

When did LinkedIn become a dating site? Two rules to navigate this new challenge



SINGAPORE: If you have been on social media earlier this year, you might have seen a curious meme going viral.

For the "LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Tinder" challenge, users have to compile four profile images of themselves corresponding to what they would post on these respective social media platforms. While Facebook and Instagram profiles can sometimes look similar, there is a striking distinction between the kind of pictures people would use on business networking platform LinkedIn and dating app Tinder - and rightly so. Obviously, LinkedIn images tend towards compelling, professional headshots, while Tinder photos often try to project a more fun-loving image that display one's personal interests and can even sometimes be more suggestive.

CONFUSING INTERACTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: For instance, there was a recent case in Singapore when a man met his Tinder date in person only to find out that she was just trying to sell him insurance. Unsurprisingly, it ended in disappointment on both sides.

On the other hand, people are turning to

LinkedIn to scout for potential partners and using its messaging service to chat up others. The Tinder insurance encounter is undoubtedly annoying but what is arguably more uncomfortable is when the opposite happens and a LinkedIn contact turns out to be a Casanova trying to score a date. LinkedIn is the main business networking platform that most people gravitate to. With 1 million users in Singapore - and over 500 million worldwide - it has become a powerful and economic way for people to make useful business contacts and collaborate on new ideas.

LinkedIn's built-in discoverability and connectivity functions serve up a list of ambitious, successful candidates who might be seeking fresh opportunities. But what was meant to be a professional human resource tool for companies have morphed into a personal human resource tool for some individuals. The trouble arises because although there are well-defined guidelines about appropriate conduct at the workplace, with social media, the boundaries between work and play are more blurred. Platforms can be used in unintended, new ways that do not gel with their original purpose. Perhaps the more relaxed terms of online interaction makes it easier for some to inadvertently slip into casual behaviour they may think twice about in an office. Is it ever appropriate to establish a romantic connection via LinkedIn? And how do you respond to someone asking you out?

1. SET YOUR OWN BOUNDARIES: Navigating the tricky grey area of LinkedIn come-ons can be challenging precisely because it shouldn't be. In general, most people would



not walk up to a random co-worker and complement their appearance or ask them out for coffee with no additional context. You would think the same general rules apply on LinkedIn. Yet, I have heard from friends how they have received unsolicited comments about their appearance. I have also previously received private LinkedIn messages asking me out for coffee even though I can barely identify what work-related commonalities we might have just by scanning the other person's profile.

But on LinkedIn, when such personal comments creep in when one is expecting a work-related discussion, it can feel particularly jarring. This makes it difficult to ignore - or to excise from one's memory. It can sometimes make one wonder, are you being valued for your carefully compiled resume and proven track record or your looks and baby-making worthiness? At the same time, it does not make sense to turn down all requests for meet-ups just because there are the occasional irritating pests who try to hound an uninterested person into going on a date. After all, having more professional contacts can come in useful for one's career. It is nice to have a career buddy in our

otherwise increasingly solitary professional journeys. Like-minded individuals who have strong professional chemistry do go on to forge partnerships that add value to their career goals, without ever wanting to date each other. So, just like in real life, I've set some personal boundaries to help figure out whether or not it is worth my time to meet a LinkedIn contact. I typically agree to a face-to-face meeting only after we've had fairly productive digital correspondences. Some coffee "dates" have resulted in mutually beneficial working relationships over the years. On a couple of occasions, these contacts have become friends I see at both work-related events and social settings. Friendships can grow out of meaningful career contacts.

Sometimes I politely decline an offer to meet when I find there is little potential in furthering our conversations in person. There are no hard feelings - it's just business after all. And that one time when a complete stranger asked me out for no apparent reason, I ultimately decided to treat it like an unwanted Instagram DM - I simply did not respond at all.

FIND YOUR DATE ON A DATING APP INSTEAD: For everyone trying to increase their chances at finding love, why not focus on actual dating apps to help you find a match?

Single Singaporeans really like using dating apps to find romance, the one bright spark that might just boost our declining birth rates.

A 2019 survey by dating company Lunch Actually found that 51 per cent of 600 Singaporean singles surveyed prefer to use dating apps to search for a partner. Popular match-making apps like Coffee Meets Bagel and Pak-



tor say Singapore ranks among their top markets.

Paktor has about 850,000 users on its app in Singapore and recorded a 36 per cent jump in the number of matches from 2018 to 2019. On Coffee Meets Bagel, 1.6 million introductions were made in Singapore in 2017.

More Singapore couples are openly admitting they first met on such dating apps. The success probably stems from a national culture of practicality and efficiency. There are few better ways to put oneself out there to a large pool of potential dates, who share the same personal objective of finding someone special. But rare is the couple who met on LinkedIn and did more with that enduring spark. The lesson learnt? Better to hunt for a potential date in a space where the terms of engagement are clear and there is little chance of misunderstandings arising. And if you just can't shake the thought of prowling LinkedIn to find someone who checks all your right boxes, such as educational background and occupation, your prayers are answered. There is, in fact, a new dating app called The League that draws on LinkedIn to verify its users. Just imagine getting fuss-free access to a group of single,

Posts, coronavirus news hit by anti-spam system glitch 'restored', says Facebook

KARACHI/CALIFORNIA: Some posts, as well as coronavirus-related news, removed earlier from Facebook after its anti-spam system glitched were successfully "restored", the social media giant's safety and integrity head said. Posts mistakenly taken down by the social media platform also included those pertaining to the Aurat March in Pakistan, among others that had no link to coronavirus. A Facebook user spoke to Geo.tv, saying they had received a warning after one of their posts related to the Aurat March 2020 had been taken down early Wednesday morning. "Your post goes against our Community Standards on spam," the warning stated. "We have these standards to prevent things like false advertising, fraud and security breaches." In a Twitter post, Facebook Vice President for Integrity, Guy Rosen, wrote that the company had "restored all the posts that were incorrectly removed, which included posts on all topics - not just those related to COVID-19". "This was an issue with an automated system that removes links to abusive websites, but incorrectly removed a lot of other posts too," Rosen added. COVID-19 is the name given by the World Health Organization (WHO) to the new strain of coronavirus that has left over 8,000 people dead around the world. Pakistan reported its first two deaths on Wednesday as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Minister Taimur Khan Jhagra confirmed that both patients - one in Mardan and another in Hangu - had died. The number of nationwide infections, on the other hand, hit 250, with most cases in Sindh. Rosen also responded to a report on Twitter, saying it was "a bug in an anti-spam system, unrelated to any changes in our content moderator workforce". According to Time, Facebook users had raised complaints that "links to news stories about school closings and other information related to the virus outbreak [were] being blocked by the company's automated system". Most of the Facebook links to news stories were from websites such as Medium, USA Today, and BuzzFeed. —Agencies

Amazon to stop shipping non-essentials to consumers in Italy and France

NEW YORK: Amazon will stop shipping non-essential products to consumers in Italy and France, according to an announcement the company published in Chinese on the WeChat social media platform. The policy is an escalation in the e-commerce giant's response to preserve resources in regions hard hit by the coronavirus outbreak. An Amazon spokesman said the company made the decision due to a spike in orders and the need to respect anti-coronavirus safety measures in the workplaces. Amazon considers baby products; health and household items; beauty and personal care; groceries; and industrial, scientific, and pet supplies as essential products. The world's largest online retailer said merchants on Amazon are open to sell and ship directly to customers in the region. More than 274,800 people have been infected across the world and 11,389 have died, according to a Reuters tally. In Italy, the death toll rose by 18.4 per cent on Friday, reaching 4,032. France reported 78 new deaths on Friday, reaching a total of 450. Both countries have announced lockdown orders to slow the spread of the virus. The move comes on the heels of actions Amazon took on Tuesday when it said it will only receive vital supplies at its U.S. and UK and other European warehouses until April 5 to free up inventory space for medical and household goods. "Effective immediately, Amazon will stop receiving FBA (fulfillment by Amazon) orders from customers on non-essential products on its Italy (Amazon.it) and France (Amazon.fr) site, so that operations employees can focus on fulfilling and delivering on the orders that consumers need the most now," Amazon.com said in a statement translated from Chinese. —Reuters

WhatsApp announces new features to combat fake news amid coronavirus outbreak

LONDON: Instant-messaging application WhatsApp announced two new features through which it aims to fight the spread of the pandemic and the misinformation accompanying it that is stoking fears across the globe. To reduce the spread of rumours, the app announced WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub - an initiative in partnership with the WHO, UNICEF and UNDP - to offer simple, actionable guidance, general tips, and resources on the infection. WhatsApp said it was also working with WHO and UNICEF to provide messaging hotlines for people around the globe to use. It was not clear when the hotlines will be ready to use but they will provide information and will be listed on the WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub. The messaging app said it was donating \$1 million to the Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and the fund will help in fact-checking for the #CoronaVirusFacts Alliance. "We are also pleased to be able to partner with the Poynter Institute to help grow the amount of fact-checking organizations on WhatsApp and to support their life saving work to debunk rumours. We will also continue to work directly with health ministries around the world for them to provide updates right within WhatsApp," the app's head at Facebook, Will Cathcart, said. —Agencies

Tech headaches of working from home and how to remedy them



Working from home because of the coronavirus pandemic may sound like a luxury. Freedom to cook lunch. Time to do laundry between tasks. Respite from that loquacious co-worker.

Then reality sets in. Your Wi-Fi slows down to a crawl, the new software tools you work with are confusing and your computer mouse is a piece of junk. Without an I.T. department, you are on your own with your tech problems. Our most common work-from-home tech issues are the ones that slow down our productivity: unreliable internet connections, low-quality video calls, software programs that are too narrowly tailored and uncomfortable work stations.

Fret not, new telecommuters: I've worked from home on and off for many years and have managed to minimize my tech problems to achieve a kind of work-from-home nirvana. And in consulting other remote-working veterans, there are easy lessons and fixes to apply that will help throughout the time you work from your residence. The biggest of these: Less is better, especially fewer gadgets and fewer work apps. That principle can guide us to a simpler, less frustrating setup that enable us to work well with our colleagues.

"There's an overabundance of tools," said Jason Fried, a founder of Basecamp, a software company in Chicago that makes remote working tools, and co-author of the book "Remote: Office Not Required." "These are disasters waiting to happen."

Here's what you can do to make working from home a joy. Let's talk about your internet. Let's first address the No. 1 tech issue at home: internet connectivity. Compared with the zippy broadband connections in our offices, our home internet speeds are probably sluggish and our Wi-Fi connections may be spotty.

So now is a good time to assess your infrastructure.

If your Wi-Fi signal is unreliable, meaning it's strong in one room but weak in an-

other, my recommendation for most people is to invest in a so-called mesh Wi-Fi system. That lets you connect multiple wireless access points together to blanket your home with a strong internet connection. My favorite mesh systems are Google Wifi and Amazon's Eero, which start at \$99 for a single router and can be bundled with additional access points.

If your internet speeds feel slow, a modern Wi-Fi system with support for the latest wireless standards, like the aforementioned ones, would help. But if speeds continue to feel sluggish even after you upgrade your networking gear, you may have to contact your internet provider to ask about other options. Some providers may offer faster broadband speeds at higher prices.

In general, many of us (myself included) are experiencing slower overall speeds in the wake of the pandemic. That's because hordes of us are going online from home and sucking up the internet provider's bandwidth, which can cause average speeds to dip. There's not much we can do in this case beyond calling our service providers to complain about the slowdowns.

That's why it's wise to have a backup option. When speed problems arise, you can resort to using your smartphone's hot spot feature, which turns the device's cellular connection into a miniature Wi-Fi network. Cellular networks are designed to handle larger amounts of users, so chances are that your smartphone's data connection will be faster when your broadband is overwhelmed. Apple and Google offer instructions on their websites on how to turn iPhones and Android phones into hot spots.

But use this feature sparingly to avoid surpassing your cellular plan's data limits.

There is no one-size-fits-all recommendation for the best remote work setup because we all have different jobs. But one rule of thumb is to keep your gadgets to a minimum. The more tech we own, the more troubleshooting we eventually have to do.

With that in mind, here's a list of common remote-work headaches and their tech solutions, including products recommended by Mr. Fried and Wirecutter, a New York Times publication that tests products:

Cramped screens. Many of us were sent home with laptops for work, and the smaller screens can feel constraining. You could consider adding a second monitor to your desk, like HP's \$539 Z27, a high-resolution 27-inch monitor.

Awkward video and phone calls. Many of us are familiar with poorly lit video calls and low-quality phone calls. If sound quality is an issue, wireless headsets like the \$180 Jabra Elite 75t earbuds have noise-reducing microphones so you don't pick up as much external noise. For better video quality, you might consider buying a webcam, like Logitech's \$70 C920S. For lighting issues, a light therapy lamp, like Carex's \$150 Day-light Classic Plus, can provide some natural-looking lighting to a video call - and it might even perk up your mood.

Noise. For those who have loud children or live in an urban environment, a pair of noise-canceling headphones, like the \$400 Bose 700 over-ear headphones or the \$105 iMore DualDriver BT ANC earbuds, can muffle out many unpleasant sounds to help you focus.

Body pains. Without help from an ergonomic specialist, you may run into problems like wrist pain, neck strain and a sore back. You can remedy wrist pains with an ergonomic keyboard, like the \$219 Kinesis Freestyle Edge, or a comfortable wireless mouse like the \$50 Logitech M720 Triathlon Multi-Device Wireless Mouse.

If your back is killing you, it may be time to invest in a well-built office chair, like the \$969 Steelcase Gesture, or a standing desk like Uplift's \$539 V2 standup desk.

Mr. Fried keeps his tech setup simple: a laptop, a good office chair, a therapy lamp for lighting up video calls and noise-canceling headphones for when his children are

being noisy. When he feels like standing, he puts his laptop on a bookcase.

Let's talk about our problems working on teams. When it comes to remotely collaborating with a team of colleagues, the path to success has less to do with tools than having empathy for one another when we tech.

At any company, the main thing to understand is that people have different levels of tech literacy. So it's best for you and your team to choose a set of versatile tools rather than a variety of single-taskers, Mr. Fried said. What does that actually mean? Team collaboration apps like Slack can handle group chats, private messaging and uploading files. Google's app suite includes collaboration tools for document editing, calendar sharing and video conferencing. Relying on a general-purpose tool like those for various tasks would be better than using a separate app for each task: Projects can get messy if some work files are in one tool but not in another.

The second step for a team is to ensure that everyone uses the same tools. Don't be the colleague urging everyone to use Zoom for videoconferencing when everybody else is video chatting on Google Hangouts, for example. A lack of consensus on collaboration tools can quickly escalate workplace tensions.

Distractions? Think of them as breaks. Many who are new to telecommuting cite tech as a major distraction from work: TV shows, video games and digital comic books are just a button press away. Here's a secret to finding happiness in these distractions: Embrace them.

You are entitled to take breaks. At home, you have the liberty to spend your lunch break watching a Netflix show instead of going to a restaurant. "You don't have to feel like you're in the office," Mr. Fried said. "Take advantage of that - don't feel ashamed of it at all." Besides, since we have to minimize the time we spend outdoors at the moment, turning on the TV may be the most responsible thing