



COULD

Linked 

BE YOUR
LEAD GEN
SECRET
WEAPON?

BY BRUCE MCDUFFEE AND TRICIA AKINS

MIMIG Manufacturing
Marketing
Group



Walker-Stanley COMMUNICATIONS

A network diagram with several circular nodes connected by thin lines, set against a dark blue background.

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INTRODUCTION

This ebook will discuss how to generate qualified leads with paid advertisements and by using the free LinkedIn subscription. With over 500 million users worldwide, LinkedIn is the perfect B2B lead generation tool.

Most business people think of LinkedIn as a networking tool, which it is first and foremost. However, the real power of LinkedIn is the potential for generating qualified leads for your sales pipeline.

Like most digital marketing tools, there are free and paid versions of LinkedIn. And the free version works well in many cases. But LinkedIn offers some paid ways to gain exposure for your business, too. You can pay for clicks or impressions to get your message in front of a much broader audience with Text Ads, Sponsored Content or Sponsored InMail. Other options include signing up for premium subscriptions such as the Business or Sales upgrades.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT LINKEDIN?

Many business owners and executives are simply too busy to figure out how LinkedIn can generate leads and grow your business. We are all inundated with advice about why the latest social media channel is the magic bullet for lead generation. But, LinkedIn is different. It is the number one professional network in the world, and research shows it leads other social sites regarding business to business (B2B) sales conversions. If you are a targeting a B2B audience, I strongly encourage you to reconsider LinkedIn as part of your sales success arsenal.

Here's why:



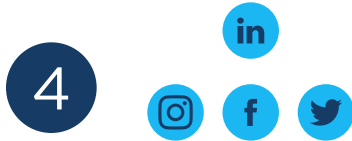
LinkedIn generated the highest visitor-to-lead conversion rate... almost 3 times higher than both Twitter and Facebook.



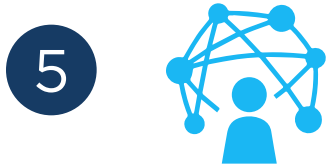
LinkedIn drives more traffic to B2B blogs & sites than other social channels.



91% of professionals feel that LinkedIn is a credible source for professional content.



92% of B2B marketers leverage LinkedIn over all other social platforms.



The demographics for LinkedIn's 500+ million members are impressive! This makes it a valuable tool for companies that want to target an educated, influential, accomplished and affluent audience.

- a. 61 million senior-level influencers
- b. 40 million decision makers
- c. 10.7 million opinion leaders
- d. 6.8 million C-level execs
- e. 3 million MBA graduates



LinkedIn is currently available in 200+ countries and 24 languages, so if your target market resides outside the U.S., take note!

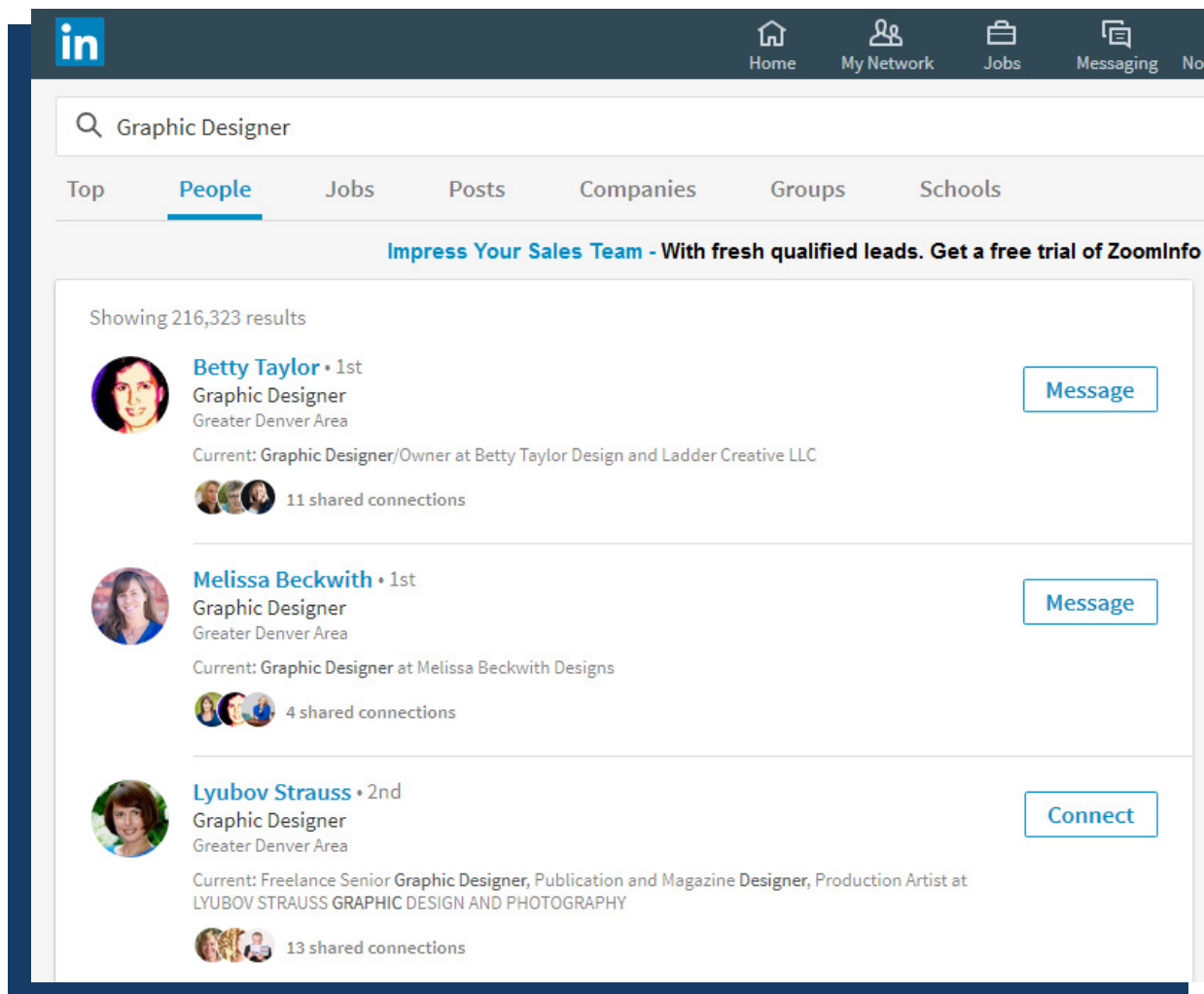


Basic membership is free.

HOW LEADING SALESPEOPLE USE LINKEDIN FOR LEAD GEN

With no out of pocket expense, top salespeople leverage LinkedIn to build their network and secure introductions. Take a look at some of the most popular tactics:

- Get introduced by existing connections to new ones suggested by LinkedIn.
- Use LinkedIn to identify potential prospects found through search.
- Check their LinkedIn news feed to stay abreast of updates from contacts.

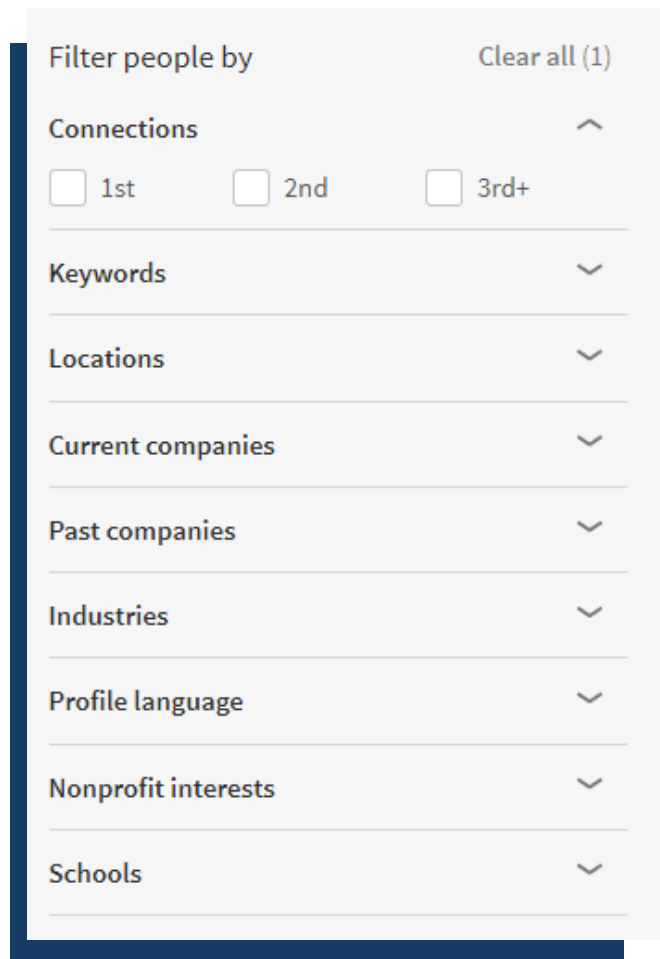


ADDING CONNECTIONS

Connections - Adding

“Connections” (called friends or contacts on the social networks). The more LinkedIn connections you have, the greater the number of people will see your updates like posts and LinkedIn Publishing articles.

People you know and can vouch for may ask to connect with you on LinkedIn. I highly recommend this! If a complete stranger, someone with who you do not have a connection in common, I recommend you do not connect. My thoughts are that you want to build a LinkedIn community of quality connections. I know others have the opposite opinion.

A screenshot of the LinkedIn 'Filter people by' dropdown menu. The menu is light gray with a dark blue border on the left. At the top right is a 'Clear all (1)' link. The 'Connections' section is expanded, showing three options: '1st' (selected with a blue square), '2nd' (unselected with a white square), and '3rd+' (unselected with a white square). Below this are several other filter categories, each with a downward arrow: 'Keywords', 'Locations', 'Current companies', 'Past companies', 'Industries', 'Profile language', 'Nonprofit interests', and 'Schools'.

LinkedIn Groups - Mutual Interests Could Mean More Connections and Leads

LinkedIn also hosts groups on the platform. These groups can be open (public) or private and are based on a common interest, affiliation or professions like marketing or an alumni association.

LINKEDIN AS A COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE / RESEARCH TOOL

Today's prospects expect salespeople to invest time to learn about them before making contact. Viewing a client or prospects' LinkedIn profile can also tell you if they have a personal blog, website or Twitter account. You can review their status updates to see what new contacts they've acquired. Do this before calling, emailing or meeting with them. And your client or prospect's LinkedIn profile can reveal:

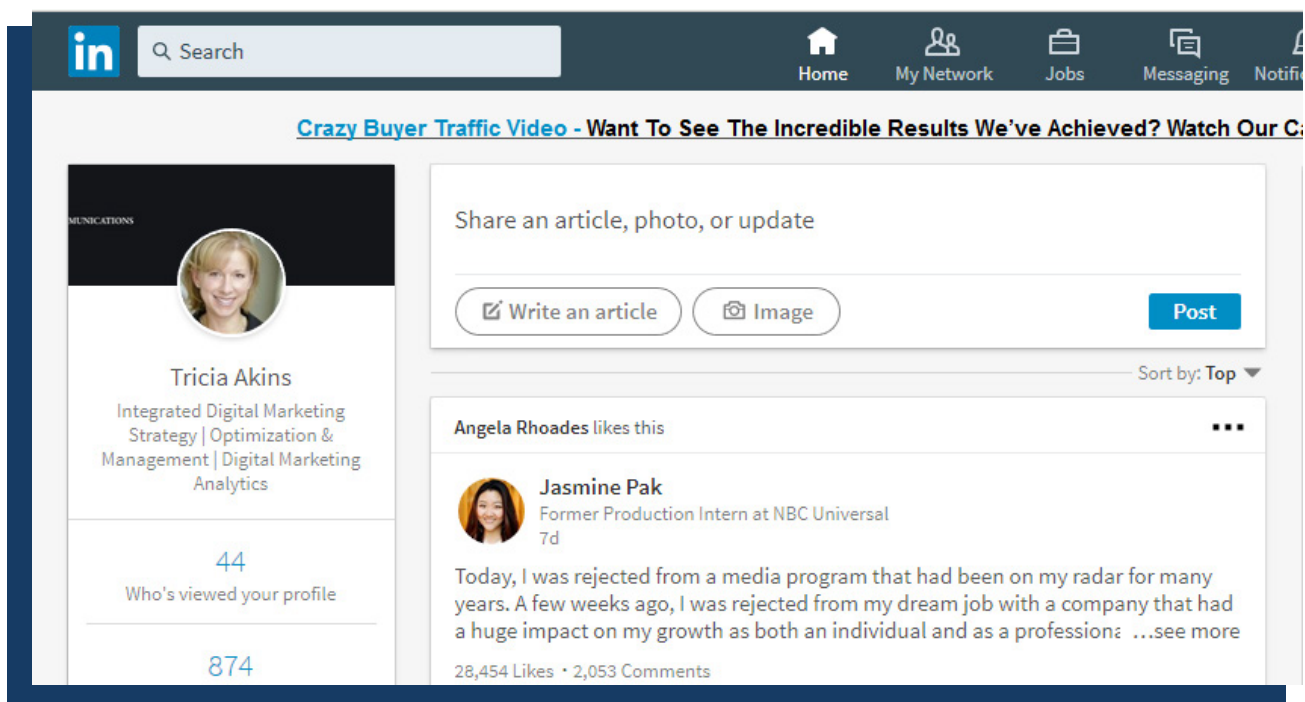
- Common interests, connections
- Past employers
- Volunteer interests
- LinkedIn group participation

LINKEDIN AS A CONTENT MARKETING TOOL

There are a couple of ways you can share content and updates about your business or professional life on LinkedIn: Posts and LinkedIn Publishing for articles. Both of these are shared with your connections automatically. When they engage with your content, it then gets distributed to their connections, too!

Similar to other social media networks, LinkedIn Posts are a great way to share quick updates, photos, images, and links. [Download this checklist for making post creation faster & easier.](#)

Sharing your content, such as new or repurposed blog posts, can be done via LinkedIn Publishing. Think of this as a blog on your website. This is not only effective for creating visibility for yourself, but also highlights your expertise and thought leadership. You can add images, videos, and links to your article on LinkedIn Publishing. Again, all at no cost.

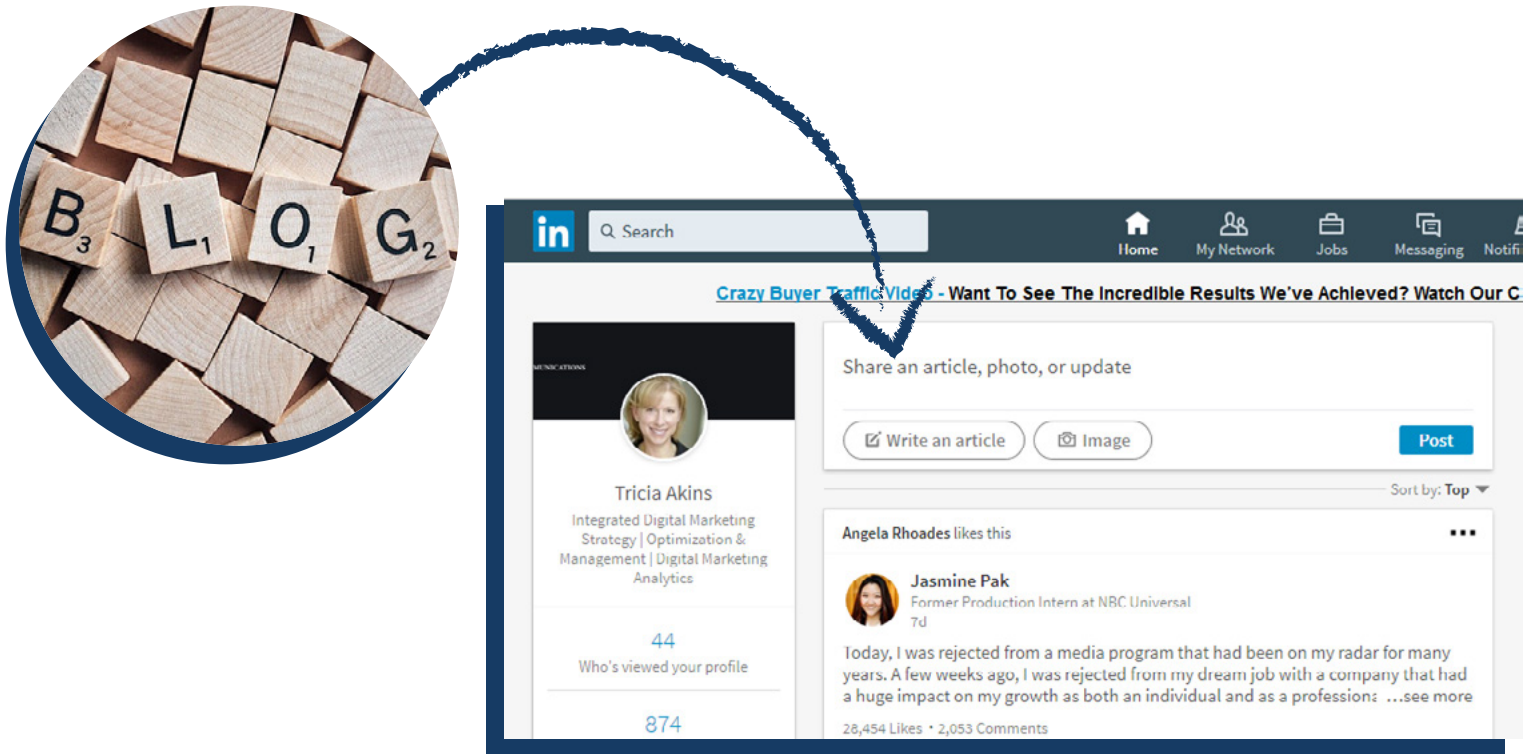


LINKEDIN AS A CONTENT MARKETING TOOL

LinkedIn Company pages cannot access LinkedIn Publishing. [See best practices for LinkedIn articles on tips for creating articles that engage readers the most.](#)

A best practice is always to keep all your updates business related. LinkedIn updates differ from other social networks in that they are business, not personal, updates.

Now that you understand how leading salespeople use LinkedIn, you're ready to leverage it for lead generation. If you are still unclear as to how to use LinkedIn on a daily basis, [Walker-Stanley Communications](#) can help. LinkedIn can have a strong ROI by shortening your sales cycle, reducing competition and generating more sales - definitely worth your time investment.



OPTIMIZING LEAD GENERATION WITH LINKEDIN PAID ADS

LinkedIn can be a powerful lead generation engine with a solid ROI. There are two categories of advertisers, self-service and working with a dedicated support team. If you have a budget of more than \$25,000 per month (or whatever you can negotiate with the LinkedIn Sales Team), you qualify for the dedicated support and more options open up to you. However, in this article, we will be discussing the self-service option and assume you are working with a smaller budget.

Before embarking on any paid advertisement with LinkedIn (or for any advertisement) you should set some objectives, specific goals and define your ideal target audience. It is also important to consider what you want a person to do when they click on an ad and what you will do in response to a conversion. In other words, you should know how someone could move through the sales funnel. If you are paying for an advertisement, we will assume the ultimate goal is to convert that person into a customer. For example, if your advertisement promotes an upcoming webinar, your campaign should include a registration mechanism, confirmation page or email, auto reply email with information about how to log in to the webinar, etc. The ad by itself is only a small portion of your overall promotion.

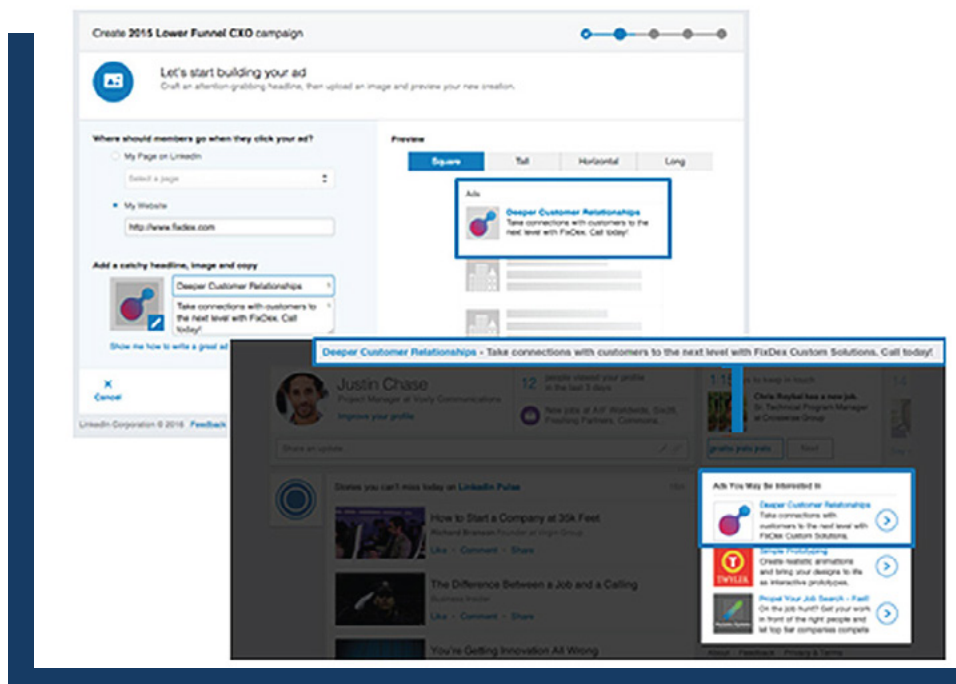
Now that you have determined your objective, defined specific goals, prepared your sales funnel with all the assets, it's time to decide which type of ad to use on LinkedIn. There are three types of ads available; Text Ads, Sponsored Content and Sponsored InMail.

OPTIMIZING LEAD GENERATION WITH LINKEDIN PAID ADS

TEXT ADS

Text ads are the ads that show up on the right side of various LinkedIn pages. These ads are similar to the typical banner ads we see in emails and on other web pages.

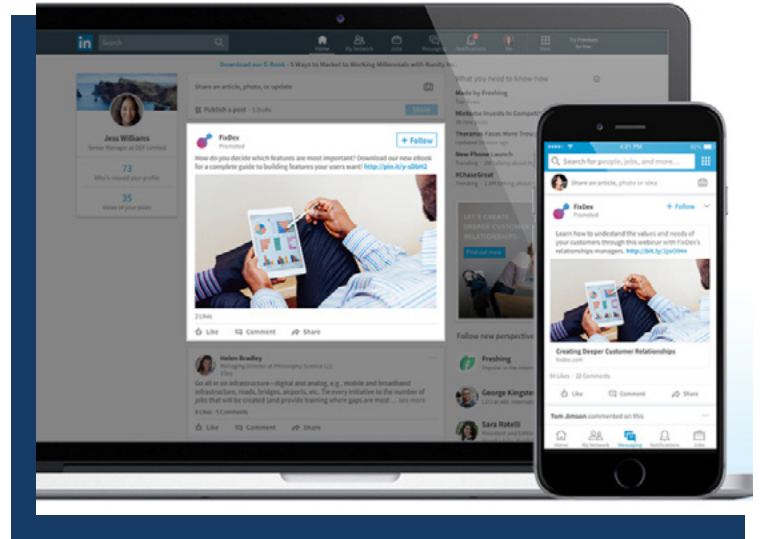
Text ads offer limited content including a 25 character headline, a 75 character description, and an optional 50x50 pixel image. The ad may appear in a variety of sizes on a variety of pages including home pages, profile pages, group pages, the message page, the 'my network' page, the 'who's viewed' page, and the search results pages. [Learn more about LinkedIn Text Ads.](#)



OPTIMIZING LEAD GENERATION WITH LINKEDIN PAID ADS

SPONSORED CONTENT

Sponsored Content is the most effective advertising on LinkedIn. The real power of Sponsored Content is that the ad appears right in the feed of your target audience. Therefore, it is less likely to be ignored the way banner ads are typically ignored. [Download this checklist for creating Sponsored Content ads.](#)



Normally, your content is only shown to your Company Page followers and your personal connections. Sponsored Content allows you to place your content in the streams of specific targeted audiences not limited by connections or followers. You can reach your specific audience at the moment they are engaged with LinkedIn across any platform, desktop, tablet or mobile.

You have more options and more flexibility with Sponsored Content than you do with text ads. Sponsored Content can include text, images, video, or SlideShare. There are numerous options for tracking conversions, impressions, and clicks. LinkedIn now offers a built-in form option where the form is automatically populated making it easier for users to convert. [Learn more about LinkedIn Sponsored Content.](#)

OPTIMIZING LEAD GENERATION WITH LINKEDIN PAID ADS

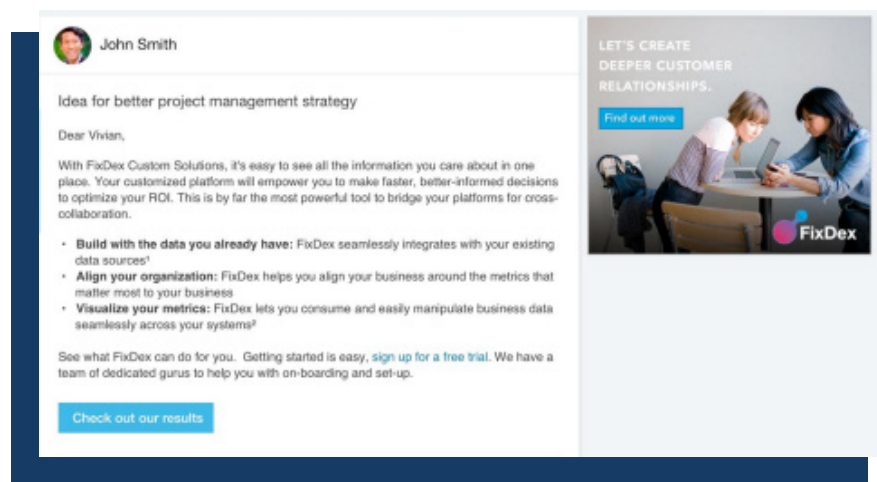
SPONSORED INMAIL

Sponsored InMail allows you to send an email directly to a targeted audience via the Messaging window. The process is the same as with all LinkedIn paid ads. Simply write a compelling email with a call to action, choose your target audience, set a bid and budget, and you're done.

Each email allows for a custom subject line, personalized greeting and a call to action button. You also get a square banner ad positioned to the right of the email that highlights your call to action.

Unlike Sponsored Content and Text Ads, your bid determines how many emails are sent and you pay per delivery, not per click. It is a good idea to keep track of the cost per click and cost per conversion if you are comparing the InMail results to a Text Ad or a Sponsored Content Ad.

[Learn more about Sponsored InMail.](#)



CHOOSING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Each of the three advertising options allows you to choose a specific target audience. The options for defining the audience are very robust, and this is one of the big advantages of LinkedIn advertising. You can include or exclude any of the following categories:

- Geographic location - as granular as a specific city
- Industry
- Company Size - by number of employees
- Specific Company - exclusion only
- Job Function
- Job Title
- Job Seniority
- Member Schools
- Fields of Study
- Degrees
- Member Skills
- Member Groups
- Member Gender
- Member Age
- Years of Experience
- Company Followers

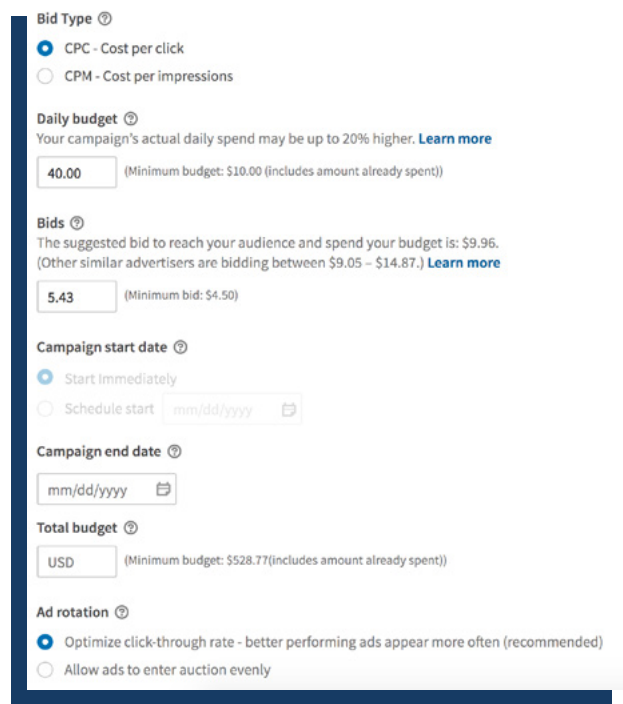
As you make choices to define your audience, LinkedIn keeps a tally of the total audience available. LinkedIn recommends minimum size target audiences of 300,000 for Sponsored Content, between 60,000 and 400,000 for text ads, and 100,000 or fewer for Sponsored InMail. When choosing your audience, keep your decisions aligned with your marketing strategy. A niche audience is usually more effective than a broad audience. It is imperative to align the audience with the content offer, so it is highly relevant to the viewer.

BUDGET & BIDDING

All 3 of the advertising options uses a bidding process to determine how often your advertisement gets in front of your target audience. LinkedIn will make a recommendation as to how much you should bid and will also specify a minimum bid. Bidding is an art and science as with any pay per click advertising. Manage your first campaigns carefully by testing different bid amounts as you compare the results to determine that sweet spot bid.

Sponsored Content and Text Ads allow you to bid on cost per click or cost per thousand impressions. The type of bid you choose will depend on your objective. Typically, cost per thousand works better for general awareness ads and cost per click is better for lead generation ads. Whichever method you choose, keep a close eye on the metrics to determine where you are getting the most impact.

In addition to bidding, LinkedIn provides options for setting a budget. You can and should set maximum budgets. You can set a daily maximum or an overall maximum budget for each campaign. You can also specify an end date for each campaign.

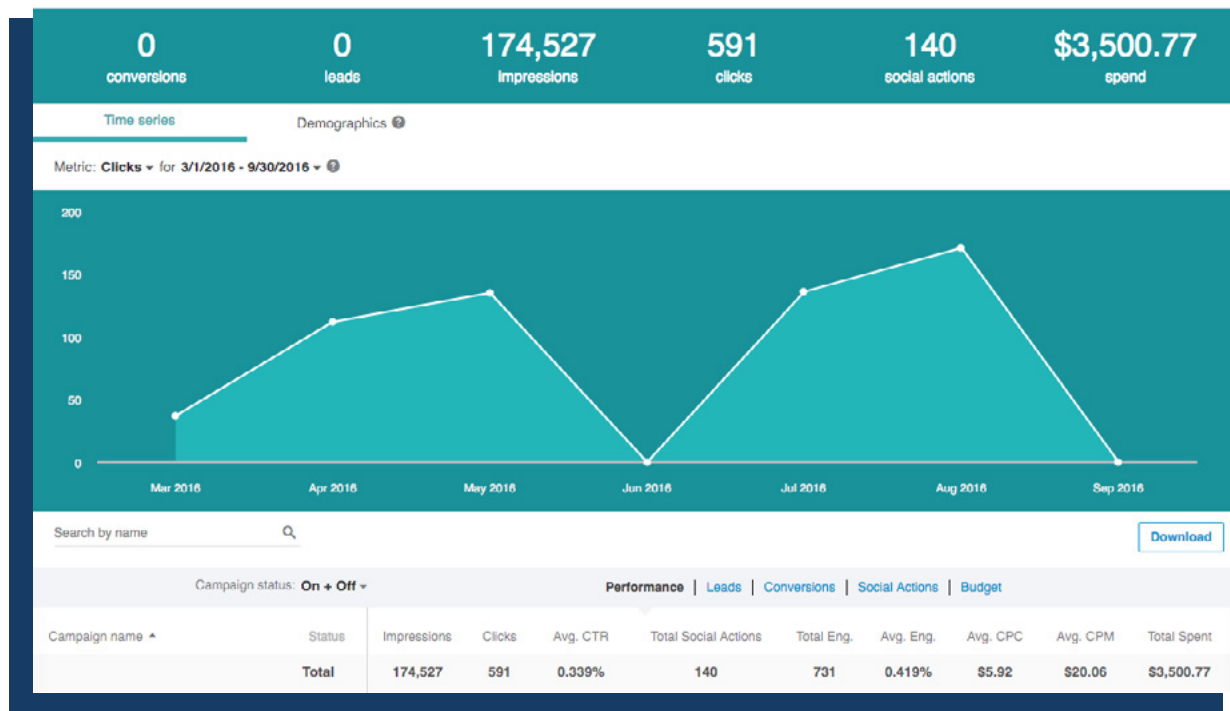


The image shows a screenshot of the LinkedIn campaign settings interface, specifically the bidding and budget section. The interface is dark-themed with white text. It includes several sections with expandable icons (circles with a question mark):

- Bid Type**: Two radio buttons are shown. The first is "CPC - Cost per click" and is selected. The second is "CPM - Cost per impressions".
- Daily budget**: A text input field contains "40.00". To its right, a note says "(Minimum budget: \$10.00 (includes amount already spent))". Above the input, a note states "Your campaign's actual daily spend may be up to 20% higher. [Learn more](#)".
- Bids**: A text input field contains "5.43". To its right, a note says "(Minimum bid: \$4.50)". Above the input, a note states "The suggested bid to reach your audience and spend your budget is: \$9.96. (Other similar advertisers are bidding between \$9.05 - \$14.87.) [Learn more](#)".
- Campaign start date**: Two radio buttons are shown. The first is "Start immediately" and is selected. The second is "Schedule start" followed by a date input field "mm/dd/yyyy".
- Campaign end date**: A date input field "mm/dd/yyyy" with a calendar icon.
- Total budget**: A text input field contains "USD". To its right, a note says "(Minimum budget: \$528.77 (includes amount already spent))".
- Ad rotation**: Two radio buttons are shown. The first is "Optimize click-through rate - better performing ads appear more often (recommended)" and is selected. The second is "Allow ads to enter auction evenly".

PERFORMANCE METRICS

LinkedIn provides robust performance metrics which include impressions, clicks, conversions (this requires a tag), cost per, averages, and social actions. LinkedIn also provides very specific demographic data about those who clicked on the ad. A little-known fact about the performance metrics for paid ads is that the download option includes much more data than the on-screen reports. Check your metrics daily and tweak every aspect as needed to maximize your ROI.



SUMMARY

LinkedIn is an excellent tool for B2B companies seeking more awareness and more qualified leads. You have two choices for lead generation; paid ads and use of the free tools. You can certainly generate leads with social posting, publishing, and networking with your connections, but it takes a lot more time and effort than paid ads. It is also difficult to get broad reach with the free tools.

For those B2B companies with a budget for advertising, try the paid ads. The general consensus is that the Sponsored Content is the best option, but don't rule out the Text Ads and the Sponsored InMail. Test, test and test, then measure, measure and measure some more. Only you can determine if LinkedIn is the right lead generation method for your business.





BRUCE MCDUFFEE



Bruce McDuffee has been on the ground in manufacturing marketing and sales for the past 20 years. He is the author of 'The New Way to Market for Manufacturing.' His mission is to help manufacturers advance their go-to-market practice for higher growth and bigger profit. Bruce is a former US Navy officer, Civil Engineer and has an MBA in Marketing and International Management from Northeastern University.

BRUCE CAN BE REACHED VIA:

Bruce@mmatters.com | +1-303-953-4361 | www.mmmatters.com



TRICIA AKINS



With over 20 years of corporate marketing and communications experience, Tricia Akins founded Walker-Stanley Communications in 2011.

Walker-Stanley Communications specializes in helping companies generate leads through an integrated approach that leverages the essential traditional and internet marketing activities required for growth. Clients are typically growing, small to midsize businesses that do not have the time or internal resources needed to update existing or develop new marketing initiatives. They are seeking an experienced, professional partner that can ramp up quickly and deliver results. Walker-Stanley Communications "gets it", and is here to help!

TRICIA CAN BE REACHED VIA:

TriciaAkins@walkerstanley.com | P: +1-720-218-0370 | walkerstanley.com