

People can correctly infer some personality traits from online profile

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Job-related social networking sites (such as LinkedIn) are often used by recruiters to find new employees, because the profiles on these sites contain information on people's education level and work experience. Is it possible to also infer information about a person's personality traits simply by looking at these profiles?

This was investigated by Niels van de Ven, Aniek Bogaert, Alec Serlie, Mark Brandt and Jaap Denissen, and they report their findings in 'Personality Perception Based on LinkedIn Profiles', to be published shortly in the *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. It turns out that for the traits extraversion and self-presentation people can quite accurately guess profile owners' personalities based on [information](#) presented in their profiles. It appears that other personality traits cannot be inferred from the profiles.

Method

The researchers arrived at this conclusion after they had asked groups of raters to infer [personality](#)

[traits](#) of 275 people from the information they could see at their LinkedIn profiles. They subsequently compared these inferences with the results of the [personality test](#) they had administered to the owners of these profiles. Niels van de Ven (Tilburg University): "What we find is that purely based on a LinkedIn profile you can quite accurately infer how extraverted a person is and how good someone is at self-presentation. But what is just as important is that based on these profiles we could not predict how precise, creative, nice, or emotionally stable a person is."

Important information for recruiters

This is relevant information for recruiters. Previous research has shown that extraversion and self-presentation are important predictors of successful job performance, particularly in the case of managers and sales executives. For positions like these, inferences on the basis of profile information in LinkedIn can play a role in the recruitment and selection procedure in making an initial estimation of suitable candidates.

Co-author Alec Serlie (GITP): "We already knew that you can predict a person's personality based on their Facebook [profile](#). But these profiles contain a lot of interaction with other people, and they are composed much less consciously than is the case with LinkedIn profiles. An important question for recruiters therefore is whether LinkedIn also "leaks" this kind of personality information, and for some character traits this this turns out to be the case."

More information: Niels van de Ven et al. Personality perception based on LinkedIn profiles, *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1108/JMP-07-2016-0220](https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-07-2016-0220)

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