

20 WAYS TO USE LINKEDIN

TO ATTRACT B2B LEADS

SPROUTCONTENT
The Business of Conversation™





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INTRODUCTION

With over 350 million users, a large number of which are professionals in decision-making positions, you'd be hard pressed to find a better place online to search for quality B2B leads than LinkedIn.

And it's not just the professional networking site's size that makes it an important part of any B2B lead generation strategy. It's also the fact that LinkedIn has intentionally evolved into one of the most powerful sources online for branding, thought leadership, and business-related content. It is, without doubt, a go-to site for professionals with money to spend and problems to solve.

Are you taking full advantage of this powerful tool?

Read on as this ebook discusses 20 ways you can start using LinkedIn right now to bring in a steady stream of valuable leads for your business, and convert them into thrilled customers.

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CHAPTER ONE

Upgrading your LinkedIn profile

One of the key ways to attract qualified leads through LinkedIn is to stop viewing your profile page as a digital resume, and instead start using it effectively as the powerful marketing tool that it is.

#1 Change your mindset

Your LinkedIn profile defaults to a standard digital resume, with your name, job title, current and former jobs, and education history front and center. But that's not how you're going to use it anymore. So make sure you clean that idea right out of your head and start fresh: your LinkedIn profile is one of the most

important inbound marketing tools you have at your disposal, and you're going to make the most of it!

#2 Optimize for your target audience

When considering how to populate your LinkedIn profile, think about who you'd ideally like to attract and set it up in such a way to appeal to that target audience. If

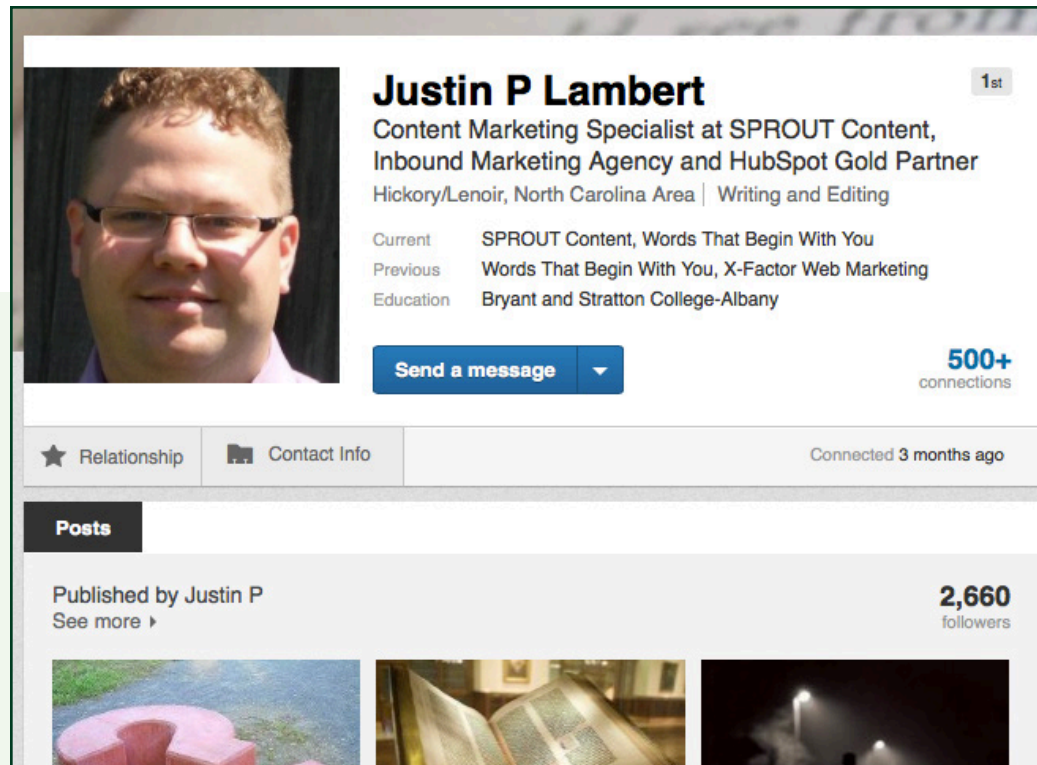


you're a parts manufacturer that sells to machine shops, your entire profile should be geared to those machine shop purchasing agents who buy your stuff. What do they care about most? What do they care about least?

#3 Optimize for search


At the same time, you need to make sure that target audience can easily find your profile among the 350 million LinkedIn users and the billions of other sites vying for their attention. So, while you're going to include the information they want and need to know, you're going to do so *strategically* by using the same words and phrases they would to search for the solutions you offer.

The Headline: Don't just use your current job title. Use this prime real estate to include a keyword-rich description of how you can solve your prospect's problems.



Contact Info: Sure, your LinkedIn profile URL is automatically there, but once they're on your profile, they don't really need that anymore do they? Make sure every conceivable means of reaching you is included, and take the opportunity to change your three website links to include keyword-rich anchor text. (Ex. Instead of "My Blog", how about, "Guaranteed Sales Tips for Maximum ROI"?)

Summary: Speak directly to your prospect. Identify their pain points, outline how you can help, and give them everything they need to either make a decision or, at least, click through to your main website for more information.

 **Summary**

As a content marketing specialist, I write with passion and intelligence, focusing clearly on the areas of your expertise that are most likely to appeal to your customers and communicating with them with a goal in mind.



I employ my knowledge, ability and experience as a copywriter to write persuasive copy that sells your product, service or idea effectively.

I have the ability to take on your voice completely as a ghostwriter for blog content, article marketing, trade journals, public relations and speeches that are designed to showcase your expertise and your customer-focused point of view.

Backed by the resources, knowledge and experience of SPROUT Content, a premier inbound marketing agency based in Pensacola, Florida and Denver, Colorado, I'm proud to offer content creation services to clients across the country.

Specialties: Content creation, content marketing strategy, copywriting, web copywriting, direct mail copywriting, article writing, press release writing, speech writing, public speaking consultation and coaching, public speaking

Psst...
*Come here,
let me tell you
something.*

Experience: Don't feel you need to include a comprehensive diary of jobs since you were flipping burgers while you took those MBA night classes. Just include that experience that directly speaks to what you're offering right now and/or lends credence to your ability to offer it. And, do so with an eye for quality keywords.

Skills: Every skill you include is a keyword. Keep it factual, of course, but don't include skills that add no value to your current prospects or search efforts.

Publications: Again, don't include anything that can water down your profile's laser-targeted messaging. If a publication's title isn't keyword-optimized, adjust it while still remaining factual, and take advantage of the description field for further optimization.

Recommendations: These are fantastic social proof, but they can be excellent SEO opportunities as well. When requesting a recommendation, include a few keywords you'd like to see in the quote. Most people who are happy enough with you to write a recommendation are happy to help you out in this way too.

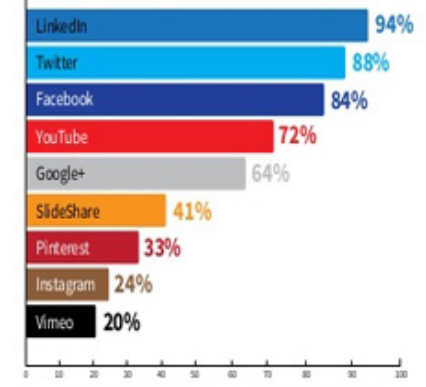
Groups: While joining and participating in appropriate groups is important (as we'll discuss in a bit) just the list of group names showing up on your profile is another SEO treasure trove. You can join up to 50, so why not do so?

#4 Know who's viewed your profile

Another powerful tool that LinkedIn provides is the ability to spy on the folks who have viewed your profile over the last few days or weeks. If you're a Premium member, this ability is greatly enhanced. But even for the free version, you can keep an eye on a snapshot of who's viewing your profile to get a feel for how effective your targeting is, and to identify potential prospects who you may be able to engage with (in a non-creepy way) now that you know they exist.

CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

B2BContent Marketing Social Media Platform Usage



2013 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America Content Marketing Institute by MarketingProfs

Which social media platforms does your organization use to distribute content?

LinkedIn is used most often

Average Number Used: 6

Note: Fewer than 20% of B2B marketers said they use the following social media platforms: Flickr (14%), StumbleUpon (12%), Foursquare (11%), Tumblr (10%), Vine (9%), and SnapChat (5%).

This year, the biggest rise in usage has been that of Google+ (up nine percentage points from last year).

After some fairly sizable jumps between 2013 and 2014, SlideShare, Pinterest, Instagram, and Vimeo have leveled off. Vine, which debuted last year at 14% usage, dropped to 9% this year.



Taking full advantage of LinkedIn groups

Everyone knows that LinkedIn Groups offer a fantastic pre-segmented audience of interested folks who are engaged in conversation around topics that matter to them. But, despite knowing this, so many professionals either don't bother joining groups, or they join and lurk, not adding any value. Don't be that guy.

#5 Don't lurk, converse

The modern LinkedIn Group is the 2015 equivalent of the cocktail hour networking event of years past. It's essentially a room full of people with similar interests casually discussing interesting topics. And, if you want to gain any sort of networking value out of it, you can't be the guy who hangs out next to the spinach dip and doesn't say anything. You need to

stick your virtual hand out there and press some flesh.

#6 Be strategically helpful

While your main goal in participating in LinkedIn Groups should be to add value to the conversations by being helpful and informative, you're also going to constantly be on the lookout for strategic benefits. For instance, if you have a recent

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blog post or white paper that addresses a topic being discussed, let your group know about it. It doesn't have to be a smarmy "read my stuff" contribution. It can be a pleasant and helpful, "you know, your comment reminded me of this great post we recently published, and I think you'll really enjoy it."

#7 Don't be scared of the Promotions Tab

LinkedIn has placed a Promotions Tab on every group discussion board specifically because they realize that legitimate and valuable business offers can and should fit into a balanced and helpful group discussion about business topics. While no one wants to see you spam a group with thinly veiled ads for your products and services, a respectable promotional post on the Promotions Tab can be an excellent and unobtrusive way for your ongoing group conversations to organically evolve into business relationships.

#8 Distribute content judiciously

As a member of a group, you have the privilege to start a discussion any time you want. As a matter of fact, any time you use LinkedIn to share something from anywhere on the web, one of the options you have is to share it with any or all of the groups you're part of.

Be smart about this and don't just indiscriminately overload your groups with one blog post link after another. Instead, use this privilege wisely by distributing your own and others' content as a means of sparking further insightful discussion. It's a guaranteed way to keep the conversation going while increasing links to your content and building your reputation as a thought leader.





Building your LinkedIn network

Technically, LinkedIn still has a recommendation published on their site that says, “Only connect with someone on LinkedIn that you know in real life.” But the fact that no one pays attention to this recommendation, and LinkedIn’s own help information and other established tools make it easy and beneficial to expand your connections far and wide, should tell you not to limit yourself in that way.

But, at the same time, it’s time consuming and ultimately useless to indiscriminately load up tens of thousands of LinkedIn Connections if they’re not in some way going to help you attract leads and satisfy customers.

#9 Learn How to Use Advanced Search

LinkedIn has a powerful Advanced Search function that can help you sift through the 350 million users on the site to find the relatively few you really need to connect with. As a Premium user, you can slice and dice six ways to Sunday. As a free user, you still have more than enough options available to narrow your focus appreciably and find those folks who you can really help.

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#10 Get introduced

Everyone's LinkedIn networks intertwine in incredibly beneficial ways, and the site allows you to capitalize on that by asking your connections for an introduction to someone they're connected to but you're not. Just like the ubiquitous, "Bob, this is Sally" introduction we're all used to, it allows for what would have been a cold connection request to warm up by means of your mutual connection. And, their introduction serves well as an implied endorsement!

#11 Consider sending INMail

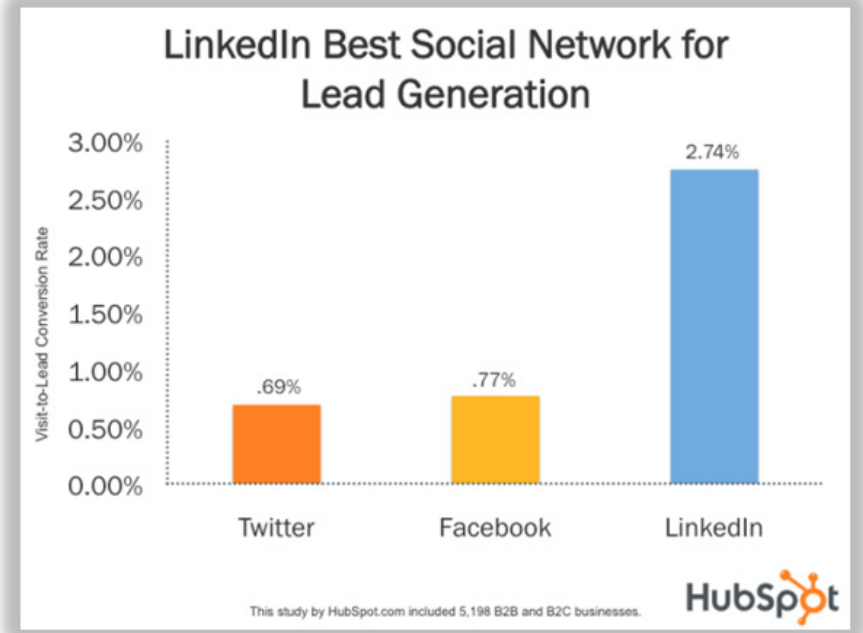
INMail is LinkedIn's own premium email option that allows you to send a personal email message to a LinkedIn member to whom you're not yet connected. As a premium member, depending on your account level, you will have up to 25 free INMails available per month. As a free member, you'll need to pay per email. But the reason they're so great is that 1) LinkedIn guarantees the recipient sees and opens your email or it's free, and 2) Since they're relatively rare, your recipient is much more likely to give it a look than if you just sent them an email out of the blue from your personal or business email account.

#12 Endorse and...

LinkedIn also provides two ways for you to directly speak to your connections' skills and talents, and both are beneficial in their own way as forms of social proof. An Endorsement is more of a passive verification that the person in question has a skill they say they have. The site will routinely offer up suggested endorsements you can either agree with or decline, but you can also endorse anyone's skills by going to their profile and clicking on their listed skills.

#13 Recommend

A Recommendation, on the other hand, is like a testimonial that can come from clients, co-workers, managers, or anyone else who has had a professional interaction with you. You can (and should) request recommendations from anyone and everyone who you've wowed over the years. In both cases, by proactively endorsing and recommending connections you can sincerely speak for, the law of reciprocity says you're going to get more in return.



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CHAPTER FOUR

Make the best use of the company page

The LinkedIn Company Page is a potentially powerful tool, but it's not a replacement for one or more lazy or non-existent personal LinkedIn strategies. That's where a lot of B2B marketers go wrong.

LinkedIn is – first and foremost – a vehicle for personal networking, conversation, and professional development. Its role on the company level is secondary and necessarily different.

#14 Create an attractive page

LinkedIn offers an image-rich layout for the Company Page, so take full advantage of that. Instead of using a generic logo-based graphic, consider creating something that tells your prospects who you are and

infuses your company personality into it too. You can update the cover image whenever you want, so it's not a bad idea to rotate images out or keep the message up-to-date with current offers or initiatives.

Instead of using a generic logo-based graphic, consider creating something that tells your prospects who you are and infuses your company personality into it.

#15 Optimize it for the prospect

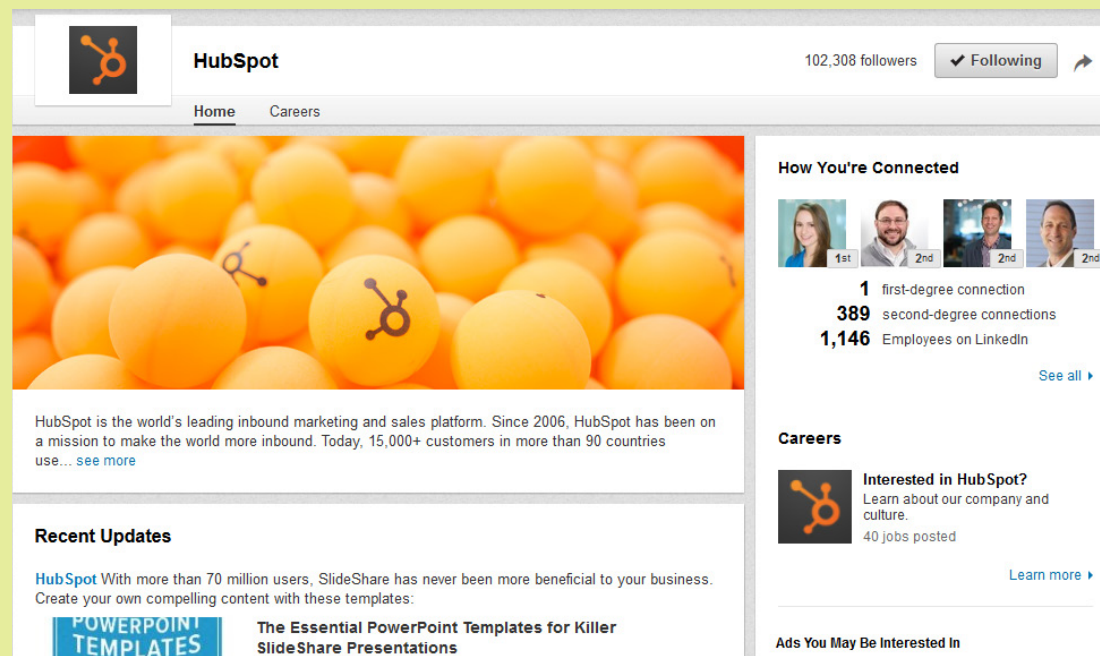
Again, just like with the personal profile, the Company Page information should be geared toward speaking to your target audience and no one else. That's who you want to attract, and that's who you want sticking around and engaging with the page. For example, as a content marketing agency, it does us no good to attract a bunch of other content marketing experts to our Company Page – no matter how talented and insightful they are – because they're not the ones who need what we have to offer.

#16 Optimize it for search

Likewise, the Company Page is another great opportunity to include strategically written keyword-rich content that will be indexed by the search engines and will bring your target audience to you.

#17 Include a no-doubt-about-it "Call to Action"

Unlike your personal profile page, the goal on the Company Page is not necessarily to engage further on LinkedIn as much as it is to drive the visitor to take some action: click through to your website (preferably a targeted landing page), or download free content. Don't leave any ambiguity here. Tell them what you want them to do and make it simple as pie to do so.



#18 Get the whole company on board

On the top right side of the Company Page, LinkedIn lists all the individual LinkedIn members who are employed by the company. This in itself is a draw if your coworkers have extensive LinkedIn networks already. But, at the very least, you should ensure that all of your associates are represented there, and that their personal profiles are all optimized as outlined above. Then, it'll make perfect sense when they start sharing company posts to their own networks, working together inside of groups, and in many other ways support and expand the efforts of each other and the company as a whole.

#19 Create Showcase Pages for individual product or service offerings

You don't want to go overboard with this, but creating a separate Showcase Page for every major category of product or service you offer is reasonable. It allows you to get more granular with the content you share relating to that niche, and it provides more targeted SEO opportunities for each segment of your target audience to find you.

LinkedIn for Business

Total Number of Business Pages: 4 million

Percentage of U.S. Small Businesses using LinkedIn: 17%

Percentage of Companies that have a LinkedIn page: 57%

Percentage of B2B Marketers that Use LinkedIn: 81%

Source: Digital Marketing Ramblings 2015

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CHAPTER FIVE

Creating killer long-form content on LinkedIn Pulse

Perhaps one of the greatest advancements LinkedIn has made in the last few years is its all-in support of user-generated content through the LinkedIn Pulse platform.

This free publishing platform allows any LinkedIn member – free or premium – the chance to have their original long-form content rub shoulders with official LinkedIn INfluencers like Richard Branson and Elon Musk, and top brands.

Not only does this offer the same awesome SEO benefits as any quality content you create and distribute online, but being that it's on the number one professional network in the world, it offers a perfect platform for building your repu-

tation as a thought leader and an expert in your niche.

Rather than going into a hundred "how to write well" tips here, I'll keep it very simple and to the point:

The potential for fantastic returns on your LinkedIn Pulse content is huge.

#20 Make Good Stuff

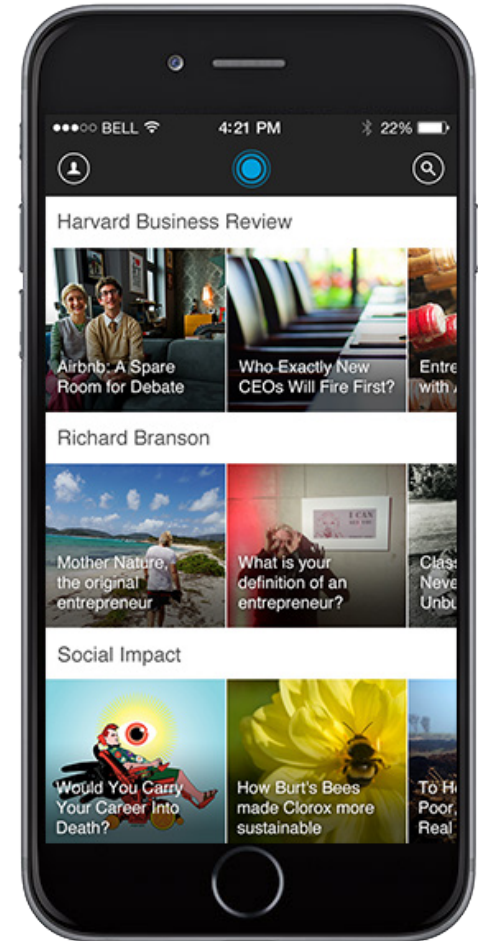
The potential for fantastic returns on your LinkedIn Pulse content is huge. Don't waste that by putting up cheesy salesy junk or rehashing the same me-too content everyone's already read. Make it original, insightful, creative, and enjoyable.

[Here are LinkedIn's own recommendations for great Pulse content](#), and there are plenty of other great articles on this blog to help with [creating great content](#).

So, there you have 20 ways to use the most powerful professional social network in the world, LinkedIn, to attract a steady stream of valuable B2B leads to your business. As a B2B content marketing agency, we're constantly experimenting with our own marketing efforts and on behalf of our clients to ensure we're making the most of this incredible tool.

If you could use some advice putting any or all of these tips into practice let us know.

Contact SPROUT Content Today





ABOUT SPROUTCONTENT

The Business of Conversation™

SPROUT Content helps businesses grow through effective content marketing. We are passionate about helping businesses understand they have an interesting story to tell and helping them tell it to their audience. We believe that strategic, purposeful and interesting content can make a great impact on a business.

We want to help establish every business we work with as a source of valuable information their customers will trust and want to read, subscribe to and share.

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