

A COMPLETE GUIDE

HOW TO BECOME A

SOCIAL SELLING SUCCESS USING

LinkedIn



digital
marketing
institute

Introduction

There are, at present, over 400 million LinkedIn users across 200 countries and territories. It's a social network with phenomenal reach; but then again, so are Facebook, Twitter and Google+.

So what differentiates LinkedIn from its competitors and why should you incorporate it into your social selling strategy?

62.9% of sale professionals report that social selling has become important for closing new deals.

Since its inception, rather than being a platform for sharing innumerable pictures of meals and viral videos of baby monkeys, LinkedIn has been a distinctly professional sphere. It's used as a tool for recruitment, brand promotion, business networking, and increasingly, a powerful platform for social selling.

What is social selling?

Social selling involves establishing a presence on social networks with the intention of using them to prospect more efficiently, generate better quality leads, and nurture more meaningful customer relationships.

The ultimate goal of using these online channels is to easily enhance sales pipeline management and make more sales.

As digital transformation continues to impact organizations of every size across every industry, traditional selling techniques are no longer enough to guarantee success.

Did you know that only 1% of cold calls actually result in meetings? Or that 90% of B2B decision makers don't respond to cold sales outreach?

This doesn't mean that traditional selling isn't effective; never underestimate the value of a face-to-face meeting. What it does mean is that by balancing it with some simple tactics and easy-to-adopt approaches, you can make the most of your LinkedIn account and achieve social selling success!

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is smiling and looking down at a tablet device she is holding with both hands. She is wearing a blue denim shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or home workspace with a desk and some papers. The overall image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay.

STEP ONE:

Optimize your profile
to build a professional
personal brand

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Optimize your profile to build a professional personal brand

If you want to harness a successful social selling strategy, you need to build your personal brand and establish yourself as a seller that customers can trust. Presenting yourself as an authentic and well-informed influence through a comprehensive LinkedIn profile will add an all-important personal touch, and help to promote positive customer relationships. This will ultimately drive sales and encourage repeat purchases!

An easy starting point is to optimize your LinkedIn profile. It's not only a platform on which you can identify and develop a deeper understanding of prospects; they can just as easily use LinkedIn to conduct research on you! That's why you need to use your LinkedIn profile to showcase yourself in the most credible and personable way possible!

Did you know that adding a professional photo to your profile makes you 14 times more likely to be found on LinkedIn?

There are certain LinkedIn profile tips that serve as a basic starting point; personalizing your vanity URL, using a professional headshot, filling in your job experience and education history. But in order to really amplify the value of your LinkedIn presence, there are few more areas you should consider:

Customize your headline:

By default, your headline will be your current job title and company, which is already displayed in the “Experience” section of your profile. Rather than duplicating content, customize your headline with some keywords and key specialist functions. This not only increases your visibility and the likelihood of your profile displaying in a LinkedIn search, it also showcases your varied skillset!

Enhance your summary and contact details:

Filling in your summary adds another layer of discoverability to your LinkedIn profile. Include a couple of succinct lines about what you do and why you’re passionate about it. There is a separate contact details section, but it’s only visible to existing LinkedIn connections, so include your contact details within your summary for potential customers, along with a suitable Call-To-Action. You can also add three links to either your Twitter profile, company website, personal website, blog or RSS feed, which further establishes your social authority and search optimizes your profile.

Add assets:

LinkedIn allows you to add media assets to your profile, including documents, photos, links, videos and presentations. By adding additional relevant content to your profile, you can demonstrate your thought leadership and creativity to potential customers, and also use that content to persuade and convert them. Examples could include a video testimonial, an industry-appropriate blog or Slideshare presentation.

Ask for recommendations:

You should aim to obtain at least one recommendation for every job title listed on your profile. Recommendations are particularly important for digital selling; client testimonials that root your solution or service in a human context, for example, could mean the difference between successfully engaging with and acquiring a new customer and... well, not!

Incorporate keywords:

If you want to increase your profile's chances of displaying in LinkedIn search results, it's important to use relevant keywords throughout your profile. Put yourself in the position of somebody who would be searching for you; what words or phrases would they use? Try to incorporate these into the content of your profile as naturally as possible – it will be obvious if you're forcing them and could disrupt the fluency of the professional, accessible tone you should be trying to achieve.

Having an online brand is not necessarily having your name in lights or being known or famous; it is the public view you give of yourself to others

- Ian Moyse (Industry Cloud and Channel Sales Leader) , rated #1 Cloud Influencer 2016 and awarded a LinkedIn Power Profile 2015



STEP TWO:

Connect and Prosper

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Connect and prospect

Once you've perfected your profile, you need to extend your LinkedIn network so it's as far-reaching as possible. The more quality connections you make, the better your chances of building a healthy pipeline. There are a number of methods you can use to achieve this:

Don't forget the people you know:

Form the foundation to a successful LinkedIn network by first fostering connections with colleagues and past colleagues. This provides the perfect opportunity for outreach as you can evaluate your 2nd and 3rd degree connections and ask for an introduction where necessary. Utilizing the connections you already have is important; LinkedIn asserts that buyers are five times more likely to engage if outreach is conducted through a mutual connection.

LinkedIn also enables you to connect with people you may already know by importing your email contacts. Be judicious when using this method; avoid a mass import and be mindful of who you try to connect with, as your email correspondence with certain individuals might not be substantial enough for them to want to engage with you on LinkedIn.

Opt for Advanced Search:

This is a valuable method to grow your network and prospect effectively. You can look for potential new connections using a variety of fields that can streamline your search. Even better, a basic LinkedIn account will enable you to save up to 3 people searches based on a particular job title and receive weekly alerts when new users match your criteria. With a premium profile, you have access to more search fields including seniority level, years of experience,

function, and company size, as well as the ability to save even more people searches, which can further maximize your prospecting efficiency!

Even when you're using advanced search options, try to leverage an existing connection by searching for fellow Group members or 2nd connections, before reaching out to somebody with whom you share nothing in common!

Remember:

there's a fine line between intercepting a customer's need and coming across as intrusive, and your prospect is the one who draws it.

Get Personal:

Nothing says "I don't really care about you I just want your money" like an automated invitation to connect! You need to make an effort to cultivate a connection with your prospects; after all, 70% of buying experiences are based on how the customer feels they are being treated. If you start investing in your customer relationships from the very outset, you are better placed to drive both first-time sales and encourage repeat purchases, which is something you, as a seller, should definitely aim for. According to Marketing Metrics, the probability of selling to an existing customer is 60-70%, whereas the probability of selling to a new prospect is 5-20%. The simple act of tailoring an invitation to connect, by succinctly and simply stating how you know them, why you want to connect, and what value your connection can provide them, can set a very positive precedent that can ultimately benefit your ROI.

TOP TOOL



Sales Navigator

LinkedIn's Sales Navigator is made for social selling, with a focus on finding the right prospects as quickly as possible. Equipped with this tool, you'll significantly enhance your chances of becoming a social selling specialist.

You can use Sales Navigator's Lead Builder function to build lead lists using the premium advanced search filters mentioned above! You can also save up to 3,000 leads and receive real-time updates on anyone you've saved. This includes what they've shared, their company updates, and alerts when individuals or companies are mentioned in the news. Sales Navigator also generates lead recommendations that are tailored to your personal preferences and based on leads you may have already saved.

Insights such as who's viewed your profile, and who on your team is connected to your leads so you can engineer warm introductions (available in the Team edition of Sales Navigator) enable you to build meaningful relationships that are more likely to drive sales. You can even send InMails to your prospects which, according to LinkedIn, have been shown to get higher response rates than emails.

How PayPal Australia achieved 3000% ROI with LinkedIn Sales Navigator

By using LinkedIn Sales Navigator for social selling, PayPal Australia was able to achieve close to 3000% ROI and reduced sales cycles by 25%

“We use LinkedIn Sales Navigator for every single deal”

- Paul Weingarth, Head of Field Sales

PayPal's goals were to:

- Acquire more accurate sales leads
- Minimize data scrubbing
- Speed up the sales cycle

They used LinkedIn to:

- Navigate directly to decision makers
- Find up-to-date and noteworthy contact details
- Generate new leads with an inexpensive approach

The results achieved were:

- Almost 3000% ROI
- Reduced sales cycles by 25%
- Multiple threading allows access to several key contacts within a



STEP THREE:

Engage

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Engage

The final and most crucial step to using LinkedIn for social selling success is to engage and interact with your connections! If you are proactive and participate regularly on the platform, it will enhance your visibility, establish your credibility and help to nurture customer relationships.

Did you know that 74% of buyers choose the salesperson who was first to add value and insight through their engagement?

Here are a couple of fool proof approaches to engagement that you can easily adopt:

Join LinkedIn Groups:

LinkedIn has countless groups suitable for every professional and industry. You can search for, and join groups relevant to your target industries and geos in order to stimulate discussions and share content relevant to prospects. These groups also provide you with an opportunity to keep on top of industry trends and innovations, which will help you to better understand and accommodate your customers' needs. By sharing content, advice and engaging in dialogue, you can present yourself as an industry thought leader, a trusted source of information and facilitate warm conversations with prospects in the process!

Keep your status updated:

Status updates are an underused but highly effective LinkedIn feature. Aim to update your status approximately three times a day (either at the beginning or end of the working day) in order to maximize your social presence, but make sure that whatever you share adds value.

Post informative, relevant content, use keywords in your headlines that will pique the attention of potential customers and be able to identify what you're trying to achieve with each status update. Examples could include an educational ebook or Slideshare presentation to re-enforce your thought leadership, or a testimonial video to incentivize prospects to engage with you.

Don't post for the sake of it; your LinkedIn engagement should always complement and support your social selling goals, whether it's in the context of refining your thought leadership status or nurturing prospects. Finally, don't forget to extend your reach; always make sure the visibility of your posts is set so everyone, not just your connections, will see them.

Use LinkedIn Pulse:

Pulse, LinkedIn's publishing platform is another powerful method to expand your reach and accelerate engagement. Unlike status updates, which are suited to excerpts and links to other sources, the purpose of Pulse is to publish long-form content directly on LinkedIn. Long-form content is the ultimate way to consolidate your status as an industry authority and increase your exposure.

When you publish a post on Pulse, your network will automatically receive a notification alerting them to the article and its title, so as with your status updates, make sure your headlines incentivize users to click! If your network is compelled to like or share your content, this will allow you to infiltrate their own connections, and if those connections like what you write, and decide to follow you, your network has the potential to grow exponentially.

In addition to this, articles posted on Pulse are searchable both on and off LinkedIn, which extends your reach that little bit further!

If you're repurposing content on LinkedIn, a company blog post for example, always be sure to credit the author (if it isn't you) and provide a link back to the original source, and avoid republishing anything that isn't owned by you or your company. If you're creating original content, keep in mind the interests of your target audience, your existing connections, and use your insights to create content on topics that will appeal to them and consequently strengthen your relationships.

What Next?

After you've implemented these simple strategies, you can measure your effectiveness by using LinkedIn's Social Selling Index. This is a quick and easy measurement tool that, with the click of a button, analyzes how successful you are based on a number of criteria, including establishing your professional brand, finding the right people, engaging with insights and building relationships. You can chart your progress on a weekly basis and benchmark yourself against both people in your industry and your network.

As always, you can use these metrics to identify your strengths and weaknesses, and adjust your approach accordingly.

