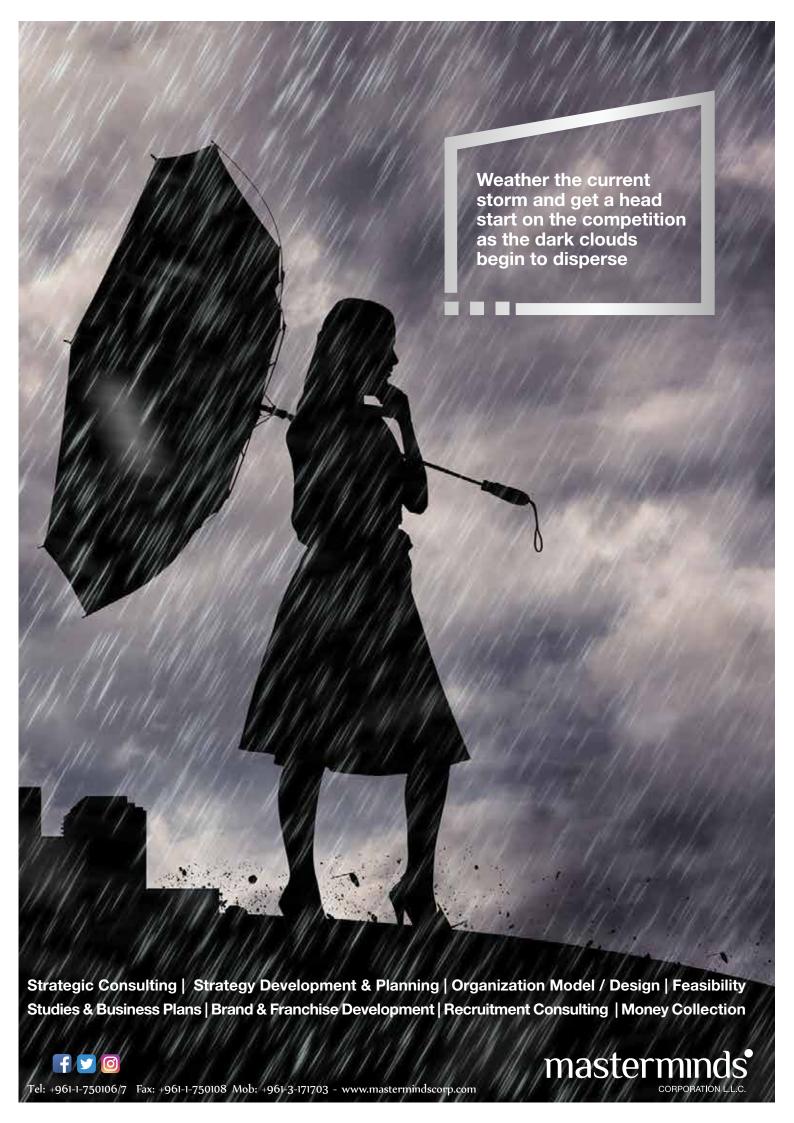
MASTERMINDS UNIVERSE NEWSLETTER









MIREILLE CHOUFANI

PRESIDENT | GENERAL MANAGER

Survival... ...ls it about Miracles?



Downturns and upturns unavoidable, but what is not certain is how we deal with them. Banks and lenders are unwilling to give loans for new investments until the economy turns around; monetary policy is "tightened", causing interest to rise on deposits to their highest rates; investors favor the 15 percent interest on their deposits rather than investing, when investments are not yielding that much net profit.

Housing loans are off; developers are stagnant, contractors are jobless, suppliers are struggling, and unemployment is at its highest rate. And the turmoil goes on and on.

If we look to the past, we know that recessions come and go; some are more severe and lengthier than others, but history confirms that downturns routinely end, and when they do, an economic upturn follows.

Yet, the impact of this recession on small and large businesses is irreversible. Businesses are mired in bank interests, lack of business itself and high operating expenses. Many managers approached during a report Masterminds Corps conducted in 2018 said that their profits were deteriorating, and they are cutting their costs and reducing staff. For such managers, it is tough to know where to place their bets for the immediate term, and not even thinking about the long term.

What comprehensive approach should companies adopt to weather the current storm and get a head start on the competition as the dark clouds begin to disperse?

66 AND THE **TURMOIL** GOES ON AND ON

Several firms have approached strategic consultants to undertake gap analysis and restructuring programs. Others prepare feasibility studies and business plans for new projects, while some have launched innovative concepts and moved them forward within Beirut's F&B sector, with more on the way. Are these steps just optimism or is it fortitude?

For many, the downturn has been a good time to check if their houses are in order; seeing to all the jobs that were missed when the company was busy. This includes updating websites, revamping processes, creating new services or products, investing in people, upgrading the quality of management teams while prudently reducing budgets, rather than spending far more than they saved in order to recover during periods of upturns. Finally, survival is not about miracles; companies might not be capable to completely protect their businesses from an economic downturn yet understanding how it could affect them will help develop a survival plan that will inevitably reduce its impact.

How 1 Survived Breast Cancer

The officially acclaimed Breast Cancer Awareness Month of October sees Masterminds Corp meet with cancer survivor Nathalie Boueri

In 2012 directly after a difficult divorce Nathalie Boueri was diagnosed with cancer. She was 36 and is the General Manager of Watermaster, a company that employs 115 people. "It was something really unexpected," she says.

For three years, Mrs. Boueri underwent hormone and radiotherapy yet managed to avoid being prescribed chemotherapy. "I was looking forward to reaching the fifth year," she says, "since the doctors would have considered me cancer free by then."

But a routine check in 2015 changed all this when it revealed new cancer cells in the lymph nodes under her arms. This time she had to have her breast removed, and a prosthesis inserted in its place. Chemotherapy was necessary this time and was administered over a five-month period, along with a two-month period of radiotherapy. If this wasn't enough, she became infected with the staphylococcus bacteria and had to return to surgery to remove the prosthesis. Three years on and despite still being in hormonotherapy, Mrs. Bouerie is now cancer free.

"Cancer changed me," she says, mentioning how being diagnosed helped her select and sort out what is important and to prioritize her life. "Before my diagnosis, my focus was on everything except myself. But once diagnosed, I focused on me. It was a war. I had to win it," she says.

66 IT WAS A WAR, I HAD TO WIN IT

Today, she is helping others to fight back. Now the President of Rotary Sahel Metn, she is fundraising to create a recreational area in the Oncological Unit at St Georges Hospital in Getawi, Beirut. "It's important that breast cancer patients have a relaxing and well-equipped room in which to take their mind of what they are going through," she says



Mrs. Boueri speaks about applying the cancer survival tools to the economic crises that Lebanon is going through. "The thing is I learned the hard way. Once I was sick, I reacted. We can adopt preventative measures before getting to a point where there is a problem in cancer or problems in your business."

GG DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO TO SURVIVE YOUR BUSINESS.

"Do what you have to do to survive your business. Hang on. From now till end of the year things are going to change. Survive," she says, adding that what's important is to live happily and peacefully. "Do everything with passion and with love, no matter what it is — work or with family or having fun to the fullest."



IT'S IMPORTANT TO LIVE HAPPILY AND PEACEFULLY



MASTERMIND



Fashion designer Lobnan Mahfouz Jr speaks candidly to Masterminds Corp about his foray into the world of fashion

Think of Lebanon's young fashion designers and the word Dubai registers highly. Speak to Lobnan and you are more likely to hear Istanbul, Positano, New Deli and Bangkok. After all, these are destinations where he honed his craft.

"I didn't want to design couture, as everyone does in Lebanon, but rather ready-to-wear. I certainly didn't want work in the Gulf," he says.

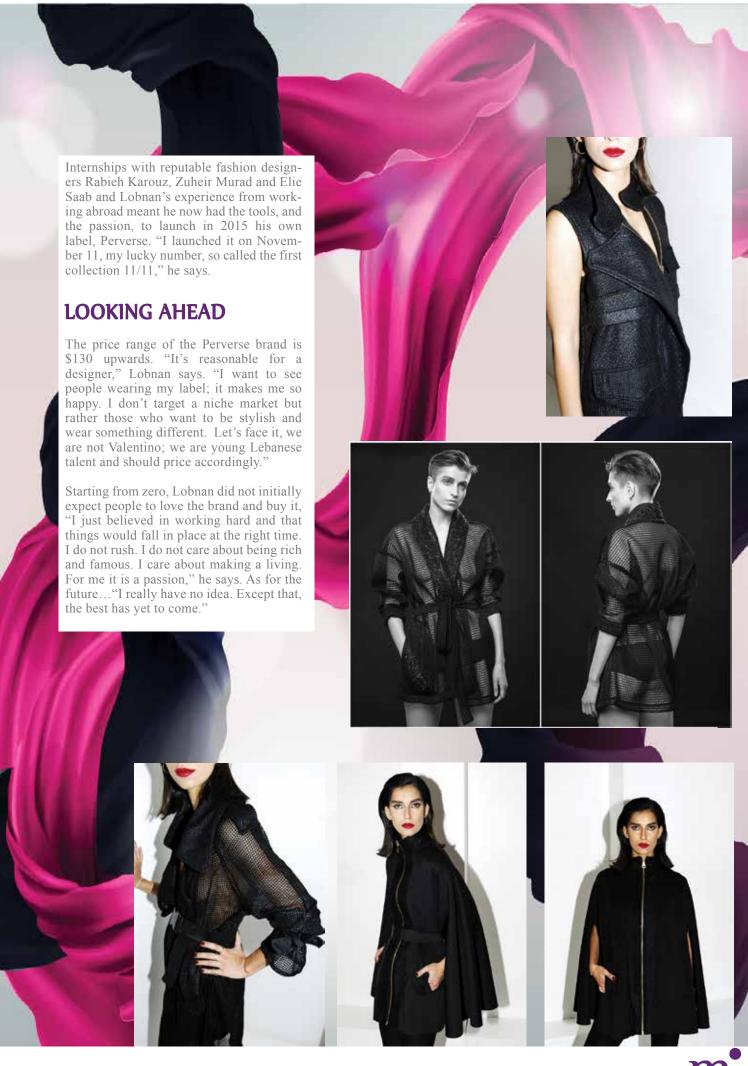
Not sure what journey to take, Lobnan relocated to Istanbul in 2012, a year after he graduated with an honorary degree in Fashion Design and Pattern Drafting at ESMOD Beirut. "It took me four years after graduating to start my own brand. I wanted to take my time," he says.

GG IT'S NOT ABOUTTHE TALENT, IT'S ABOUT THE HARD WORK

Staying in Istanbul for a year, working at a ready-to-wear factory, Lobnan then returned to Lebanon where he met an Italian designer. This took him on a journey to the renowned Italian village of Positano. It was here he worked on a creation of kaftans, leading Lobnan to New Deli to work on the collection there.

A stint with our very own Masterminds Corp in 2013/14 then took him to Bangkok, which he describes as "an amazing experience and the best one ever. I designed the collection from A to Z, often traveling to China," he says.





Employment By Sector - 2017-2018 Construction Retail Services Hospitality Digital Media Industrial

Source: Masterminds Corporation

Lebanese Labor Market Outlook

The war in Syria continues to negatively affect the local market, creating increased numbers of unemployment among the Lebanese

It will come as no surprise to anybody in Lebanon today or indeed in the wider Middle East that, since 2013, the Lebanese labor market has been greatly affected by the influx of Syrian refugees.

Almost half of the Syrian refugees are economically active, mainly in agricultural activities, domestic or personal services and construction. Almost 59 percent are unskilled, with the remaining 41 percent being semi-skilled.

In addition, the Palestinian labor force constitutes almost 50 percent, half of whom are employed outside the camps, with approximately one-quarter working in the camps.

A STARK REALITY

The labor supply consists of new entrants to the labor market, comprising students and graduates from universities. Supply is not only directed towards the local market but rather towards the region, particularly in the Gulf countries.

Unemployment rates are high among highly skilled Lebanese citizens, which, according to figures published by official institutions, stand at between six and nine percent. However, the reality reveals much higher ratios, not to mention those without formal education or below secondary education.

EMPLOYMENT BY UNIVERSITIES 2017-2018



Source: Masterminds Corporation

Based on Masterminds database, we noted that at 37 percent, the services sector has the biggest share of the economy, followed by retail and industrial jobs.

AGE MATTERS

In terms of gender, men are employed at a rate of 59 percent while the employment of women is steadily increasing, with a current rate of 41 percent. The most recruited age is between 20 and 30 and the least recruited is above 41 years for both genders.

STUCK?



IN THE WRONG JOB....

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THE COPYWRITER

In this issue, we focus on the role of the wordsmith and what it is they do to help your business grow

How much writing do you do in your business? Who does it? And more importantly, are the words being used bringing in more business? Copywriting is much more than writing. An experienced copywriter can craft a message that speaks directly to your target audience and get them to take action by either buying your service or product, subscribing to your newsletter or even making a donation.

What is copywriting?

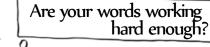
Copywriting is the skill — and field of work — where people write sales promotions and other marketing materials for products, services, fundraising campaigns, etc. It is the craft of writing persuasive messages that prompt people to take action (buy something, inquire about a service, download a free eBook, donate to a cause, etc.).

Copywriting is a skill that's needed EVERYWHERE today. It's used in thousands upon thousands of materials and messages sent out to reach specific audiences, around the clock, every day. Everything that you have read today was probably written by a copywriter.

What does a copywriter do?

A copywriter speaks to clients, writes a brief to send to clients, does lots of research and then writes copy for just some of the following areas:

- Emails
- Social media posts
- Research
- Manage projects
- Proofread
- Advertising and marketing





- Public relations
- Technical materials
- Speeches
- Editing what others write
- Ghostwriting
- Audiovisual and broadcasting
- Website copy
- Case studies
- White papers
- Grants to raise money
- Collateral materials



The role of a copywriter is an important one and all businesses will use one at some point. Copywriters can work inhouse or be hired on a freelance basis. Many business owners discount the importance of a good copywriter, thinking that anybody can write. The truth is, it takes an expert copywriter to get good results for your business.

Enticing Jobs



SENIOR BUSINESS DEVELOPER

Senior Business Developer for a leading company in Metn

Candidate profile:

- 3-4 years experience in Sales
- Excellent Communication and
- Selling skills Keen to details &
- Excellent time management and organisation.

MEDICAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Candidate profile:

- Male
- Age: 25-35
- Degree in Biology, Chemistry or Medical Laboratory
- 1-3 years of experience in pharmaceutical sales.

SECTION MANAGER

For one of the leading retail companies in the Beirut greg:

Candidate profile:

- Bachelor's Degree from a reputable university
- 2-3 years of experience in a similar position
- Excellent communication and Leadership skills
- Fluency in English and French

F&B GENERAL MANAGER

For a Multinational company in Kuwait involved in the F&B industry.

Candidate Profile:

- Age: 25-35 years
- Degree in Hotel Management
- 2 to 5 years related experience in a similar position

Send your CV to:

recruitment@mastermidscorp.com mentioning the job title in the subject

EVENT PLANNER

For a successful and enthusiastic female event planner provide outstanding customer service and organize memorable events that meet quality expectations.

Candidate Profile:

• 2-3 years experience in relevant field.

BUYER-RETAIL INDUSTRY

For the Bed and Bath Linen sector of a leading Retail company in Beirut: Follow up on the suppliers negotiating files.

Candidate Profile:

- Data entry of the items and conditions.
- Follow up with suppliers on delivery and stock
- · Coordinate with the buyer in solving the differences between invoices and prices.
- •2-3 years experience in relevant field

Testimonials

Some of our happy clients



Social Media Executive



Thank you for taking my case seriously. This showed me how professional your company is and how dedicated you are when it comes to customer service.



Wissam R. Maalouf CPA, CFA

esident & CFO Capst restment Group SAL



Capstone Investment Group ofter calls upon Masterminds to help with the hiring or job search needs of highly skilled individuals to join our company. Masterminds is committed to the highest level of customer service, not just during the hiring process but beyond...creating lasting professional relationship."



Carol Hakim Retail & Marketing Director ANTOINE HAKIM Joailliers



It was an absolute pleasure for ANTOINE HAKIM working with Masterminds Corporation since year 2013. They are experts in their field, with their response, efficiency and prompt follow-up, I would always happily recommend them.





Creating a new vision for future growth

MEAB Bank has rebranded. Masterminds sits with Mohammed Jawad, Head of Marketing and Communication at the Bank to find out more

Why rebrand MEAB now? What is the objective?

MEAB Bank was initially established as a corporate bank with limited presence in Lebanon. With over 25 years of experience providing clients with exemplary services, MEAB Bank decided to go even further by adding retail banking to corporate banking. Therefore, the objectives were to increase its brand presence in the market and to widen its offerings to reach a larger target, more tailored products that serve our clients. Achieving this has led to an entire rebranding and repositioning. Furthermore, the rebranding project was one of the main initiatives identified in the Bank's new five-year strategy (2016-2021).

How was the rebranding approached?

Identifying the keys to success in the banking industry and MEAB's current position in the market versus those of close competitors and market leaders is essential to its growth, and in establishing itself as a powerhouse in Lebanon's banking sector. Moving towards a more retail, dynamic, young, modern and tech bank requires additional depth into the market and uncovering threats that might hinder the banks progress and diving deeper into impactful opportunities. For these reasons, a brand equity study was conducted, aimed at uncovering such aspects that allowed for more efficient progress and with fact-based findings towards the next stage of the brand development and repositioning. The study was commissioned to the leading international research firm Nielsen.

How did you tackle the brand identity?

The research was split into two parts: qualitative module (to uncover and understand) and quantitative (to measure and assess). Based on the outcome of the data provided by both the qualitative and quantitative research, and local and international trend spotting, the agency defined the brand positioning that will secure its uniqueness and out of which will stem the brand promise. Stemming from the brand positioning, an international and modern visual identity reflecting the state of the art and international company standards was created. This identity aims at reflecting the brand personality, mission and vision.

Is it all aspects of the bank that is actually being rebranded?

This project will culminate in a fundamental change in the Bank's brand equity and image, thus covering all aspects of the brand. We have developed a new branch architectural concept that will be rolled out in phases to cover all the bank branches in Lebanon and Iraq. The Bank's Head Office will also undergo an architectural change. All the bank's alternative channel media will be also overhauled (ATMs, website, online and mobile banking). Additionally, all the bank's collaterals will be naturally affected.

What differentiated identity are you hoping to create in the minds of consumers, investors, competitors, and other stakeholders?

We plan to reinforce our strong brand identity with our existing clients (the research results showed that our customers have a very high brand equity index with our brand compared to other bankable people with their own banks.). Therefore, the rebranding reaffirms this message and is telling our customers that we are extending this existing close relationship with our clients locally and internationally. Consequently, we are aiming at projecting this special relationship that we have with our existing clients to new potential clients.

How is the new brand being rolled out?

A number of advertising platforms have been utilised to create awareness of the bank's rebranding. These include TV commercials broadcast on leading Lebanese channels, outdoor advertising that covered most of Lebanon, and, of course, all digital platforms.



MOHAMMED JAWAD, HEAD OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATION



What advice do you have for others thinking about rebranding?

Rebranding is meant to inform your audience that you have a new vision towards the future. It might be a new strategy, direction, product, or way of doing things. Your new brand must also represent who you are in reality, and to make your clients feel comfortable about their relationship with you. Furthermore, you must involve your employees and clients from the beginning to understand the core reason of the exercise before implementing any change, otherwise it won't be achieved.

AASTERMINDS UNIVERSE

Paying Back to Society

Dr. Amin Hajj-Ali, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering at the Lebanese International University reveals to Mastermind Corps how the university has been at the forefront of technological brilliance



BEKAA VALLEY CAMPUS

Photo by Jihad Mourad

Please tell us about this new project

The first of its kind in Lebanon and the Middle East, we recently built a satellite from A to Z, which is part of capacity building for our university and the country itself. Lebanon is not well versed in the aerospace and aeronautical fields. However, we are working with Istanbul Technological University's (ITU) faculty of aerospace and aeronautical engineering and have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with them for the purpose of the transfer of such skills through capacity building courses.

66 A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES STARTS WITH ONE STEP. WE HAVE TAKEN THAT STEP

The first course was to develop on a CanSat, so called as the satellite is as small as a soda can. Teams of students from a variety of disciplines, such

as surveying, computer, and electrical engineers, were given the mission to build the satellite, in order to collect information from sensors and transmit those sensors to a ground station, which they also must build.

How long was the course for and who was involved?

The course ran from September 20-26. Apart from the students, one aspect we thought about as a university was paying back to society. Therefore, we thought of two parties that should be involved: The Lebanese Army and the National Centre



for Remote Sensing (CNRS), which is part of the national research center. Mainly the tutors were from ITU in Turkey and professors and lab instructors from LIU assisted.



Yes, they did in Bekaa. However, satellites are usually launched by rockets, but they didn't have time for this, so the alternatives were to connect it to a drone or helium balloon or just drop it from high building.

What other aspects of satellitebuilding did students learn on the course?

They had to learn about satellite technology in brief and how to work in teams on tight deadlines. They had to think and develop in their designs the liabilities involved. For example, when you shoot rockets into space, such are subject adverse conditions such as temperature and other forces, etc. So, they have to research and look at these calculations, and so on.

Where to from here?

We are planning to develop other capacity building courses along these line, but within the domain of a CubeSat, which are real satellites. A CanSat is an educational satellite which is fired to a maximum height of 500m floating back to the ground via a parachute. We are now working with ITU and other parties to develop courses along the lines of CubeSats. This said, the entry level course of building a CanSat must be undertaken before moving onto a CubeSat course.

What was the students' reaction?

They absolutely loved it. We received great feedback. Students were totally involved, since they had to start from scratch, understand what's going on, build it and then test it. They worked in teams from different engineering disciplines, such as surveying, computer, and electrical engineers to build something new. The experience was new for them.









Going Niche

Some of Beirut's food and beverage players have taken a different approach by going after niche markets, while others are mixing upscale with casual

You don't have to look far to realize that Lebanon's food and beverage (F&B) sector is causing ripples around the world. In August of this year, Forbes Middle East ran an article entitled "Lebanon's Restaurateurs Are Cashing In On Nigeria's Booming F&B Industry". Also, here on the domestic front, the sector was put on a pedestal when Beirut was named Travel and Leisure Magazine's Best International City for Food in 2017.

In a city (and its suburbs...think Broummana, Antelias) where it seems a restaurant, café or snack joint is opening every week, it pays to stand out from the crowd in what has become a dog-eat-dog market. Our researchers at Masterminds have been out on the city's F&B scene looking for those places where both differentiation and value are key. Or in other words, catering to niche markets, which is more than just a trend.

Kalei Coffee Co., in Beirut's Mar Mikhael district, is one such place. According to its website, its own coffee enthusiasts travel the world to actually handpick unique coffee beans themselves. A three-floor coffee shop and micro-roastery means those beans, which are direct trade green coffee, are flown home and roast onsite. Another specialty non-chain coffee shop to hit Beirut in the past 12 months is Sip, on Gemmayzeh's Rue Gouraud, with its vintage style interior and cool crowd.

Staying in Mar Mikhael but this time on Pharon Street is Kharouf, which Charbel Akiki managing partner with Gino Khoueiry opened in the final quarter of 2017. What's unique about this place is that it only serves (more or less at least) lamb, which rotates on a spit that diners can see. Going strong for nearly a year now, it clearly shows that going niche has a place in the Beirut F&B scene.

MORE TO COME

Stem, by the owners of Capitol, and located on Achrafieh's Monot Street, has been causing a buzz since it first opened its doors earlier this year. Wine bar and restaurant, its upscale-casual mix and simple branding gives way to drinks and



Kalei Coffee Co., Mar Mikhael





Kalei Coffee Co., Mar Mikhael

international dishes. Word has it that this place is constantly full, so clearly, they are doing something right.

Two more places about to open their doors in Beirut are Slate, and Wine and Wit, both situated on Madrid Street, Mar Mikhael. Our researchers have also seen that the huge space of the former Memory Lane on the same street is currently being worked on, so expect a new F&B opening soon. Also, a little bird has told us that an innovative Asian F&B concept not seen in Beirut before is set to launch in March 2019, so watch this space.



Stem, Monot Street







Afaf Cake Lounge Gemmayze





If you want to grow your business or get noticed for a new job, then it's time to take this free platform more seriously

If you're not active on LinkedIn, you're missing a great opportunity to gain new business leads, network with industry notables or find new work opportunities. Follow these tips to increase your reach with your present and new connections to help you and your business grow.

1 POST REGULARLY

Logging onto LinkedIn occasionally and scrolling down the newsfeed is not enough. LinkedIn has gone social. Aim to write the minimum of three posts a week, more is better. Write about what interests you, and indirectly relate it to your business. Use hashtags, so you attract your tribe and increase who connects with you.

2 ENGAGE WITH YOUR CONNECTIONS

LinkedIn is not just about you. To attract your connections and potential connections to look at your profile and connect, you must engage with their posts. When you see something interesting, comment on it. And no, saying "That's a nice post." Doesn't count. Really engage with a post, say why you like it, ask questions so your connection will reply to me. Remember, there are over 500 million users on LinkedIn. Find out who your target audience is and start engaging. It's a simple yet effective approach.

3 BE AUTHENTIC

Connect with people, chat with people, message people. But whatever you do, make sure you are being YOU. Yes, LinkedIn is much more relaxed and more social than ever before. Chat to your connections the same way that you would if you were to meet them in 'real life'. Leave the jargon and business speak in the office for your colleagues. Remember this: People buy from people. Your aim is to build relationships through trust and sharing.

4 PERSONALIZE YOUR MESSAGES

So, you've seen somebody you would like to connect with on LinkedIn. Yes, you can just click the "connect" button and wait. Instead, send a personalized message. Something simple to introduce yourself, how you are looking forward to expanding your network and reading their posts. A personalized connection makes all the difference and makes it more likely that the person you are connecting to will accept your connection request.





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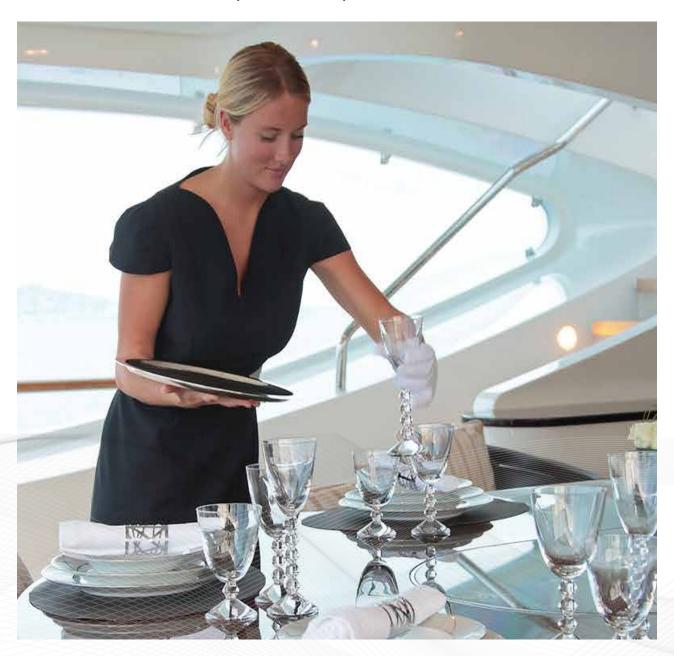
NEED AN EDITOR OR PROOF-READER?

Yes, we provide this service too. Let an English-native speaker go over your work before you send it out to clients or submit an article to a college or university.



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