

# How to Make Use of LinkedIn for Your Business Success

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## Abstract

The Internet has changed the way people communicate, obtain information and build relationships. As a result of this global phenomenon, the way the world works has changed. Nowadays, the company's relations (in the networks and outside networks) are more important than they were ever before. The emergence of social media has opened a number of market opportunities for businesses and individuals. LinkedIn has recently transformed the way companies recruit, marketed and sale. In today's working world, your professional online brand is key. LinkedIn can help you build one.

Nowadays, the company's relations (in the networks and outside networks) are more important than they were ever before. The emergence of social media (according to some data there are already more than 84,000 of them in the world) has opened a number of market opportunities for businesses and individuals. Companies compete to create Facebook pages and tweets, however, many have overlooked LinkedIn, which is at its core an inter-company site that is four times more effective for communication between companies than Facebook or Twitter.

Through a personal network, users search for content that enables immediate gratification, such as coupons, games, and entertainment. By focusing solely on the professional network, LinkedIn solved the dilemma between private and professional online lives. LinkedIn is thus the largest social network in the world for business people and professionals.

## Some facts about LinkedIn

- LinkedIn was founded in 2003 with the purpose of professional integration,
- LinkedIn has more than 7,600 full-time employees with offices in 30 cities around the world,

- out of 2,100 companies in the United States, LinkedIn is the fastest growing technology company,
- LinkedIn has more than 347 million members in more than 200 countries (January, 2015),
- 67 percent of users are from outside of the US,
- in 23 languages
- more than 80 per cent of LinkedIn's members are decision-makers in their organizations,
- the average LinkedIn user has a household income of € 80,000 (compared to € 43,849 of Facebook users or € 41.680 of Twitter users),
- an average of 172,800 new members per day,
- professionals join LinkedIn at a rate of more than two new members per second,
- the average age of a LinkedIn user is 41 years,
- more than 25 million profiles on LinkedIn are viewed every day,
- more than 4 million companies have LinkedIn company pages,
- as many as 27 million brands have a LinkedIn social site,
- there are more than 1.5 million different publishers who actively use Share LinkedIn button on their websites to send content to the LinkedIn platform,
- 45 percent of LinkedIn's visitors also visit other digital content (website, blog, etc.),
- LinkedIn members share views and expertise in more than 2.1 million LinkedIn groups,
- there are over 39 million students and recent college graduates on LinkedIn. They are LinkedIn's fastest-growing demographic,
- out of 2,100 companies in the United States, LinkedIn is the fastest growing technology company,
- LinkedIn won the prestigious Gold Award in 2013 as the top social site for sales and marketing,
- in certain regions / countries it is still not the absolute leader: in France it comes second to Viadeo; in the German-speaking region Xing is in the lead; Mixi leads in Japan and Tianji China

### **Who should be on LinkedIn?**

Almost everyone can have a commercial or professional benefit from their presence on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a must for all who want to make use of this tool for obtaining new business, potential new customers and higher visibility in the domestic and foreign markets. LinkedIn has become a valuable tool for cooperation and promotion of every company that deals with the sale, marketing and public relations. Even companies that provide business to business products and services, make good use of its options for establishing new connections. Experts for human resources use it for the purpose of employment, it also became an immensely popular website for job seekers and even non-profit organizations are opening up new ways for donors and fundraising.

### **Why should you also be present on LinkedIn?**

The most common mistake does not understand what LinkedIn really is. Business people often claim that LinkedIn is for job seekers, spammers, and therefore have no interest in it.

Besides the fact that LinkedIn is free and easy to use, there are several other reasons why you should use this social network. It is not just a tool for integration, but a versatile commercial platform. It allows you to build relationships, create potential buyers, conduct market research, enhance the reputation of a company or brand and build an online community.

LinkedIn is the biggest and the best base in the world for the search of business professionals, by using keywords. The search is just the beginning of the story, in fact, you can also find out how you can connect with these individuals. Then, when you connect with someone on LinkedIn, you can see whom he knows and whom his friends know. The larger your network at LinkedIn, the more benefits and assistance you can receive.

You and information about your organization are now part of a keyword search engine in the largest business database. However, there is more to it than just finding contacts. Another advantage is that you will be found in this database, if you optimize both your personal and company profile. For many users, LinkedIn has become a way to find new companies and people with whom they do business.

In the past, the biggest share of marketing in an organization was implemented by marketing and PR departments. With LinkedIn, every employee uses his or her profile to promote the benefits and services of an organization. LinkedIn users have viewed 63 percent more web pages on mobile and desktop versions in the first quarter of 2013 than in the same quarter of 2012.

Your competitors certainly use LinkedIn, enabling you to observe them. If you need some information about your competitors, the monitoring of their individual and organizational profiles can prove to be very useful. LinkedIn has features that allow you to browse through their information in a useful and legal manner.

Everyone can use a free 24/7 virtual assistant. There are several "Save" functions on LinkedIn, which provide you with information about people, new jobs, businesses and events that have been identified as important to you, and which are delivered directly to your e-mail inbox.

Increasing percent of business is being conducted online. Today's typical shopping experience, everything from books and cars to professional services and industrial supplies, usually starts with a web search and research (according to some data, no less than 70 percent).

The facts and figures have been touted all over the LinkedIn community arguing that **the days of cold calling and traditional relationship selling are over:**

- 75% of B2B purchases are influenced by social
- 57% of the buying process is complete before sales rep involvement

- 97% of the time cold call do not work.

While these statistics might have hailed more from North America than Europe, the message is clear: the control of the sales cycle has shifted from the seller to the buyer.

Today, we need to act in terms of the buying cycle, not the sales cycle. As a B2B vendor you need to target, engage and influence your target customers before they buying cycle gets going!

If a potential customer sees a description of products or services with credible recommendations on LinkedIn, it is very likely he will not look any further.

Experts from around the world are available to answer your questions. Through groups, discussions, answers to questions, LinkedIn provides you with an easy way to find answers to difficult questions you are facing every day. Someone in the world or perhaps even in your own network is undoubtedly experiencing the same issues.

Research of organizations and people who work there has become a lot easier. Do you want to get information about a company you would like to get employed at, are you interested in a business opportunity? Human resources officers have access to the largest database via LinkedIn, which enables them to find and explore the profiles and reach the right talents and candidates. LinkedIn will not only help you to find out who are the employees of a certain company, but also which of them already worked there, where they were educated, how much experience they have, which customers recommend them, and much more. This is just the tip of the iceberg of all the information that you can get your organizations' profile on LinkedIn.

### **Getting started**

Like Facebook, LinkedIn offers both a personal and a company profile. Experts recommend that you have both. The personal profile highlights your personal experience, your personal brand as an expert in a specific area with certain working experiences, while the profile of the company represents products or services, job opportunities and brand. LinkedIn profile is only the first step. The fact that you are registered, of course, does not mean that good offers will just keep on coming or that sales will increase. Both profiles should be upgraded.

Your profile must be ambitious, professional, thorough and focused on the activity, which means market-oriented presentation (and not personal curriculum vitae).

### **Your personal professional branding**

Build a strong online reputation that showcases experience and increases credibility.

In today's business world, your professional on-line career brand is crucial. LinkedIn can help you build it. How?

- **Active involvement in a profile** is also recommended by Forbes. They suggest a number of seemingly minor actions which, when used together, significantly increase the effectiveness of a profile: professional profile photo, striking summary, proactive measures (link, an invitation to another site, etc.).
- **Credibility:** the best online identities are genuine, sincere and focused on what makes you unique and what you can offer. Personal branding is not about sales or spin.
- **Create a distinctive profile address:** your LinkedIn address is the first description that people will see. Good titles are clear, confident, and use terms that people are searching for.
- **Avoid clichés:** words like "creative", "extensive experience" and "team player", which occur in many profiles and are almost meaningless. Find therefore a unique way to describe your skills.
- **Be visible:** stand out by updating your status with information about your projects, things that you're reading (and your opinion about them), and events that you have attended. Your brand is not only about who you are; this is what you have done.
- **Build Links:** you are rated according to a company in which you find yourself, build your personal brand by building your LinkedIn network. Connect with colleagues, classmates and others. You should have at least 501 connections, because people on LinkedIn prefer to connect with well-connected people.
- **Share content in LinkedIn groups:** each post or reply to a question you posted, is an opportunity for your personal marketing and the building of credibility. Be involved in 50 groups (increased visibility, more opportunities for establishing contacts), have a profile, which indicates that you are open for new connections, business (eg. LinkedIn Open Network, or LION, which is already an upgrade of the basic free profile).
- **Build relationships – be personal:** personalize connection requests or any other message on LinkedIn, people will appreciate the personal attention.
- **Be consistent:** Make sure that all parts of your professional footprint are consistent and have the same message (your LinkedIn profile, your CV and other social networks).
- **Be generous:** helping others is the key to building one's own brand, also give advice, links to jobs, give support and congratulate people for their successes.
- If used strategically, these tools will help improve your competitiveness.

## **LinkedIn company page**

First and foremost, it is important to present a company in a professional way, and the same goes for the leaders of a company (that has a positive impact on the company and shows their innovativeness). This is also "required" from the key employees of the company, in particular, to implement the procedures according to certain prudent steps. First, it is important to evaluate your strengths, weaknesses and resources needed for success that will work in favor of your target group. Make yourself easier to be found, use the strategies and tactics to attract potential customers to your site. Building a community group can help you build a highly targeted or large basins of targeted customers, promotions, campaigns, recommendations from your customers.

In Slovenia, 37 percent of all companies use social networks, but only a little more than 1.4 percent have their own LinkedIn page. Most often, companies in Slovenia, as well as abroad, use the personal profile for the presentation of the company. Quite often, companies have a LinkedIn page, but it is not active (ie. they do not publish current news, offers, etc.). Companies need to include their employees as ambassadors of their company. They should include multimedia (video, PowerPoint, various materials, etc.). The visual elements significantly increase the attractiveness of a site and brand awareness.

- **To set up a LinkedIn company page**, the company must meet several conditions, namely:
  - You must have a personal LinkedIn profile with your real name and surname
  - Your personal profile must have the strength of the medium or the All-Star profile
  - Several links to your personal profile (at least 10 -50)
  - That you are a company employee and your site is listed in the Experience in your personal profile
  - That you have an e-mail address of the company (eg. [john@companyname.com](mailto:john@companyname.com)) which is added and confirmed on your personal LinkedIn profile
  - That the e-mail domain name of your company is unique to the company
  - First and foremost, it is important that the company is professionally presented. The supporting image is very important, as it is the first thing everybody sees. It is important to evaluate your strengths, weaknesses and resources needed for success that will work in favor of your target group. Create a short description and review (keywords and competencies of your company), include what your company does, the specificities of what you offer, what kind of solutions.
- **Encourage your employees:** your best brand ambassadors, encourage them to add their current position in your company to their profile. This will automatically turn them into followers of your page, with your company logo on their profile (link), in order to help bring more visits to your site.
- **Attract more followers**
  - Be found, use the strategies and tactics to attract potential customers to your site. By building a community group, you can help build a highly targeted or

large basins of targeted customers, promotions, campaigns, recommendations from your customers.

- Let your **current clients** know the value that you provide. Include your LinkedIn page in the company's communications, such as e-mail or blog, website.

### **A brief overview of the most useful LinkedIn marketing and sales tools:**

- A new feature on LinkedIn are the so-called **Showcase sites (free tool)**, which are extensions of your company page on LinkedIn, aimed at highlighting your brand, business unit or project. Most companies do not use them (perhaps due to ignorance about this feature). You can create a special page for various parts of your business / program / offer with a segmented audience. They are aimed at establishing relations with members of LinkedIn.
- **Company updates (free tool)** are the **most effective way** to start a conversation, comments, word of mouth and for direct engagement with your target audience. Posts will appear on the page of your company and among the news on the home page of each of your followers. Share news, industry articles, thoughts of key employees, or invite your followers to start a debate on "hot topics". Posts will appear on the pages of your company and among the news on the home page of each of your followers.
- **Targeted updates (free tool)** only appear to the intended audience (targeted audience, according to certain criteria). The company must have at least 100 followers.
- **Sponsored InMail** is a direct message (e-mail marketing with LinkedIn), which can be used for a much larger number of people (outside the scope of your company's followers). Sponsored e-mail is displayed as a message, however the message is not directed at individual users, but rather at groups, depending on the selected criteria (geography, job, group membership, gender, company size).
- Gain a deeper **insight into analytics**, responsiveness to posts, the growth of the number of followers, key metrics and trends, use the valuable information to optimize and adapt your contents.

Quite often, companies have a LinkedIn page, but it is not active (i.e. they do not publish current news, offers, etc.). Companies need to include their employees (of course, if they have any) as ambassadors of their company. They should include multimedia (video, PowerPoint, various materials, etc.).

Although LinkedIn is the largest social network in the world for business people and professionals, it does not appear on the market radar of the majority of small businesses. But even that is changing, as LinkedIn itself is regularly adding several features designed to help

companies in the marketing of 347 million registered users and, consequently, more and more companies began to use this powerful platform to create business contacts and potential new customers. Whether you decide to jump on the LinkedIn train or remain at the station, one thing is certain: Your colleagues and competitors are on board and are going full speed ahead.

While you are reading this article, millions of experts add information to their profile, share important knowledge and connect with each other on LinkedIn.

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