

Career Connections on LinkedIn

Don't chase the referral - build the relationship, and it will follow.

Building Relationships for Referrals

Now that you've perfected your resume and crafted a strong cover letter, it's time to focus on building relationships. If you're targeting a company for future employment, start connecting with UMass Boston alumni - even if there aren't current openings. Building your network early will pay off in the long run.

LinkedIn is one of the most powerful tools for exploring career paths, learning about companies, and developing professional connections. Yet many students miss its full potential, especially when reaching out to alumni or industry professionals.

The biggest mistake? Contacting someone only when you want a job referral. While referrals can boost your visibility, cold requests often fall flat. The real key is building authentic relationships over time - and that starts with informational conversations with alumni.

Why Alumni Networking Matters

Alumni know what it's like to be in your shoes, and many are open to offering guidance and insight. By building relationships with alumni, you can:

- » Gain inside knowledge about company culture, hiring processes, and industry trends.
- » Learn about career paths you might not have considered.

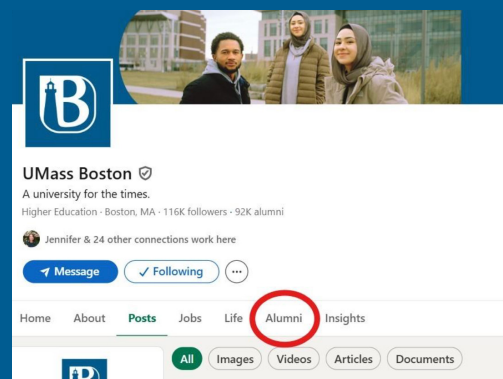
- » Develop advocates who may naturally want to recommend you for future opportunities.
- » Build a stronger professional network that supports you beyond a single application.

This approach isn't about asking for a job. It's about cultivating a professional relationship that can lead to more impactful referrals.

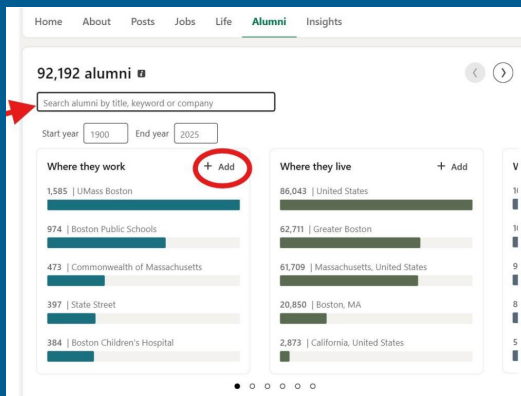
How to Find Alumni

Step 1: Finding Alumni on LinkedIn

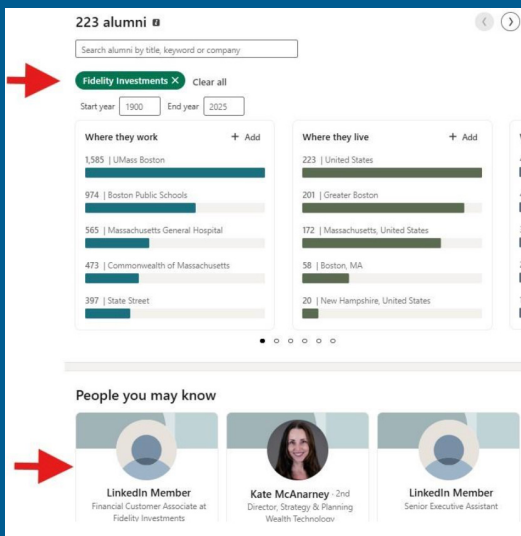
1. Use the "Alumni" Tool: On your university's LinkedIn page, click the "Alumni" tab to see thousands of profiles of graduates.



2. Filter by Company & Industry: Narrow your search to people working at your target companies, in your fields of interest, or in geographic locations where you hope to work.



3. Look for Common Ground: Shared majors, student organizations, or activities can make a great conversation starter.



Step 2: Reaching Out Professionally

Your first message should be short, specific, and genuine. Focus on your shared connection (the university) and your interest in learning about their experience - not asking for a job. For example:

Hi [Name], I'm a current student at UMass Boston majoring in [Field]. I noticed you also graduated from UMB and now work at [Company], which I admire for [reason]. I'm exploring career paths in [industry/field] and would love to hear about your experience there. Would you be open to a brief conversation in the coming weeks? Thank you!

Step 3: Conducting the Informational Conversation

- » Come Prepared: Have a few thoughtful questions ready (e.g., "What skills are most important in your role?").
- » Listen Actively: Let them do most of the talking. People enjoy sharing their experiences.
- » Respect Their Time: Keep to the time you agreed upon (often 20–30 minutes).
- » Don't Ask for a Job: Instead, focus on advice, insights, and stories.

Step 4: Following Up & Staying Connected

Thank Them Promptly: Send a thank-you message within 24 hours.

- » Share Updates: Let them know how their advice has helped you or update them on milestones in your academic or professional journey.
- » Engage Over Time: Like or comment on their LinkedIn posts, share relevant articles, or send a note on work anniversaries or accomplishments.
- » Ask for Tangible Help: When you find a relevant internship or job, email your contact to let them know you've applied. Reiterate how much you've valued your conversations and express appreciation if they're able to advocate for your candidacy. Be sure to attach your application materials.

Why This Works

When you invest time in learning from someone and maintaining a genuine connection, you build a professional relationship rooted in trust and respect. Over time, that bond can lead to meaningful advocacy and referrals grounded in a true understanding of your goals and skills.