LINKEDIN SELLING

TACTICAL PLAN

A Daily Playbook for Selling on LinkedIn

A MESSAGE FOR THE PROGRESSIVE SALES LEADER

If you aren't using social media as part of your sales process, you're not doing your job. **Three in every four B2B decision-makers and more than 80 percent of C-suite members now use social media to inform their buying decisions.**[1] **Almost 70 percent of the B2B buyer's journey now occurs through digital channels,**[2] so that's where salespeople have to invest more and more of their effort if they want to find prospects, influence decisions, and consistently beat their targets.

When it comes to social selling – generating sales via social media – LinkedIn is where the bulk of the action occurs: 80 percent of B2B social media leads come from LinkedIn, and **1 in 2 of our members say they're more likely to purchase from a company if they've engaged with it on LinkedIn**.[3] So how can you craft a LinkedIn presence that will attract prospects and boost your chances of a sale?

In an effort to help you get in front of the **50 million business decision-makers in over 200 countries and territories**, we've created this tactical plan for you to help you build social selling momentum and start pulling in leads – all in less than 30 minutes a day.

Applying the insights from this plan will significantly reduce the time and effort it takes for you to generate leads and sell to prospects. Social selling isn't rocket science, but it can send your results through the roof. Let's get started.

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[1] Forbes, "The C-Suite's Next Mandate"
[2] Demand Gen Report, "B2B Buying Mythology Debunked"
[3] LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, "60 B2B Marketing Quotes, Stats and Facts for the Modern Marketer"

LINKEDIN PROFILE

GET NOTICED BY POTENTIAL BUYERS

The best LinkedIn profiles are built on an understanding of what leads and prospects are looking for. Optimize your LinkedIn profile with these five steps to generate more leads and opportunities for dialogue.

ANATOMY OF A LINKEDIN PROFILE

PROFESSIONAL PHOTO

LinkedIn profiles with a photo are 14X more likely to be viewed and have a 40 percent higher InMail response rate than those without one.

COMPELLING HEADLINE

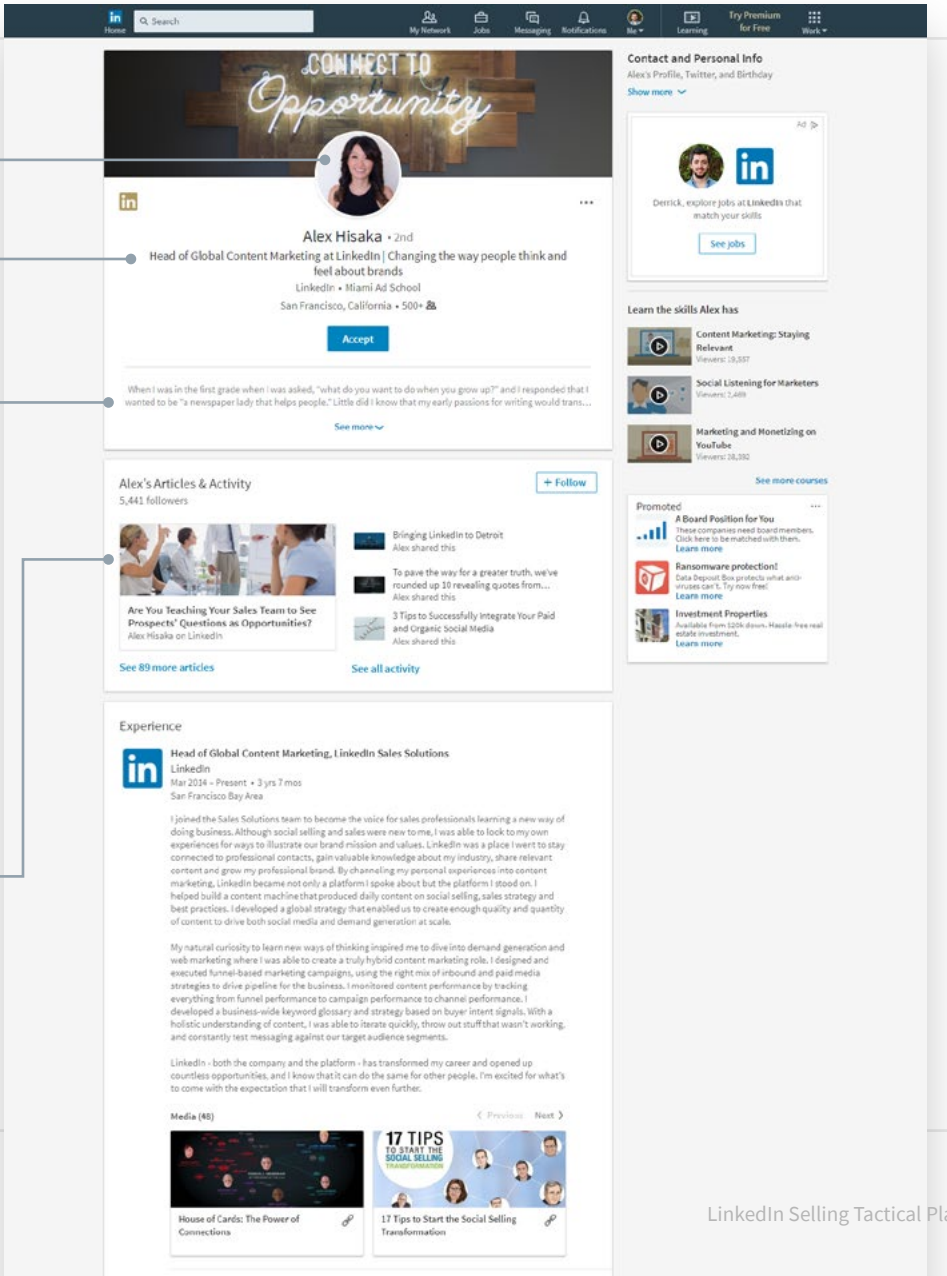
Consider mentioning what region you cover and the industries or businesses you help, as well as the company you're currently at.

SUMMARY

Think of this as your "30-second pitch": Focus on what you do, how you help your customers, and the best way to get in touch (your Call to Action).

RICH MEDIA

Embedding relevant rich media – not just videos but also blog posts, infographics, and even SlideShares – in your profile can greatly boost engagement from people who visit it.



STEP 1

UPLOAD A PROFESSIONAL PHOTO

LinkedIn profiles with a photo are **14 times more likely to be viewed and have a 40 percent higher InMail response rate than those without one**.[4] However, it's essential that you convey the right impression with your choice of photo. Avoid photos that are too casual, low-quality (grainy, dark, or overexposed), or full-body shots. The best profile photos convey the same impression that you would when walking into your favourite customer's office: Smiling, facing the camera, and dressed in a way that shows professionalism and respect.

PRO TIP

Use the background picture on your LinkedIn profile to show a bit of your out-of-work life, such as sports you participate in, places you've been, or events you've spoken at.

[4] LinkedIn Talent Solutions, "5 Tips for Picking the Right LinkedIn Profile Picture"

STEP 2

WRITE A COMPELLING HEADLINE

Your default headline is your latest job title, but this may not always clearly demonstrate your true value to customers. In your headline, consider mentioning what region you cover and the industries or businesses you help, as well as the company you're currently at. Avoid generic headlines like "sales rep" or internal jargon that customers won't understand. The headline is the first thing prospects read about you, so it should be as clear and compelling to their own interests as possible.

At LinkedIn, our sellers often use a very simple format for their headlines:
[Your role description], helping [your customers] solve [their problems]

One example would be: **Data-driven marketer, helping retailers personalize campaigns in North America**

This clearly explains what you do, who your customers are, and what sort of benefits or services you provide them with.

PRO TIP

Use words in your summary that your prospects often search for to boost SEO on Google. You can base these on your own discussions with customers or your marketing team's insights.

STEP 3

SUMMARIZE YOUR STORY

After viewing your photo and headline, prospects may look at your personal summary on your profile. Think about this as your "30-second pitch": Focus on what you do, how you help your customers, and the best way to get in touch (your call to action). Write in the first person, avoid bullet points, and make the skills and experience you talk about directly relevant to your current job.

Follow this structure to turn your summary from a simple résumé into a reputation-building asset:

PASSION: A sentence about what motivates you professionally and what that means for customers.

BACKGROUND: One or two sentences summing up your career to date.

COMPANY: One or two paragraphs about what solutions you offer, and how they've solved industry or customer problems in the past.

CALL TO ACTION: Contact details and best channels to get in touch – the same things that you'd have on a business card.

PRO TIP

Keep your summary concise. Focus on putting your most important information into the first paragraph or two.

STEP 4

ADD RICH MEDIA

It's been said that a single minute video is worth 1.8 million words in engagement.[5] Embedding relevant rich media – not just videos but also blog posts, infographics, and even SlideShares – in your profile can greatly boost engagement from people who visit it. You can even use LinkedIn as a personalized "content hub" by directly linking contacts to content you've hosted on your profile: it makes for far easier navigation than many corporate websites.

There are two areas to which you can add rich media:

- Enhance your **Summary** with awareness-type content: C-level interviews about your company, whitepapers dealing with industry issues, or campaign microsites.
- Support your **Experience** with greater detail about specific solutions, including presentations or even videos where you directly address customers.

Limit yourself to around five pieces of media content for your summary and two for your latest career role, focusing on the specific products and solutions that you sell.

PRO TIP

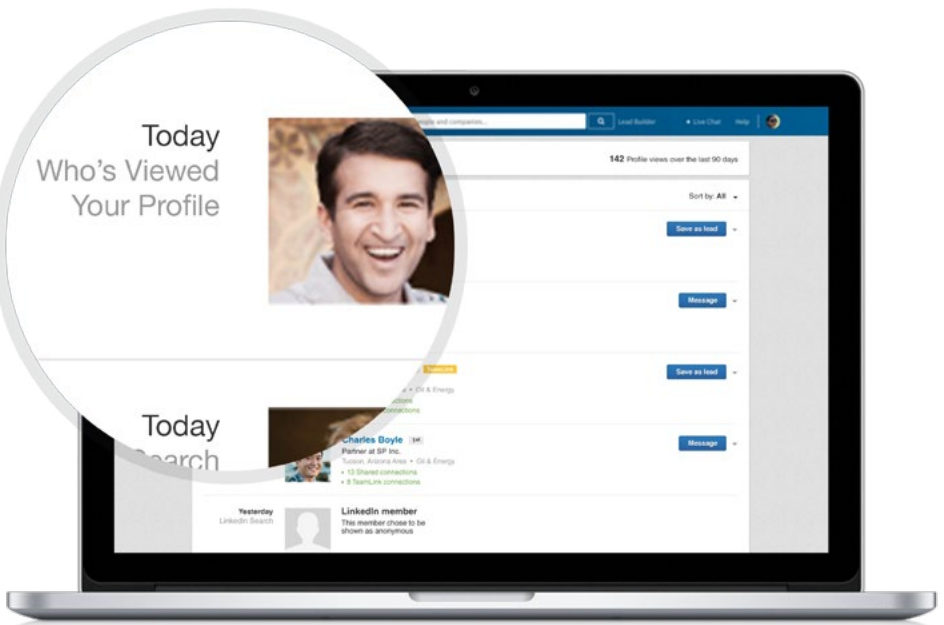
Source content from your marketing team, then use your ongoing conversations with customers to add assets that will resonate with your particular target audience.

[5] Forrester Research, "One Minute Video Worth 18 Million Words"

STEP 5

ANALYZE YOUR PROFILE

LinkedIn Sales Navigator allows you to see who's viewed your profile in the past 90 days – as well as filter them according to company, industry, and job role. These insights can give you new leads to follow up on, as well as the context to approach them in a more personal manner. Referring to common interests according to leads' LinkedIn profiles is a great place to start.



PRO TIP

Make sure you aren't viewing other people's profiles in "Anonymous Mode" (turned off by default). When people can see you've clicked on their profile, they're more likely to view yours in return — laying the foundations for a relationship.

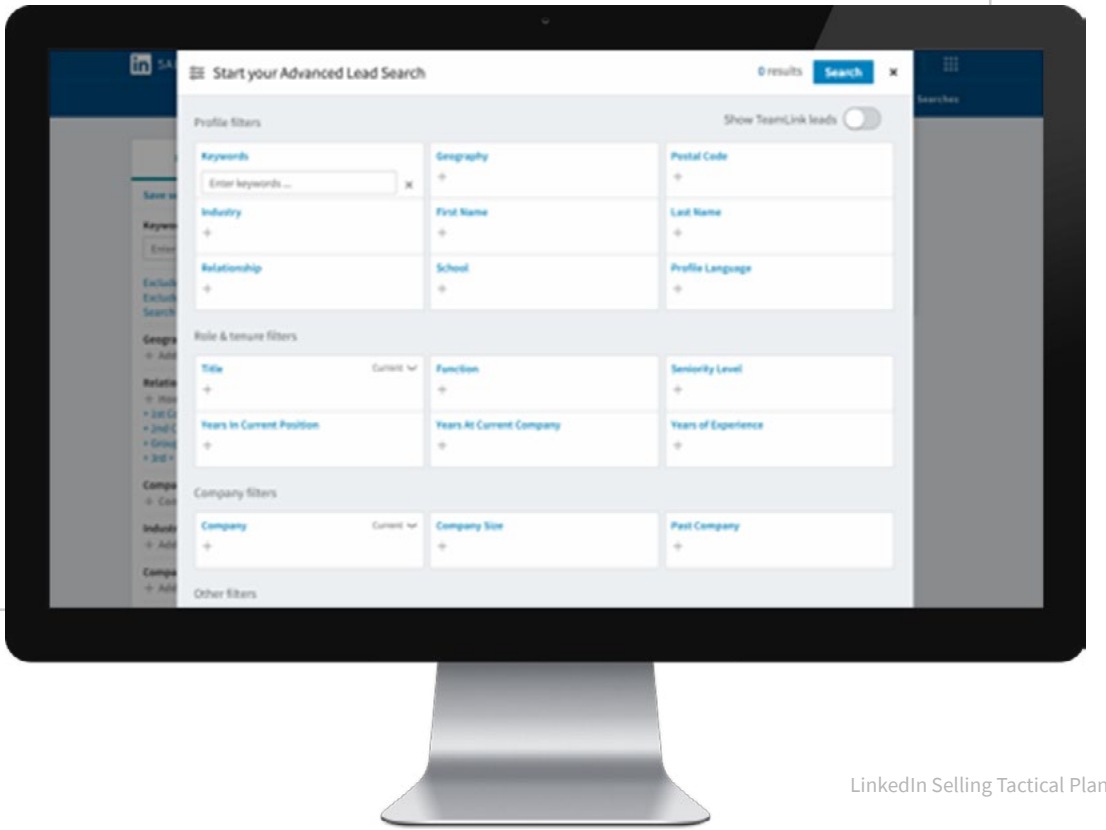
PROSPECTING

HOW TO TARGET THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The best social sellers tailor their “first contact” to directly address each prospect’s professional objectives and personal interests. With the depth of data and variety of tools available, there’s no excuse not to know your buyer before you reach out to them.

STEP 1
IDENTIFY AND FILTER YOUR TARGETS

Work out the types of individuals who're likely to benefit your business the most. Think about factors like industry, function/ department, location, and seniority level. At LinkedIn, for example, we tend to look for Director or CXO-level individuals within the marketing function of a range of industries. If you're using Sales Navigator, you can enter these criteria and create a list of matching leads within seconds.



With more than 500 million users on LinkedIn, it's simply not feasible to contact each and every potential lead – even when Sales Navigator filters these down into the hundreds. From search results in Sales Navigator or LinkedIn's general search, open only profiles which fit your target decision-making level and industry/ company size. Then, quickly scan the following to get a better sense of the prospect's background.

LANGUAGE

What sorts of phrases does the prospect highlight or repeat in their headline and/or summary? These often give insight into their values and passions: "Culture-focused" or "growth mindset" immediately tell you a lot about both business style and personality.

EXPERIENCE

What sorts of companies has the prospect usually worked for? This can indicate their preferred working style: Prospects with a history in start-ups, for example, will operate differently to those who've matured in large enterprises.

ROLES

Has the prospect always been in the same discipline or have they switched careers in the past? This can reveal a lot about their appetite for risk and growth.

Once you identify a prospect you feel is worth engaging with, it's time to plot your approach.

STEP 2

CREATE A REFERRAL

A warm introduction from a shared connection is five times more likely than cold-calling to get your prospect engaged.[6] Reach out to your shared connection or team member to request an introduction to the lead. At LinkedIn, we stress the importance of a warm, personal introduction that clearly explains why you're getting in touch and what value you might offer to the lead's current situation.

Personal introductions have extremely high success rates – up to **500 percent higher** than an unsolicited approach.[7]

[6] LinkedIn Research
[7] LinkedIn Research

PRO TIP

Sometimes you may wish to build up greater influence in an organization than can be provided by a single individual. When you access leads via Sales Navigator, the top of their profile will also list "Lead Recommendations," other individuals in the organization who may also be worth approaching.

3 IDEAS FOR SOCIAL SELLING VIA REFERRAL

Use the **TeamLink function in Sales Navigator,** which shows you who else in your company with Sales Navigator is connected to a prospect, to take advantage of existing relationships between your organizations.

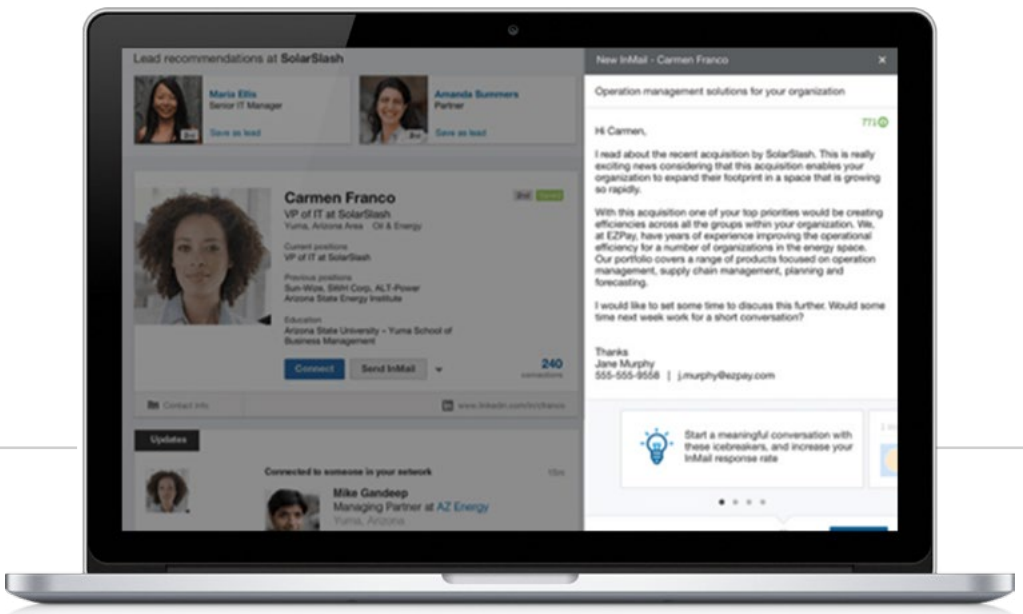
Spend 30 minutes a day reaching out to trusted customers and team members for **referrals and testimonials**. Doing so not only expands your network of prospects rapidly, but also cultivates your existing relationships.

Review your existing customers' connections and groups to find "centers of influence" where similar decision-makers come together, then **tap on your customers to make introductions** to others in the space. This works particularly well for sectors with high entry-levels like wealth management (asset worth) or industrial technology (technical expertise).

STEP 3

MAKE YOUR PITCH

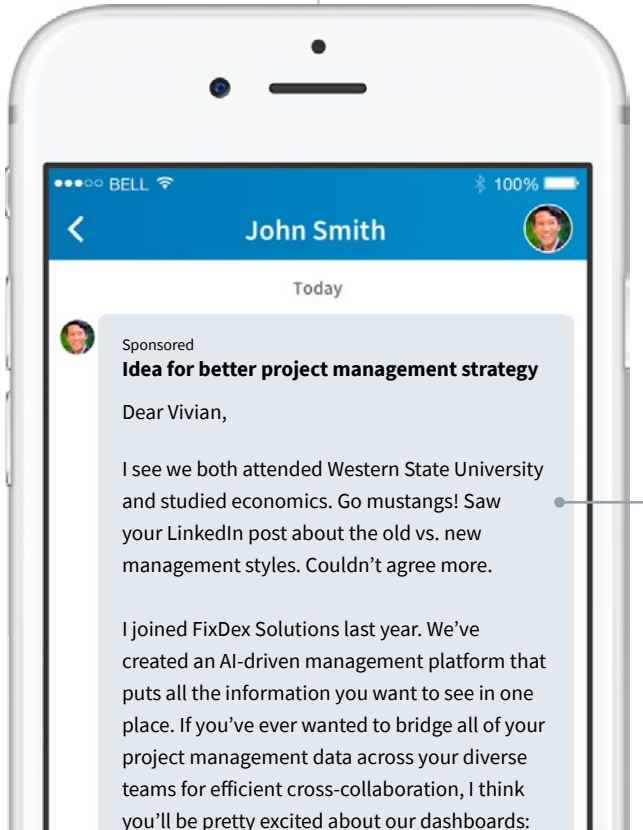
The tone and structure of your "first contact" with a prospect will define the rest of the relationship. This is particularly important when you have to directly approach the prospect without a referral. InMail allows you to send a message to other LinkedIn members who you're not yet connected with, delivering your message via three channels: The member's LinkedIn inbox, their email inbox, and a pop-up the next time they open the LinkedIn app. This makes it the best channel for directly engaging prospects without referral.



InMails have a 10-25 percent hit rate when it comes to getting a response from prospects – that's **300 percent higher than emails** with the exact same content.[8]

[8] LinkedIn Sales Solutions, "LinkedIn Changes InMail Policy to Improve Quality of Messages and Response Rates"

At LinkedIn, we've found that the best social sellers (including our own people) use this **three-paragraph format** for every single InMail they craft.



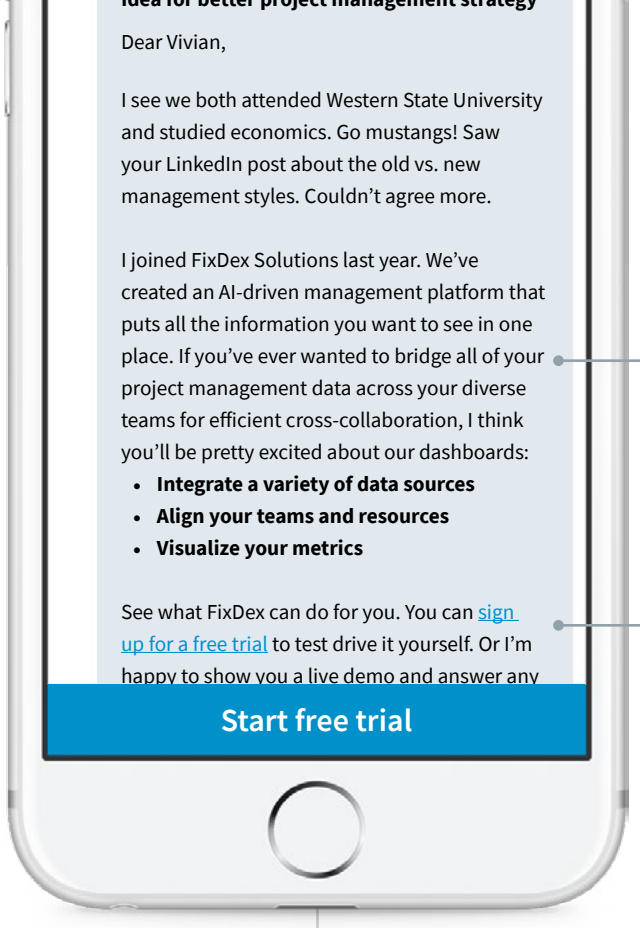
1ST PARAGRAPH
START SOCIALLY

Look at your prospect's profile for a common connection or an interesting talking point, and use this as the "opener" of your message. Leading with this will demonstrate an interest in them as a person, and make them far more receptive than if they were to receive a straight-up sales pitch. Sales Navigator can be a valuable tool here, as it allows you to "unlock" and view in full up to 25 profiles that aren't in your network.

Some good talking points are:

- Sports or community activities (check out the prospect's background image and Interests sections)
- Similar education history
- Posts they've written on LinkedIn Longform

Be authentic about your interest. It's easy to detect fake enthusiasm on social media.



2ND PARAGRAPH
PITCH QUICK

Briefly state why you've reached out to this particular person, and what you or your business can do to help. Prospects expect to do business via LinkedIn, so this sort of subject matter is more than acceptable. However, be sure to phrase this in terms of the benefit you can bring to the prospect. The more specific or accurate your analysis of their challenges, the better. And show what's in it for them: Demonstrations of personal value have twice as much impact as business value.

3RD PARAGRAPH
CALL THEM TO ACTION

Always close with an action – either requesting a meeting or providing your availability for a conversation. This is the best way to ensure a response and start building the relationship further.

What about actually writing your message?

When it comes to composing InMails, remember these best-practice copywriting tips.

Use a compelling subject line.

Be different. Referencing common interests or a specific challenge the prospect's facing are good starting points. Try to elicit the curiosity of the prospect.

Make it about them.

Focus on benefits to the prospect, discuss their interests, and refer to their awards or achievements on their LinkedIn profile to build rapport. Using inclusive language ("we" versus "I") can also help.

Start a conversation.

Asking questions or sharing common details about your experience not only encourages a response, but also proves that you know what you're talking about – whether it's data analytics or sports.

Keep it short.

The average online reader's attention span is about eight seconds, so your messages should be no more than 100 words or so.

PRO TIP

Only follow up once at most after your initial InMail. Remember that your InMail goes to three separate channels: App, LinkedIn inbox, and email. A better solution is to test the waters with other individuals, such as direct reports or peers.

CONTENT:
6 MUST-DO'S FOR ATTRACTING LEADS

Content offers a twofold opportunity for salespeople: They can engage with content that their prospects post, or post their own content to attract prospects during the earlier stages of the buying journey. Selling with a content marketing approach is quite possibly the most efficient way to beat sales quotas. Here's how it's done.

LEVERAGING OTHER PEOPLE'S CONTENT

In the past, trying to uncover potential opportunities (like a change in job role) came largely down to chance: What you overheard at the water-cooler, or happened to see on the customer's desk. Platforms like LinkedIn, however, have put all these insights in the one place: The status updates and content which members post on their profiles. This makes it easier and quicker to respond to changes when they occur. That's great for social sellers, as **50% of all sales go to the first salesperson to contact the prospect**.[9]

The best social sellers will look out for "digital body language" like these signs:

COMPANY NEWS

Acquisitions, cutting costs, new strategic direction – any major organization-level change can mean new opportunities or demands. Use this content as a conversation-starter with new prospects or existing customers.

CHANGE IN JOB

This can disrupt sellers' work in positive and negative ways. When a prospect changes jobs, you may need to find a replacement sponsor in the business – but it may also create opportunities for working with them in new fields.

[9] InsideSales.com, "Sales Lead Management"

STATUS UPDATES

These have huge value because they reveal what prospects really care about and prioritise in the now. Engage with them by liking, commenting, and sharing their updates to put the focus on their interests, not your product.

BLOG POST

Reference the deeper insights in a LinkedIn long-form post by linking to it or leaving a comment that adds on something useful. You can also cite or even respond to prospects' ideas in your own posts.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Are some of your prospects posting or joining LinkedIn Groups? Start or contribute to discussions in order to raise your profile as an industry expert and thought leader. Not only are you making your expertise more visible to prospects in their newsfeeds, but everyone who replies to you also becomes a new lead to track.

PRO TIP

When you identify a potential new lead, save them in Sales Navigator. You'll be alerted to updates about your saved leads, including when they're quoted in the media, when they post a new long-form article, and when they reach new work anniversaries or promotions.

GENERATING YOUR OWN CONTENT

Salespeople are naturally well-endowed for content marketing. Who else speaks directly to multiple customers, companies, and industries on a daily basis? The challenges and success stories that you see each day provide a unique breadth and depth of knowledge that prospects can benefit greatly from. Sharing this content boosts the chances of having a positive impact during the 80% of time that B2B buyers spend on online research.[10]

However, not all content has to be created by you. At LinkedIn, we use the "4:1:1 ratio" of:

4 parts **sharing** other people's content (links and articles)

1 part **engaging** with content (commenting or responding)

1 part **creating** your own original posts

PRO TIP

Try using InMail to extend the conversation with people who've already engaged with your long-form posts. The second tab on "Who's Viewed My Profile" will show you the profiles of who's liked or commented on your posts.

[10] Forbes, "Customers Like to Research Online But Make Big Purchases In Stores"

BE AUTHENTIC

Write about what you're interested in, in your own voice. This includes topics that don't relate directly to business but resonate on a personal level with your prospects. Meditation may prove a far hotter topic than derivatives amongst bankers, for example.

HAVE AN OPINION

Don't just stick to facts. Give a new perspective on an issue, and use it to start and finish your post. A rough outline will help more philosophical sellers avoid wandering off on tangents.

FIND A COPY PARTNER

Make sure your posts go past a second set of eyes. One way to do this is to write in the evening, review your post in the morning, and send it to a colleague for their opinion first thing at work.

PUT THE AUDIENCE FIRST

What does your audience care about? Use tools like Buzzsumo to analyze what people are already posting about, identify the gaps – like industry-focused insights, or case studies – and fill them.

WRITE FOR THE MEDIUM

This means catering to skim-readers. Write short paragraphs, keep them to two or three sentences each, and don't worry about paragraph length.

BE SOCIAL

Refer to prospects' Twitter handles, link to their long-form posts, and copy them when you share articles. Doing so kick-starts conversations and proves to them that your expertise is both current and relevant.

PRO TIP

What terms do your prospects and customers use the most? Tweak your headline and summary to incorporate them wherever possible. You can work out these terms by analyzing your customers' profiles or asking your marketing team for insights.

A DAILY PLAN FOR SOCIAL SELLING

You can improve the results of your prospect outreach with this daily "**1-2-3-4**" routine.

Search for new connections once a day

A quick search for prospects on LinkedIn each morning will not only expose you to more opportunities, but also provide greater awareness of what's going on in your target industries and business functions. Sales Navigator is the best tool for doing this. Use Sales Navigator's filters to quickly filter through LinkedIn's member base by function, industry, seniority, location, and a range of other relevant factors.

1

Identify two prospects to reach out to per day

Your outreach has to be personal and relevant to make an impact on your prospect. Rather than feeling compelled to contact as many potential buyers as possible – and resorting to generic or copy-pasted messages – setting a limit of two per day encourages you to invest more time on understanding what makes them tick. Don't feel compelled to reach out to a prospect until you're ready or an opportunity arises: you can always add them to Sales Navigator and return at a later time.

2

Send a three-section InMail to each prospect

The average person's attention span is now around eight seconds – that's less than a goldfish! To avoid having your InMail automatically deleted, top sellers cultivate a sense of connection and trust within those first few seconds. Use the three-section format: Social start, quick pitch, and call-to-action. Each section should be its own separate paragraph, and not longer than two or three sentences.

If the prospect doesn't respond to your InMail, review it for any potential red flags. Was it too generic? Did you miss something recent – like a job change – that the prospect's been through? Was the language too wordy? A good way to follow up is to reference a second similarity between you and the prospect, relating it to the first message's content as much as possible.

3

Follow the 4:1:1 ratio for engaging through content

Want the prospects to come to you? Then share four pieces of content, comment on one piece posted by someone else, and create one piece of your own content every week. Make sure you're sharing a range of articles from various prospects – some related to trending business topics, others about human-interest subjects like psychology or science and technology.

When engaging with posts, try to add value by asking a question or adding insight about something the author didn't fully cover. And remember that the best original content is short, makes a clear point, and is based on personal experience. You should aim to go through the 4:1:1 ratio once a week – but focus on the quality of comments and original posts rather than simply trying to meet a quota.

4

LinkedIn Sales Navigator makes it simple to establish and grow relationships with prospects and customers by helping you tap into the power of LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network of 500 million members. Designed for sales professionals, LinkedIn Sales Navigator combines LinkedIn's network data, relevant news sources, and your accounts, leads, and preferences to produce customized recommendations and insights.

With LinkedIn Sales Navigator, you can focus on the right people and companies, stay up-to-date on what's happening with your accounts, and build trust with your prospects and customers.

For more information, please visit our Sales Solutions site.