

## **Transcript of the Podcast Interview with LinkedIn's most connected man – James Evangelidis.**

### **Karalyn:**

Hi everyone it's Karalyn Brown here. I am the Founder of Interview IQ. Today on the Interview IQ microphone, I've got a wonderful guest.

His name is James Evangelidis. James is an author, a headhunter and consultant and he's the most connected Australian man on LinkedIn.

Today, James is going to share how he uses LinkedIn to find consulting opportunities, how he uses LinkedIn to hire people as a headhunter, and what he specifically looks for in a LinkedIn profile.

There is that and a whole lot more. So listen up.

### **Karalyn:**

James it's lovely to speak to you this afternoon. I was really interested in having a chat with you, because I know that you're Australia's most connected man on LinkedIn, and LinkedIn's, probably, number one fan in Australia.

So why don't tell us about, first of all, what you do and how you generally use LinkedIn?

### **James:**

Sure. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I am Australia's most connected person on LinkedIn. And that is not by design. It's quite by default. It's just that way it's happened.

I've been at different [career] points now for fifteen years. For the first ten years I was essentially a headhunter. I worked in specialist search [headhunting] in a specialist team within the IT space called e-Business and e-Commerce. Those were the first ten years. But I moved from the e-space to the headhunting in accounting and law on the professional side for accounting firms and law firms.

And then as about five years ago I started to see the change in the recruitment in the search market. I started writing books. In fact, my first foray into the book world was to co-author a book with my good friend, Karalyn Brown.

### **Karalyn:**

That's right. That's the book: "What Do Employers Really Want?"

But you've gone on to write a few more books since. What have they been?

**James:**

My first book after that was called: “What Do Accounting Clients Really Want?” which now has gone to second edition.

There is another one called “What Do Financial Clients Really Want?”

And there’s another one called “What Do The Bosses Really Want?”

So you can see a bit of a theme.

Although my latest book which comes out next month is called: “The New Trusted Adviser.” This is a different genre for me and I’m really enjoying it. And I’m enjoying even more because I actually I completed it last week.

Yay.

**Karalyn:**

Having deadline it will help you get motivated!

**James:**

Absolutely. But a common thread in all the books is LinkedIn.

**Karalyn:**

How has LinkedIn helped you with those books?

**James:**

Well, essentially the bulk of the books were interview based, essentially on seeking the views, and the thoughts of someone in a particular market.

So for example, with “What Do The Clients Really Want?” the book was basically speaking to people who hire accountants for the business.

And although I know a lot of CFOs, I don’t know all CFOs. So LinkedIn really helped me actually finding those CFOs

It has given me a really good starting point, to actually about find out more about not just their name, not just their title, not just their current role, but what they’ve done before.

I also see the direction of their careers, where they went to university, what sports they play, their hobbies and interests. LinkedIn is just a wonderfully rich repository of information.

And what I really like to say to people is that LinkedIn is akin to the world's largest virtual bucket of business cards and more.

And I say and more, because I don't know about you Karalyn, but the last business card that was given to me didn't tell me what the person's previous job was, whether he went to university, who his friends are or what his hobbies are, whereas LinkedIn gives that plus much more.

**Karalyn:**

Yes it's great.

When you're reaching out to CFOs and people like that, one of the questions that people will have is how can this apply to people that are looking for jobs as well. So how do you reach out, so people actually want to connect up with you and then want to talk to you?

**James:**

Yeah that's an obvious things to ask because a lot of people have said to me okay you'll find out about them in LinkedIn, but do you use LinkedIn to reach out to them.

I use LinkedIn in a really unusual way which I don't think LinkedIn is really happy about themselves. But what I essentially used LinkedIn for is a really solid starting point. The starting point is essentially research.

If, for example, I'm really keen to interview a CEO or a CFO or someone known in a particular market that I'm interested in, what I do is research them. I find out as much about them, as deep as I can.

I get hold of their email address. I send them an email, I introduce myself, I tell them that I've done research and I was impressed, because usually, I only usually reach out to people who impress me.

I say I am impressed because their profile to me was interesting. I say in the email that I was impressed by the profile and this is what I'd like to do. I will phone you later this week and then I phone them.

Essentially in this approach I've used LinkedIn. I've used email. I've taken it offline. And invariably, the people I get to speak to, my success rate in them agreeing to meet with me is actually really high. It's like two in every three. Between 60-70% of people that I get on the phone, once I've sent them the email and so on, say yes to a meeting. And for me it worked really well.

The people that I can't get on the phone because they're either too busy or not interested will send me an email, are a smaller number. But I've used this approach and I've

tweaked it a bit, and so forth.

So long as you're upfront and you tell people why you are contacting them and how you found out about them, most people respond in the right way.

**Karalyn:**

How long are those emails?

**James:**

What do you mean, in terms of actual length?

**Karalyn:**

Yes, because I think that is an important thing because, again, I'm just applying what you are saying to people looking for a job. They'll send out their resume in an email.

**James:**

No. I'm not asking for a job.

I have the advantage that I want them to appear in a book and so forth. There's a sense that this is sometimes like ego appeal somewhat. Sometimes there's that element, but in terms of the approach it basically works for everyone.

If for example we're using the scenario of someone doing research on LinkedIn about a company that they really want to work for, the first approach is always send an email, then follow up with a phone call.

But that email should be something that is succinct and is very clear on what you want and what you can do for the business, for that company that you are approaching.

It's not an opportunity to talk about yourself per se. It's more of an opportunity to introduce yourself, to basically tell the reader of the email or the receiver of the email what you want and what you can do for them.

It's very important.

There's going to be those three elements: who you are, what you want from them and what you can do for them. It's really really important.

**Karalyn:**

Is it a 3 pronged approach? Because I know in the way that you've developed business, you've used LinkedIn as a starting point to reach out to people that you might want to

offer consulting services to, for example.

One of the things that I am saying to people is that if you're looking for work, think of yourself as a consultant. You might not be a consultant, but think of your approach as a consultant. How do you say that in an email, particularly around what you can do for them? What could you put there?

**James:**

Sure. If you're sending an email to a CEO or CFO, by definition they're really busy people. They read lots of things that they don't want to read. They get lots of emails and so forth.

The best approach if it was me, is more about the fact that you really want to be clear with them about what you can do for them.

And my approach if I was looking for work wouldn't be an email necessarily. I've tried this approach myself and it actually worked. I advised I friend of mine who wanted to basically work for a lot of insurance firms.

Through LinkedIn he researched who the CEOs were of five large firms and he approached them.

But he approach them by a letter. The letter was a book and because of LinkedIn, the CEOs - these aren't CEOs of major banks and so on, but insurance companies of a certain type and the CEOs had a LinkedIn profile that had what they're into: golf, swimming, family travel and so forth.

So what the advice was to my friend, which he did, was buy a book linked to one of those described interests. So if the CEO is involved in golf, a book on golf was attached to the letter.

In the letter, he would refer to it as "A small token of my appreciation in you reading this letter. Please accept this gift with my great thanks."

And funny thing about it is the way he actually delivered it was, again, I advised him that people love opening little parcels, little boxes. Because I would say they would get 500 emails a day, they may get 20, 30, 40 phone calls a day. But they probably wouldn't get a parcel that often.

**Karalyn:**

That's a great idea. What kind of reaction did he get with that?

**James:**

He got meetings with three of them, three out of five.

**Karalyn:**

In the letter in terms of his interests, did he explain why he was interested in that organization? And did that encourage some sort of meeting?

**James:**

Spot on. He basically explained what he did. He was a very specific Project Director. And based from the research that he had done on this particular insurance firm, he has identified ways in which he could help.

So he was not asking for a job or anything like that, but ways in which he can help, because any business, be it large insurance firm, be it a corner shop, be it somewhere in between, for every business owner, for every business executive, if you can prove to them that you can do one of these three things that I'm about to share with you, they'll always give you an audience.

But you've got to share it with them in a way that is genuine, sincere and compelling.

If you can prove to them through your research, through your skills that you help make more money, save money or save time and risk doing it, they'll always give an audience.

You don't have to do all three, but you have to do at least one really well, especially for a properly held business. An owner is always interested in doing things.

**Karalyn:**

Okay, I guess the research of that person did was online on LinkedIn in looking at these contacts?

**James:**

Yes LinkedIn, Google and looking at websites. I mean you can basically just research within an hour, if you know what you're doing, you can find practically everything and especially with big companies, because a lot of them are listed on this stock exchange.

You can find out everything. I mean, you really can.

**Karalyn:**

How do headhunters look at LinkedIn? I ask you that because I know that sometimes you still do that for your clients if they beg you. What do you look for in somebody's LinkedIn profile?

**James:**

Again, my approach is quite unusual, but then again I would imagine most recruiters, most headhunters would overlap with a lot of what others say, but because you're asking what I want to see in a profile.

One, it has to have a photo. This is one of the times that let's say for example, I don't really like seeing photos on a business card because usually it means they're a life insurance broker or sales agent.

Whereas in LinkedIn, it's quite the opposite. I don't want to read anything about this person if they haven't taken the time and trouble and at least care of putting on a photo.

And when I say that, put on a photo that actually makes sense. It's a photo you doing what you're doing. And the reason I am saying that is, when I spoke in an accounting conference last year, a lady had approached me a few days ahead of the conference, because she knew I was speaking at it and reached out to me via LinkedIn and she was like "I really want to meet with you. Can we connect and arrange to meet?"

Now she had a photo of Julia Roberts on her LinkedIn profile and I didn't take a lot of notice, because I thought she must look like Julia Roberts.

When we met, I can safely say that she didn't look like Julia Roberts. Now I asked her reason why Julia Roberts? She said I don't really have the good looks of Julia Roberts and I thought that would be a nice touch and instead of a little bit of a joke and so forth.

It's absolutely wrong. I don't care about the way that she looks. I just thought it was disingenuous to put a photo of someone else.

And the same goes for logos.

A person's not a logo. I don't want to see your company logo for an individual's profile. That is just ridiculous.

And also, I don't want to see photos of people drinking or carrying on. That's not for LinkedIn. It needs to be a photo of the way that you want other businesses, and how you want other professionals to see you. If you wear a suit everyday then wear a suit. If you don't wear a suit then you don't have to wear a suit, but it's to be something that reflects who you are.

That's one big thing that I look for, Karalyn.

The other big thing is that the tagline, which is basically the line that is in your LinkedIn profile in the headline just below your name. I don't want to see "Senior Project Manager Marketing Enterprise." It doesn't tell me anything.

What I really like to see is a descriptor or a tagline explaining something like “I help businesses with their IT needs.” Something like that describes what you do, because instantly, I have a sense of what you are.

And the third thing, which is one of my things as well and I think it’s yours as well, is that I really like to read into the summary.

That’s the first thing you read in the body of the profile. It isn’t simply cut and paste from the employer’s website or from the corporate website. I want to read it in first person “I”. This is who I am. This is what I do. This is what I think. This is what I’ve done so I, I, I.

Not that slickness that comes from probably the third person or “At IBM, we do...”. I’m not interested in IBM per se. I’m interested in Joe Smith. He just happens to work at IBM.

**Karalyn:**

We did research on people’s profiles. I think that’s 80% were on the third person, and about 75% had the summary that we called unreadable. It was unreadable because it didn’t really reflect who that person was to the market. And I think if people can get those two things right, they can get away ahead of that percentage.

**James:**

Absolutely.

**Karalyn:**

So headlines are important? The photo’s got to be a representative of who they are.

Do you read profiles in detail if people connect?

Or do you just make a quick assessment and connect with people?

**James:**

I have done, which I’m sure a lot of people listening to this podcast have the same issue.

I don’t actually invite anyone to join anymore, because I ran out invitations in LinkedIn. So probably for the last three, four years I haven’t been able to invite people so I get invited lot to join other people’s networks and that’s fine. I get several hundred every week.

My theme that is if there’s no photos, I don’t ever connect. Unless I know they’re on my list of friend and then I phone them up tell them “You big banana. You should put a photo.”, but I still connect to them.



I tend to not like those people that send me an invitation and in the invitation they just used the standard “I think we should connect”. And one more thing, I just want them to take a little bit time and try to personalize it to me. Most people don’t and that something I look out for.

The other thing that I don’t really don’t like is when people say “Oh we met and we worked together.”, but no, we’ve never met or never worked together. They presume things, so I don’t like that.

The other things I look for and I just can’t afford the time to read through several hundred profiles every week. I scan them. I can’t read through them individually, but some things are really easy to check straight away - photos and also whether or not it’s that standardized approach of the invitation.

If they’ve taken a little bit of care to write to me with something like: “James, I read an article on your blog”, or whatever, I’m really much more open to that and nine times out of ten, I will connect.

**Karalyn:**

Now do you participate in groups and things like that on LinkedIn?

**James:**

I used to. I don’t a lot now, only because of the fact that the way that I work now is somewhat different.

But early on, absolutely. I think anything that allows you to join and to contribute to a community of like-minded people, it’s a good thing.

It’s a really good thing. Say for example, if a person wants to work for a biotech company, for that cutting edge biotech firm at any part of the world, one really good starting place is actually joining one of the biotech groups. Listen to the conversation.

Just think about how you can contribute, then do that. You start to build up a reputation within those groups.

**Karalyn:**

The thing is that most people don’t participate. So if you do you stand out. If you do in a good way, you definitely stand out. And I think LinkedIn puts out that fact that you’ll receive around four times more profile views if you participate in groups.

And I know, because I run a couple of groups that when people do comment or like or support something, I know who they are. And even if I’m not connected to them and they

reach out and connect, I'll connect with them.

At some point if they say, "Oh Karalyn, can we meet for coffee. We've got some interest in common," I'll probably say yes to that as well.

So a final tip James, if you're coming into the market, keeping your eye on the market or in the market looking for a job, how would you suggest that somebody use LinkedIn to its full potential?

**James:**

There's a few things. LinkedIn is, as we said Karalyn, such a wonderful starting point. Even before the starting point, it's really important for any job seeker to determine what they want to do and who they want to do that with.

So it is much easier, again, through LinkedIn with a purpose. Say for example, if you're an accountant or you're a branding person or you're someone who is a specialist and you want to work for certain firms, make a list of those firms.

And a really good starting point if you want to work for IBM, if you want to work for Ford Motor Company, do research on Ford Motor Company in your area and just have a read of the profile of the employees in that company.

You do the research outside that and so forth. And the funny thing that I've noticed is you start to get a bit of a flavor of the types of people that work with Ford or work with IBM or whatever.

And invariably, you're going to learn a lot about their product, what's similar about them, through reading their profiles and so forth. That would be a really good first step.

My advice is - this just goes against the grain and I'm sure a lot of recruiters would be incredibly angry with what I'm about to say, but I'll say it anyway. I think the individual job seeker is much better served by not using recruiters as their plan A.

Recruiters should be a plan B,C, D, or dead. Plan A is essentially representing yourself, going directly.

After you do your research and after you know what you want to do, who you want to do it with and what value you can add to them as to what I said before that - making money, saving money same time as doing it - a person is much better served by representing themselves, because instantly, they differentiate themselves in the market.

Let me ask you Karalyn, if you were wanting to employ someone and you had someone who came through an agency or a recruitment firm, or someone who approached you directly based upon research that they did in the market, everything else being equal and so forth, would you be more impressed by Person A if he came through a recruiter or

Person B who did it on their own?

**Karalyn:**

Definitely people who do it on their own. And they don't even have to get it perfect, to be honest. People do give you points for trying.

**James:**

Absolutely.

**Karalyn:**

From the book that we wrote, I always quote these numbers. I think it's a really powerful thing. We asked employers whether they would be open to direct approaches

Twenty-four out of twenty-five people said yes and that you'll gain a lot of ground or get an opening or a conversation at least if it's a genuine approach. So I think with LinkedIn there's no excuse not to be genuine about it.

**James:**

Spot on.

**Karalyn:**

Alright James, thank you very much for your time today.

**James:**

Karalyn, an absolute pleasure. Thank you.

**Karalyn:**

It's been very much appreciated. Where can people find your website to read your books?

**James:**

People can go to [whatdoclientsreallywant.com](http://whatdoclientsreallywant.com).

Let's say that again: [whatdoclientsreallywant](http://whatdoclientsreallywant.com) - so one word.com and of course you can find me on LinkedIn. I'm the only James Evangelidis on LinkedIn and Google. Many are very grateful for the fact that there's just one of me. So it's good.

**Karalyn:**

Yes I have a, what's the word? - a Google Ganger and she's a gnome rescuer.

**James:**

A gnome rescuer. You must be very proud.

**Karalyn:**

I am. People don't confuse us anymore, because I've taken over google.

**James:**

A gnome rescuer. I love it. Hey, I've always wondered this. Why does gnome start with a 'g'?

**Karalyn:**

Got g-no idea.

**James:**

It's funny.

**Karalyn:**

Alright. I better let you go, James. Thank you.