Social Selling Unlocked

The SECRETS of LinkedIn's Sales Teams

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% of C-suite members now use social media to inform their buying decisions.[1] Almost 70% 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.

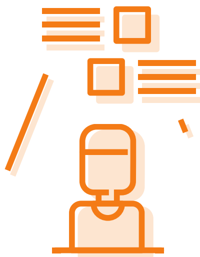
When it comes to social selling – generating sales via social media – LinkedIn is where the bulk of the action occurs. 80% of B2B social media leads come from LinkedIn, and 1 in 2 of our members say they're more likely to purchase from a company if they've engaged with it on LinkedIn.[3] So how can you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

[1] http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS25135814

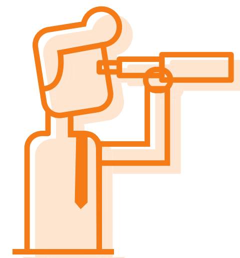
[2] https://www.siriusdecisions.com/Blog/2013/Jul/Three-Myths-of-the-67-Percent-Statistic.aspx

[3] https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/blog/6/60-b2b-marketing-quotes-stats-and-facts-for-the-modern-marketer

This eBook covers the three essentials of any social selling strategy:



Profile: How to build a LinkedIn profile that grabs and holds the attention of buyers – not just recruiters.



Prospecting: Tips to identify, understand, and win over prospects on LinkedIn.

Content: Using content on LinkedIn to detect opportunities amongst your prospects and generate new leads.

Finally, we've included a daily action plan to help you build social selling momentum and start pulling in leads – **all in less than 30 minutes a day.**

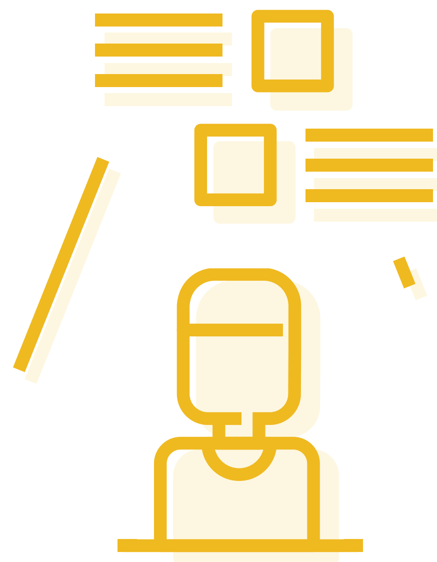
Applying the insights from this eBook will significantly reduce the time and effort it takes for you to generate leads and sell to prospects – as well as making you 51% more likely to exceed your quota.[4] Social selling isn't rocket science, but it can send your results through the roof. Let's get started.

[4] http://sales.linkedin.com/blog/how-sales-reps-exceed-quota-make-club-and-get-promoted-faster/

PROFILE

5 TIPS TO GET NOTICED BY POTENTIAL BUYERS

Your LinkedIn profile will often be the first touch-point a prospect has with your brand. In fact, 49% of decision-makers research vendor profiles before reaching out to them.[5] As the "shop window" to both your business and your personal brand, it's essential that you put your best foot forward.



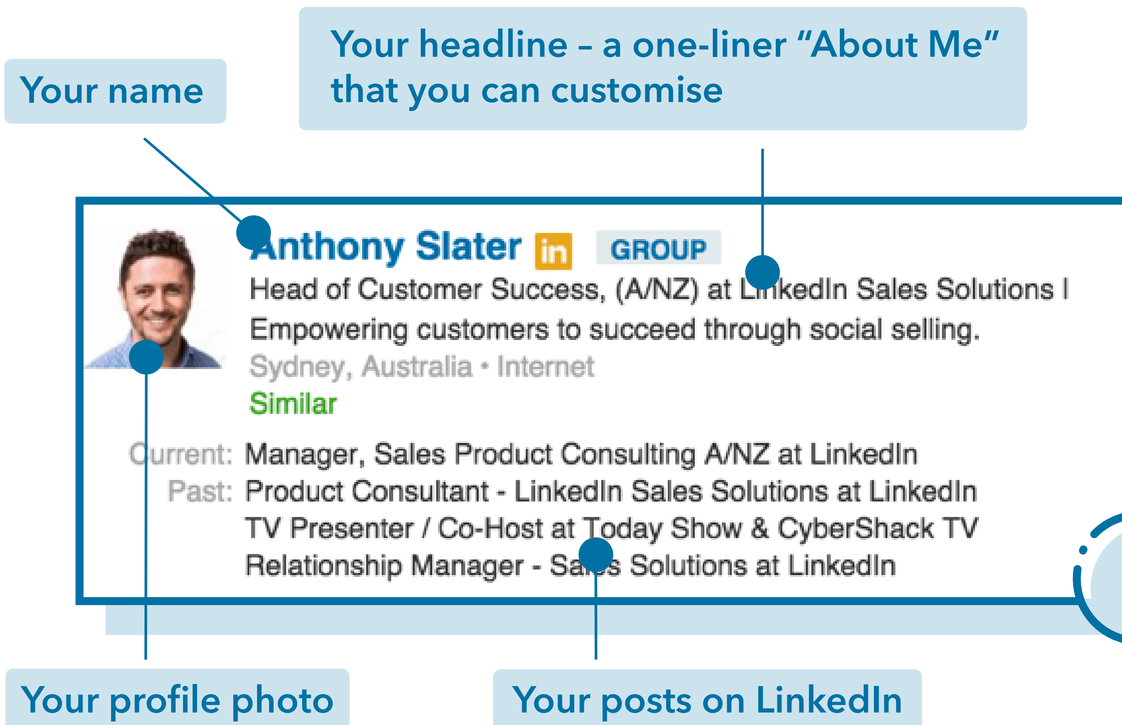
[5] https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/blog/6/60-b2b-marketing-quotes-stats-and-facts-for-the-modern-marketer

PROFILE

5 TIPS TO GET NOTICED BY POTENTIAL BUYERS

What's in a Profile?

The best LinkedIn profiles are built on an understanding of what leads and prospects are looking for. When someone searches for you or your company, the first things they'll see are:



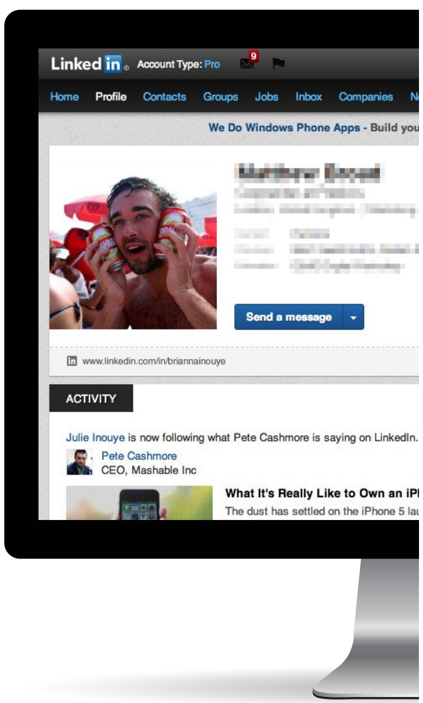
A stand-out combination of photo, headline, and profile content will encourage prospects to pay attention to you, trust you, and engage with you in further dialogue.

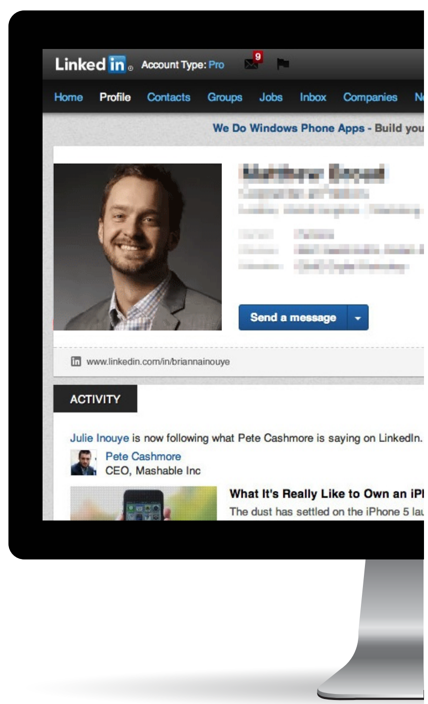
Optimise your LinkedIn profile with these five steps to generate more leads and opportunities for dialogue:

STEP 1

UPLOAD A PROFESSIONAL PHOTO

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

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 personalise campaigns in Asia

Which 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

SUMMARISE YOUR STORY

After the photo and headline, prospects and leads will look to the 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.

One way to turn your summary from a simple résumé into a reputation-building asset is to follow the following structure:

- **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

Forrester's Terry Forsey argues that a single minute of video is worth 1.8 million words[6] in engagement. Embedding relevant rich media – not just videos but also websites, infographics, and even slide sets – in your profile can greatly boost engagement from people who visit it. You can even use LinkedIn as a personalised "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 latest **Career Role** with greater detail about specific solutions, including presentations or even personalised videos where you directly address customers.

Limit yourself to around five media 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.

[6] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/one-minute-video-worth-18-million-words-forrester-research-forsey

STEP 5

ANALYSE YOUR PROFILE

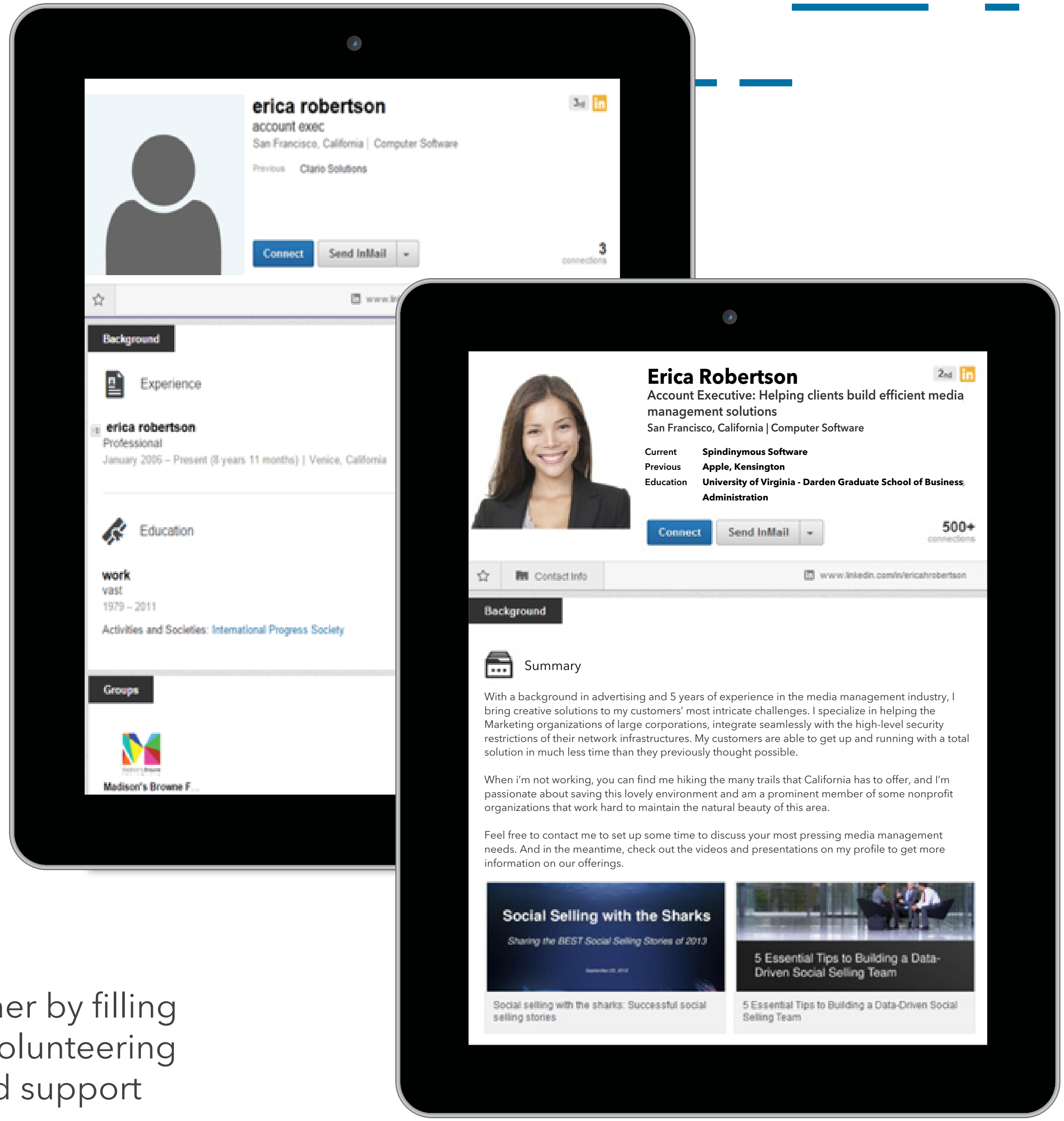
LinkedIn's Sales Navigator tool allows you to see who's viewed your profile in the past 90 days – as well as filter them according to company, industry, and job role. These insights can give you new leads to follow up on, as well as the context to approach them in a more personal manner. Referring to 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 and lay the foundations for a relationship.

Breaking it Down

Take a look at these two profiles of the same hypothetical person. The right-hand profile of Erica is obviously a lot more engaging for prospects and leads. She's using a professional and warm photo, and her headline clearly defines the value she brings to clients. Her summary further elaborates on the skills and personality she brings to the job, including specific benefits like time-to-market and media articles that demonstrate her expertise. Notice how Erica talks about her passion, background, company offering, and gives a call to action within just a few sentences.

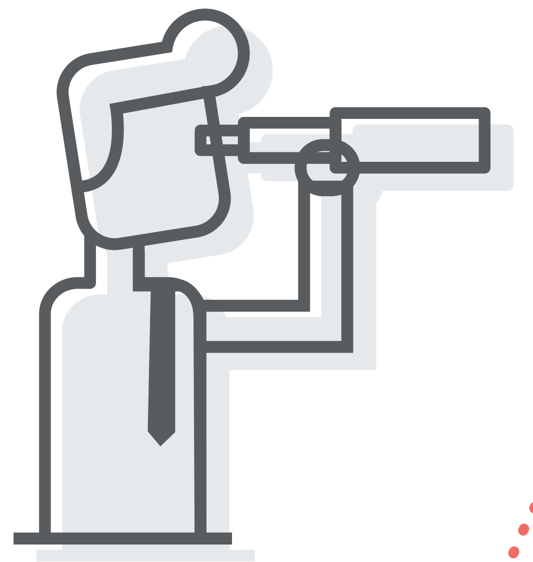


Erica could take her profile even further by filling out other sections in her profile like volunteering experience and projects, which would support her summary with even greater detail.

PROSPECTING

WIN OVER PROSPECTS IN 3 SIMPLE STEPS

Social media has effectively killed cold-calling. 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.



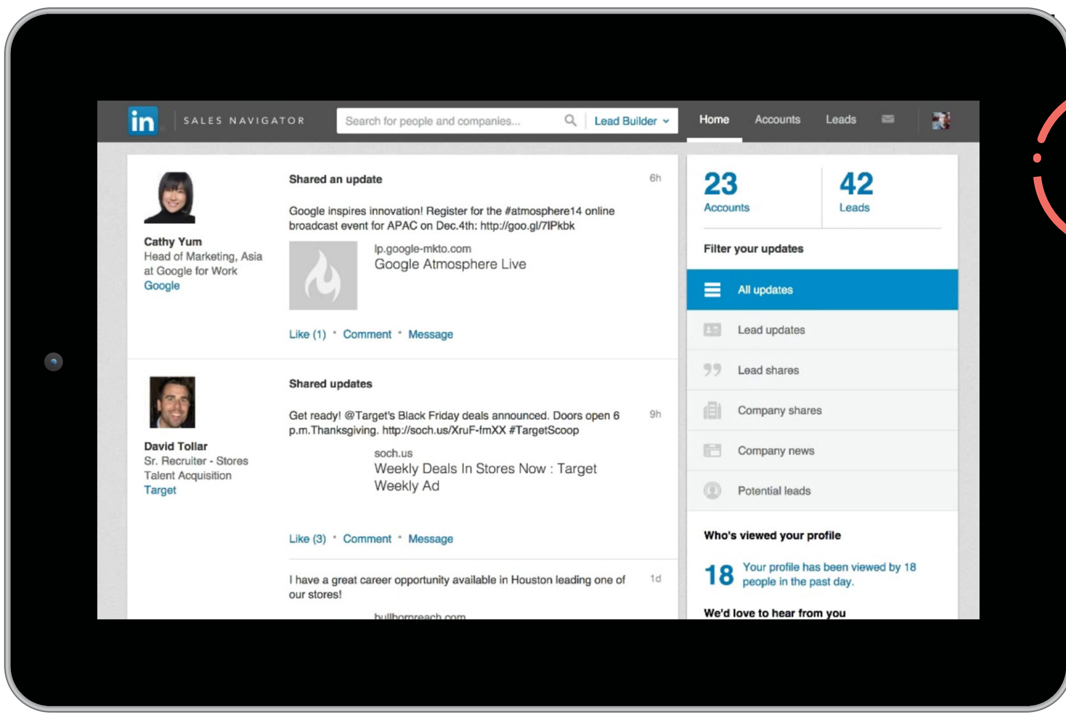
PROSPECTING

WIN OVER PROSPECTS IN 3 SIMPLE STEPS

How LinkedIn does it

Everyone in LinkedIn's sales practice uses a tool called Sales Navigator. Built specifically for sales professionals, Sales Navigator allows sellers to quickly search, filter, and find ways of connecting with decision-makers of potential value to their businesses.

Our internal studies show that sales teams using this approach with Sales Navigator grow their revenues by nearly 20% more than those only using LinkedIn. However, the basic principles of our approach can be applied no matter what level of the LinkedIn platform you're using.

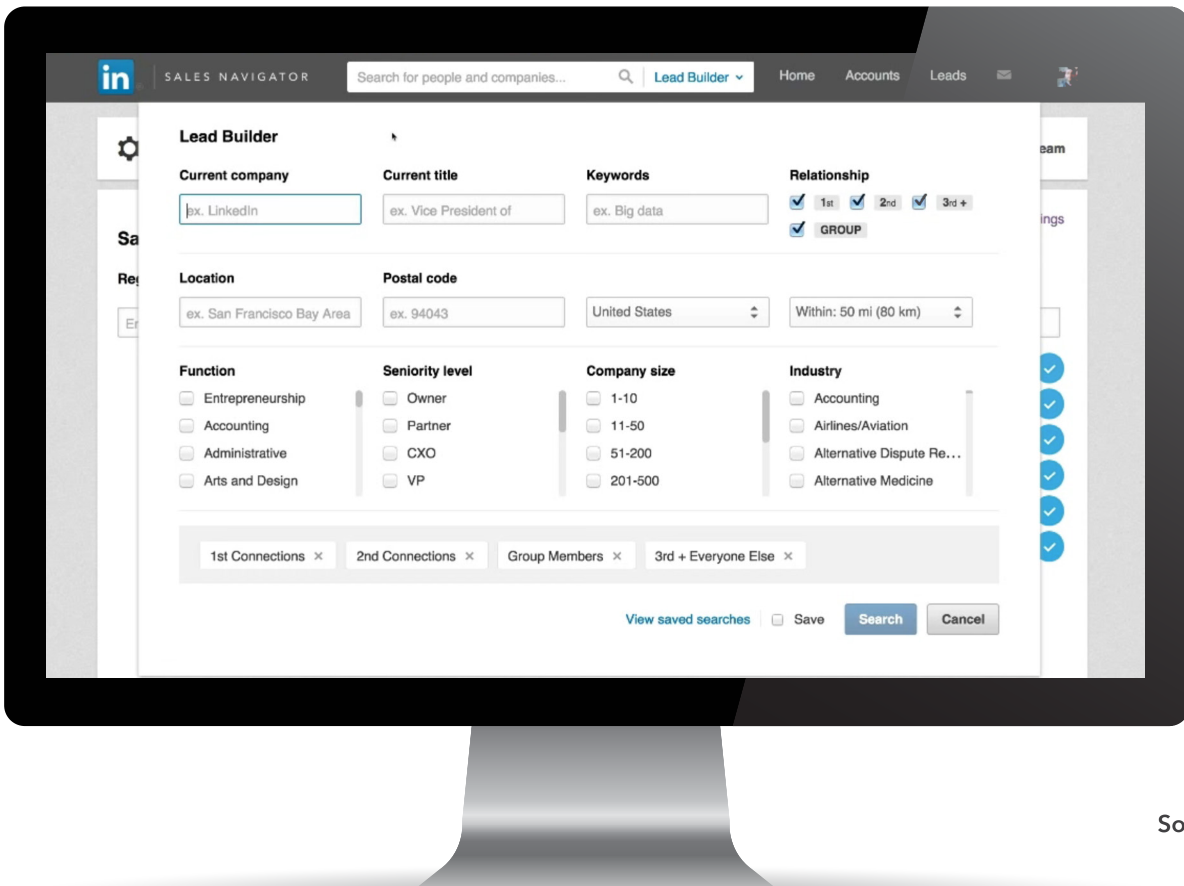


At LinkedIn, we use a simple three-step approach to social selling:

STEP 1

IDENTIFY AND FILTER YOUR TARGETS

Work out the types of individuals who are 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 414 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/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.

CAREER HISTORY

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

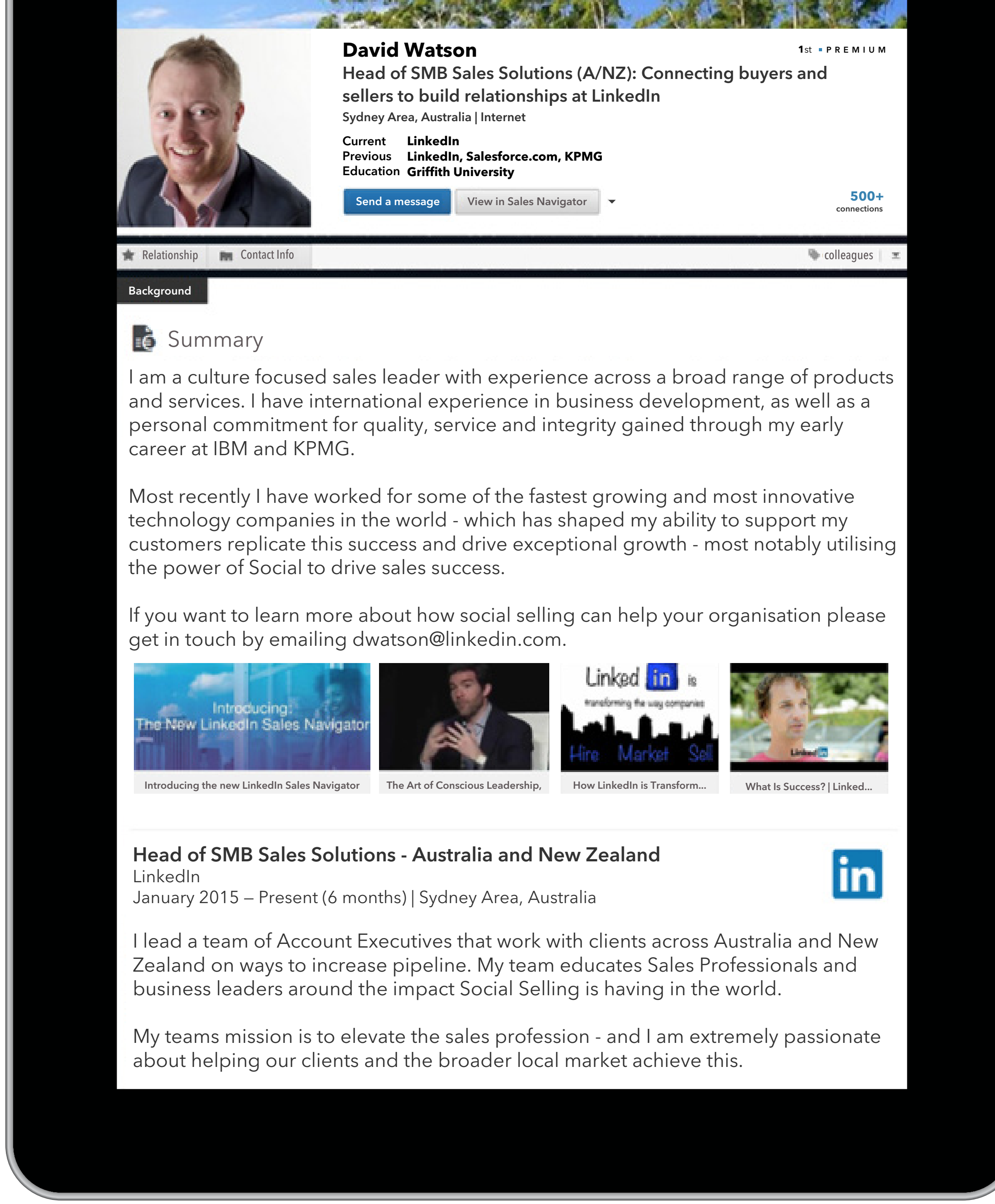
Has the prospect always been in the same discipline or have they switched careers in the past? This can reveal a lot about their appetite for risk and growth.

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

Breaking it Down
Understanding Prospects

What do we know about David from his profile?

From David's language, we quickly realise that his core values include growth and collaboration: his summary focuses on how his experience benefits not only his customers, but also his team members. The roles that he's been in - sales leadership and business development roles - seem to confirm this. His work history, which he mentions in his summary, suggests that he thrives in leading change within larger organisations, particularly in the enterprise technology sector. On a personal note, David's background image implies that he's a fan of the outdoors and travelling around Australia.



Based on this, we could approach David with an interesting article about collaboration in software companies, or perhaps engage him by mentioning a recent hiking trip on the outskirts of Sydney. If pitching, it'd make sense to emphasise the benefits of the solution to both him and his team. We'll discuss all these approaches later in this eBook.

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. 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% higher than an unsolicited approach.

Pro Tip:

Sometimes you may wish to build up greater influence in an organisation 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 organisation who may also be worth approaching.

STEP 2

CREATE A REFERRAL (cont.)

Here are three ideas for social selling via referral:

Use the TeamLink™ function of 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 organisations.

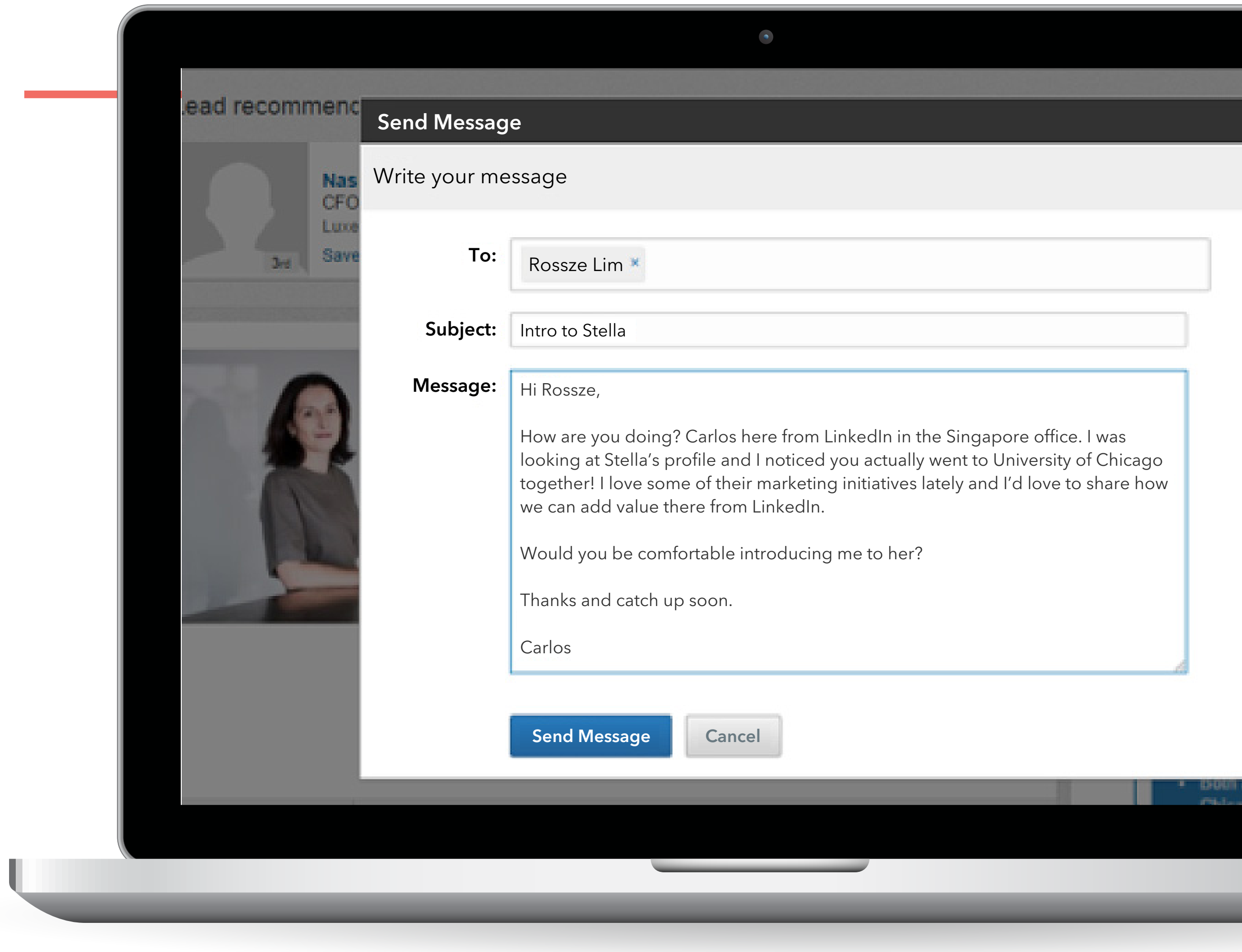
Spend 30 minutes a day reaching out to trusted customers and team members for **referrals and testimonials**. Doing so not only expands your network of prospects rapidly, but also cultivates your existing relationships.

Review your existing customers' connections and groups to find "centres 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).

Breaking it Down

Referrals

Requesting an introduction is the same as asking a favour. In this example, Carlos gets straight to the point about what it is that his colleague Rossze has in common with Stella, the lead. But more importantly, he also states what value he wants to offer Stella, offering something relevant rather than simply saying he wants to sell to her company. Carlos also takes a warm but professional tone. He keeps his sentences short (saving Rossze's time) and writes the same way that he might speak to his colleague in an internal meeting, subtly setting the sort of tone he hopes Rossze will take when introducing him.



STEP 3

MAKE YOUR PITCH

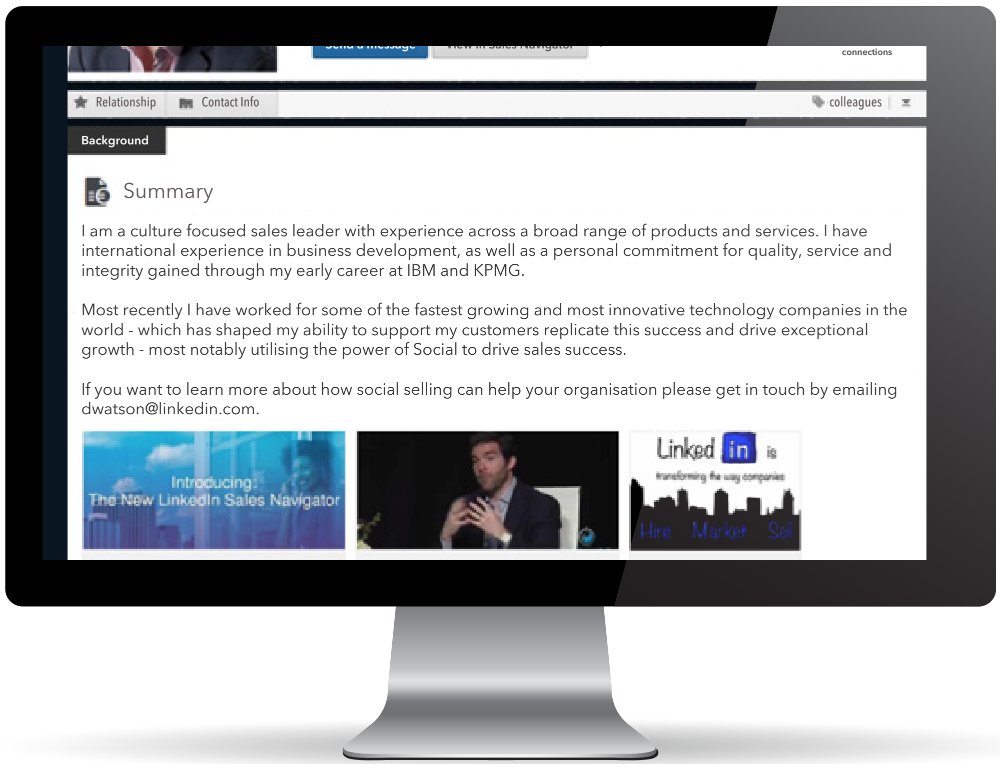
The tone and structure of your "first contact" with a prospect will define the rest of the relationship. This is particularly important when you have to directly approach the prospect without a referral.

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% hit rate when it comes to getting a response from prospects - that's **300% higher than emails** with the exact same content.

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:

1 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 include:

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

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

2 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.[7]

3 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.

[7] http://sales.linkedin.com/blog/sales-strategy-23-facts-about-buyers-and-purchasing/

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.
- **Offer next steps.** This turns the message into something actionable and encourages at least some sort of response to take things further.

Pro Tip:

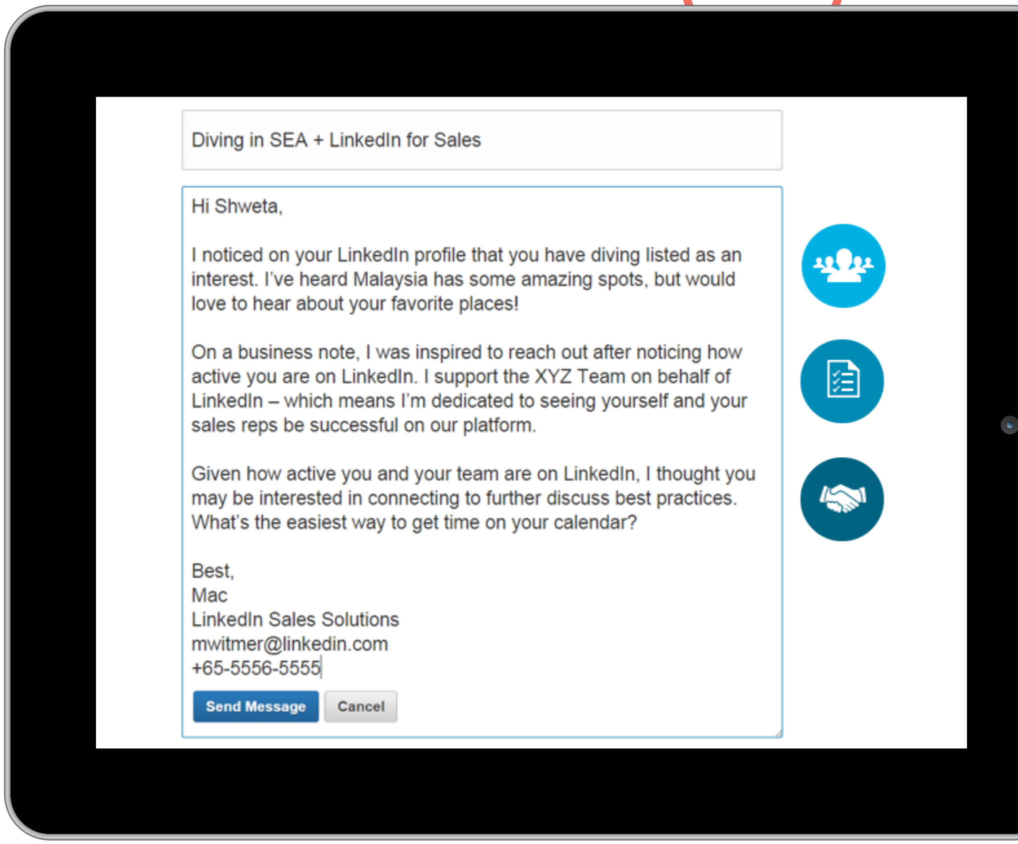
Only follow up at most once after your initial InMail. Remember that your InMail goes to three separate channels – app, LinkedIn inbox, and email. A better solution is to test the waters with other individuals, such as direct reports or peers.

Breaking it Down

InMails

An InMail is more likely to work if you lead with something that the prospect is interested in or passionate about. Notice how Mac puts this first in both the subject line and the paragraph structure of her InMail to Shweta to immediately catch her attention.

It's fine to state openly that you've learnt about this more personal subject matter from the prospect's LinkedIn profile – this is, after all, information they've freely shared in a business context. However, Mac also does a good job of naturally incorporating aspects of Shweta's profile into her opening icebreaker, such as the fact that she lives in Malaysia.



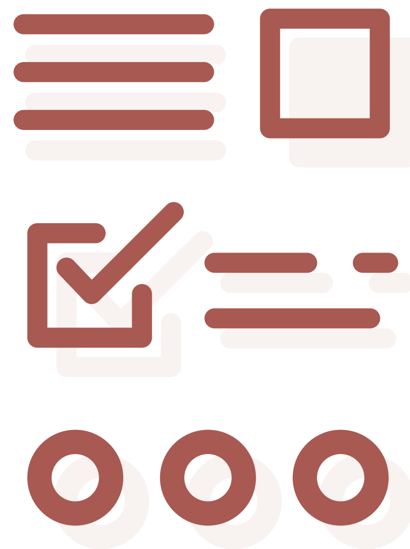
When it comes to the business-end of the InMail, Mac's language is all about her prospect Shweta. Using phrases like "given how active you are" and "dedicated to seeing yourself" can clearly frame the prospect's situation and tie it into the seller's skills or services.

Mac also avoids any language that could be construed as too forceful or sales-y. Rather than assume that she can book time in Shweta's diary, she asks "what's the easiest way" to demonstrate a willingness to accommodate her preferences. Give the prospect as much control over next steps as possible, but do include a specific call to action (in this case, a phone call or meeting).

CONTENT

6 MUST-DO'S FOR ATTRACTING NEW LEADS

"Content marketing is all the marketing that's left," says Seth Godin. For social sellers, content offers a twofold opportunity: 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.



CONTENT

6 MUST-DO'S FOR ATTRACTING NEW LEADS

Leveraging Other People's Content

In the past, trying to uncover potential opportunities (like a change in job role) came largely down to chance: whom you overheard at the water-cooler, or what you 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.[8]

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

Company News
Acquisitions, cutting costs, new strategic direction – any major organisation-level change can mean new opportunities or demands. Use this content as a conversation-starter amongst 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.

[8] http://sales.linkedin.com/blog/sales-strategy-23-facts-about-buyers-and-purchasing/

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 Longform 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 (see next section).

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 then be alerted to updates about that lead, including when they're quoted in the media, when they post a new Longform 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.[9]

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 Longform posts. The second tab on "Who's Viewed My Profile" will show you the profiles of who's Liked or commented on your posts.

[9] http://sales.linkedin.com/blog/sales-strategy-23-facts-about-buyers-and-purchasing/

When it comes to creating your own original posts, use this "Cheat's Guide" to cut through to your potential buyers:

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.

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

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 skeleton or plan will help more philosophical sellers avoid wandering off on tangents.

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.

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.

Be social. Refer to prospects' Twitter handles, link to their Longform 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 analysing your customers' profiles or asking your marketing team for insights.

A DAILY ACTION PLAN FOR SOCIAL SELLING

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

1 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.

2 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.

3 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 no 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.

4 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 & 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 or fortnight – but focus on the quality of comments and original posts rather than simply trying to meet a quota.

About Us

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 414M+ 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.