced or learning processes they went through could be great information to include in one's personal story," Sezer said. "We find that journey information leads to greater perceptions of warmth because journeys help to communicate humility, mitigating the appearance of arrogance often associated with [self-promotion](#)."

Sezer and co-authors Kelly Nault, assistant professor at IE Business School in Madrid, and Nadav Klein, assistant professor at INSEAD in France, wanted to understand how people can introduce themselves with a high level of effectiveness and success. Following several different studies drawing from publicly available data from LinkedIn, they discovered that users prefer written introductions that describe a journey because [personal stories](#) make people appear humbler, and humility is a key ingredient to creating a connection and conveying warmth.

In four pilot studies, the researchers surveyed working professionals to understand how people view introductions. They found that introductions are seen as opportunities for self-promotion, and raise concerns about coming across as lacking humility. Eighty-one of 121 participants explicitly mentioned self-promotion as inherent to

professional introductions, and 59 expressed feelings of discomfort.

Although people seek to create favorable impressions on others in general, they are particularly interested in creating positive impressions on those who make hiring decisions. In one study the researchers tested whether human resource specialists evaluate written introductions which reference a professional journey more favorably than introductions with only achievement information.

The researchers recruited 332 HR professionals and provided them with the LinkedIn introductions used in previous studies to evaluate how those introductions were perceived. Overall, HR specialists viewed candidates who provided more journey information as warmer, partly because they appeared humbler.

Perceptions of warmth generated by journey-oriented introductions, the researchers found, played a key role in influencing HR specialists' desire to connect with the job seeker.

The researchers wanted to probe how one navigates the fine line between presenting professional competency and coming across as arrogant.

"Although delivering an effective written introduction is important, how to do so is less clear," Sezer said. "One of Mark Twain's popular quotes was, 'Success is a journey, not a destination,' and those sentiments capture the essence and value of our research."

**More information:** Kelly A. Nault et al, It's the journey, not just the destination: Conveying interpersonal warmth in written introductions, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2023.104253](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2023.104253)

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