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B2B Social Selling On LinkedIn

Discover everything you need to know to uncover new business gems on the professional social network

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LinkedIn has approximately 200 million users worldwide & adds 2 new members every second

- LinkedIn

Introduction

Social selling is the process of a salesperson using social media channels to engage and interact with prospects, leads and customers. Through active participation in posting and discussions, the salesperson can show thought leadership and establish themselves as a trusted resource. Having built strong relationships with prospects via social media, the salesperson can then look to convert these new business opportunities to customers. Key benefits of this approach include the ability to gather huge amounts of data on key industry challenges and prospect pain points/ concerns. It's also an opportunity to generate leads and sales at a fraction of the traditional 'cost per lead' expense.

Once you've completed your decision-maker persona research you'll discover which social media channels your prospects typically use; but in a B2B environment, the most popular location will likely be LinkedIn. Why? Because it is the social network for professionals.

With 2.7 million business pages and 35% of its users accessing the site every day; LinkedIn is the go-to social network for both professionals and salespeople alike. That's why we've created this helpful guide. Read on to find out what's needed to get the best social selling results in the LinkedIn environment.

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64%

of LinkedIn members use the site to develop relationships and grow their business

- lonelybrand.com

LinkedIn Profiles

Your profile on LinkedIn will allow other users to get to know more about you and your company... so make sure it's engaging. It should also go without saying that a LinkedIn profile should be perpetually professional (don't post inappropriate content or photographs).

As this profile is also an opportunity to market your organisation as well as yourself, be sure to discuss the products/services and expertise of your company in the 'current employment' section. This can be done in an indirect way by writing about your company, your position within it and how the business objectives are achieved.

When creating social media profiles there can be a tendency for us all to think 'I won't bother filling in all that information', but on LinkedIn that can be a detrimental approach. When someone completes a search on LinkedIn, the results will prioritise user profiles that have comprehensive information, so make sure you provide as much relevant information as possible.

To give other users quick access to your latest piece of company content, click the 'Add a link' or 'Upload a file' buttons in the summary section of your profile to upload blogs and videos etc. This will then feature as a clickable link above the fold on your LinkedIn profile page.



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SEO Tip:

In the Contact Info section of your profile you can add up to three website addresses. By changing the left-hand column to 'other' you can then input information into the middle column box. Use this middle box to add relevant keywords your company wants to rank for then add the website address to the right column. These are 'follow' links which will benefit your website SEO.

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There are currently more than 1 Million unique groups on LinkedIn

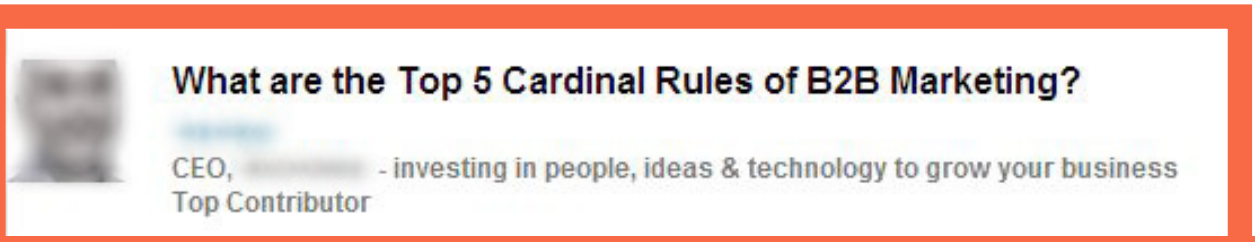
-LinkedIn

LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn groups are a place where you can connect with like-minded professionals related to your industry and join discussions by sharing insights and posting articles. Less experienced salespeople will think that once they join a relevant group, they can simply start peppering it with marketing messages and 'spam'; but this isn't advisable.

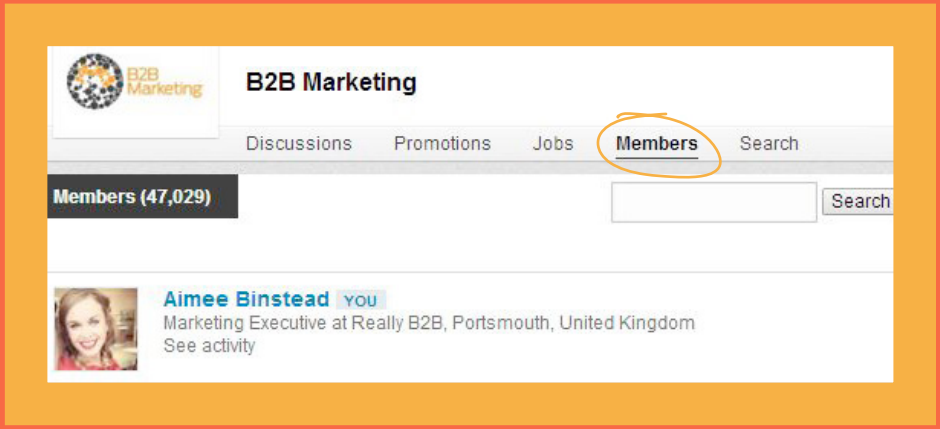
After joining a group, simply start by 'listening'. What are the hot topics? What are people talking about? What are their pain points? Once you've gathered and digested this information it's time to start getting involved. Start by entering into existing discussions and comment on other peoples' posts. Once you have spent time doing this and established yourself as a valuable group member, start your own discussions and look to gain comments/feedback/engagement from other users. As you continue to create posts that generate contributions from other members, you'll start to become a group 'influencer'.

By establishing yourself within the group and gaining the trust of the other members, you can begin to gradually suggest your organisation's content or direct them to your landing pages – but only if the content/page is highly relevant to the topic being discussed.



Group Tip:

Join groups that your prospects are most present in, then click the Members tab at the top to see if the group contains any of your organisation's 'dream prospects'. The reason for this is because LinkedIn will allow you to privately message someone InMail if you are both members of the same group.



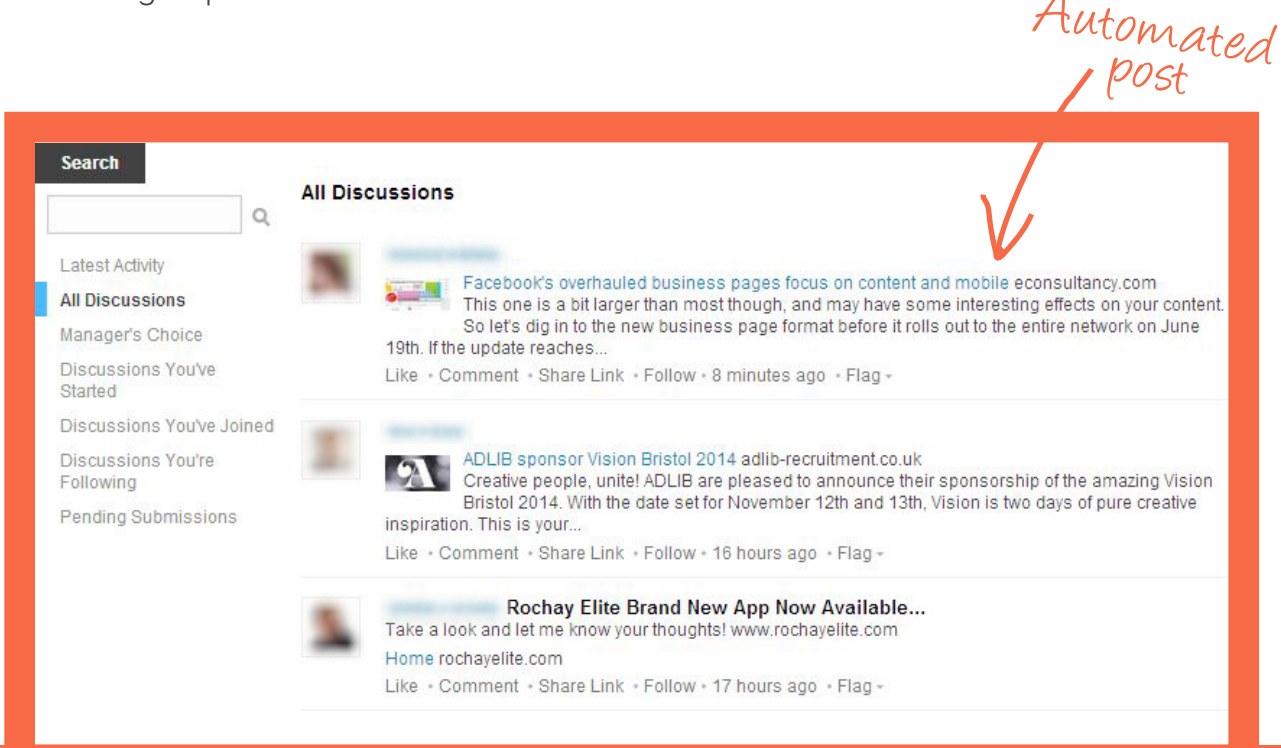
LinkedIn Groups (Continued)

Once you have joined a group you will see that posts are ranked in order of popularity by default, but this can be changed to display posts with the most recent first. Changing the setting to see the most recent posts is a great way to ensure you are one of the first people to post on a particular discussion. By posting early on a new discussion it again highlights to other group members that you are an industry thought leader.

Having established yourself as a key influencer within the group and as an industry thought leader, use the search box in the group to find discussions that relate to your company's products/ services. These particular discussions are an ideal place to suggest your content and landing pages as solutions to prospect pain points and concerns.

Be aware that if you are using marketing automation, do not automatically post directly to LinkedIn groups. Typically the format of the post will be upset and bolding will be removed, therefore illustrating to other members that you used an automation tool and did not have time to actively engage personally. Be sure to manually create your posts for LinkedIn groups.

To ensure you are not infringing on any etiquette rules and that you're placing yourself in the best possible position to generate excellent results, read our article on effectively distributing content on LinkedIn.



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Case Studies:
Embarque

For Embarque, a London-based executive mini-cab company, LinkedIn was used to support attendance at an industry event called the Business Travel Show. The goal was to establish a connection and introduction with key prospects prior to the event. In order to build relationships with prospects, LinkedIn InMails (private messages between LinkedIn members) were used to contact a list of known event attendees to invite them to visit Embarque's stand.

The strategy achieved a 9.3% positive response rate.

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Case Studies: Geaves

As specialist surface manufacturers, Geaves looked to research and connect with industry thought leaders and influencers in order to generate interest in their latest product. First searching Twitter for Tweets relating to their product and the biggest industry influencers, these people were then looked up and connected with on LinkedIn. The connections were made from the client's own account as this is more personal than a company profile. With the referral/recommendation strategy up and running, one influencer was quick to introduce a high-quality prospect via private message.

The approach generated a 13.3% response rate and 3 leads (6.2% conversion to lead rate) within the first month of the campaign.

Pay-per-click Advertising

Other social media sites such as Facebook let you target your prospects based on certain pieces of profile data such as location and Likes. But, if you are hoping to get your ad in front of a specific decision-maker with a particular job function who works in a specific sized company, then LinkedIn Ads are more appropriate.

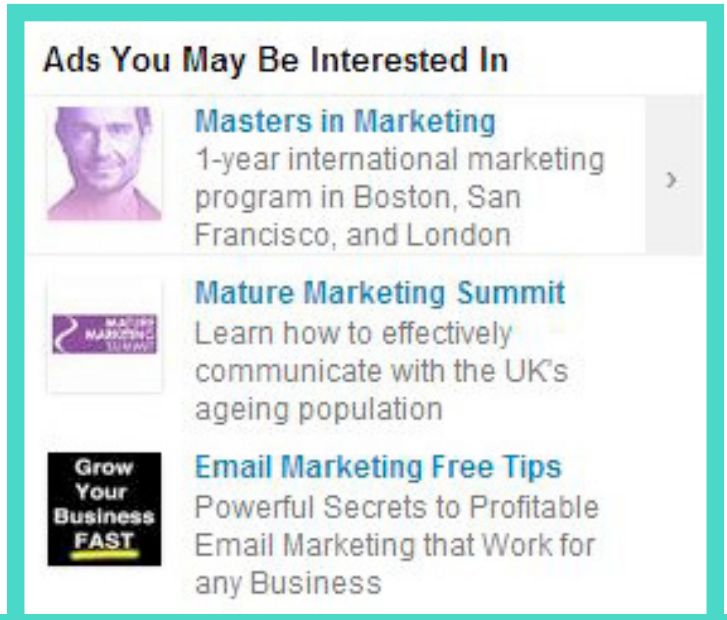
LinkedIn Ads offer a pay-per-click option meaning you only incur a charge when someone clicks on your ad, but in return, you get to target your advertising to the people you are looking for.

Target your ads using data such as:

- Job Titles
- Job Functions
- Industries
- Company Size
- Plus many more...

LinkedIn Ads are easy to create and by using a combination of ad variations, LinkedIn can serve your best performing ads therefore improving your conversion rates.

With Google Ads becoming increasingly overcrowded and expensive, and Facebook Ads not offering strong enough B2B targeting options, LinkedIn Ads are a valuable weapon in the social selling arsenal.



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Did you know?

InMails are 30% more effective than using regular emails

- Social Media Examiner

LinkedIn InMails

We previously discussed the targeting options within the LinkedIn social network and how you can locate specific prospects based on job title or job function etc (simply by entering it into the search field), but what if they are not connected with you? Well, as part of an upgraded LinkedIn membership you are given a limited number of InMails to be used each month. These InMails allow you to privately message other members who you are not currently connected with. The allowance of InMails increases with each membership plan (i.e. Business, Business Plus and Executive etc.).

Given that the number of permitted InMails each month is limited, it means that this service cannot be used for 'spamming' and the messages are more likely to be considered legitimate and worthy of reading.

If your marketing team has emailed your database with a marketing offer and a key prospect has failed to respond, InMails are a great opportunity to follow-up in a personalised and individual manner. The key approach with InMails is that they should be highly personalised. They are not a way to connect with prospects en masse; they're a direct message between two professional people.

InMail works. We sent highly targeted and personalised InMails to key prospects for one of our clients in the Business Services sector and managed to achieve **ROI of 570%**.

Conclusion

One of the commonly asked questions regarding LinkedIn is 'what type of account is best for me?' The answer is LinkedIn offer a variety of 'Premium Account' options which include features that can greatly enhance your use of the platform for social selling. The best account upgrades available are 'Business' and 'Sales Professional'; both of which give you access to additional search results, better insight into who's viewed your profile and the ability to send more InMails. To learn more about the benefits of a premium account, visit the **LinkedIn help centre**.

When building your network and trying to uncover those golden nuggets of new business; don't be afraid to ask for introductions. If you find an ideal prospect that you are not connected with, but who is connected with one of your existing connections, then simply ask them to introduce you. The obvious reason is because a simple introduction means you are not approaching a prospect cold and are more likely to generate engagement (or at least a connection with the prospect).

When used correctly, LinkedIn can be a priceless tool in social selling – enabling thought leadership, relationship building and trust generation with prospects and leads. Once the relationship has been created, LinkedIn can be used as an outlet to drive prospects towards your content and a conversion to appointment. People buy from people and social media is a great opportunity to add a face to the sales team and build a real rapport with potential customers.



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That's us!

About Really B2B

Really B2B has been advising, devising and executing great B2B campaigns for over 10 years.

Along the way, we've attracted some of the finest marketers to join us - experts from a wide range of backgrounds, including technical, manufacturing, professional and financial services.

For advice on your B2B marketing give us a call on 0845 519 8517 or email us at info@reallyb2b.com