

Grow Networks and Win Business

A Step-by-Step Guide to Prospecting on LinkedIn



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Introduction

"While we may get real value from LinkedIn, we hover on the outskirts of it, dipping in and out but never really quite knowing what we're supposed to be doing."

I've used LinkedIn for as long as I can remember – it's become second nature. Whenever I meet someone in real life or discover a new interesting business, one of the very first things I do is check them out on LinkedIn.

We all know the bad ways of using LinkedIn: the spammy inbox messages and the strange connection requests that immediately turn into an irrelevant sales pitch. They didn't even bother to check the spelling of your name did they?

Many of us are put off by this experience. While we may get real value from LinkedIn, we hover on the outskirts of it, dipping in and out but never really quite knowing what we're supposed to be doing. We don't take action to use this incredible social selling platform to benefit our own business.



Corinne Thomas

Transforming Purpose-Driven Business with Ethical Sales
MD | Strategist | Entrepreneur | B2B Sales Expert

Greater Bristol Area, United Kingdom · [500+ connections](#) ·

[Contact info](#)

The team and I created this step-by-step guide to show you how to get the most out of LinkedIn organically, without paying for ads or likes.

You'll learn how to create a stand-out profile, post meaningful content, create valuable networks and win more business with the right client or customer who aligns with your business mission.

Good luck, and don't forget to send me a LinkedIn connection request!

Corinne Thomas
Managing Director
Ethical Sales







Step 1: Build Visibility & Nail That Personal Profile



The first step to a successful LinkedIn strategy is having an authentic personal profile that reflects your experience, mission and values.

Before we jump in, it's worth noting that LinkedIn is primarily a B2B platform with 303 million monthly active users. This means the audience is business professionals looking to build B2B relationships or seek job opportunities.

Firstly, we recommend undertaking a thorough profile review, paying particular attention to:

-  **Having a suitable headshot (the circle image). A professional, friendly headshot is absolutely essential. Taking the time to invest in a pro photographer to create some headshots will look even better. (It needs to be 400 x 400 pixels in size.)**
-  **A banner image that represents your business mission or purpose. Call to action messages can also be effective. (It needs to be 1584 x 396 pixels.)**
-  **Creating an eye-catching profile headline. (This doesn't have to be the same as your current role title - see below for some examples.)**
-  **A detailed about section (see below for more guidance on this section).**
-  **Completing the experience section, drawing out key achievements and results as necessary.**
-  **Asking for some recommendations from colleagues, clients or trusted partners.**

Nail that Profile

An accurate and authentic profile page will enable LinkedIn to position your profile in front of the right audience. It also provides an insight into who you are, what your mission is and your strengths as a person.

There are two key elements that we recommend you spend most time on. The first is the profile headline. This is very important as it's the first introduction to a profile when users are searching the platform. Consider using keywords in the headline that clearly represent your specialism or expertise.

Here's a couple of examples of profile headlines and approaches to developing a robust profile to bring this to life a little:

A - A start-up organic smoothie business owner and trained vegan nutritionist. She wants to grow her profile on LinkedIn and reach more suitable large grocery buyers or corporate facilities managers who could be interested in her smoothie packages.

Her profile tagline is: Jenny Maxwell, Creator of Incredible Organic Smoothie Experiences for Home and Workplace | Nutritionist | Vegan

B - The CEO of a well-regarded carbon offsetting app and B Corp is embarking on her corporate launch strategy and needs to raise her profile among senior decision makers with a sustainability agenda.

Her profile tagline is: Amelia Clarke, CEO of Carbon4Good | Helping Business Leaders to Offset their Carbon with Tech | Forbes Tech 100 | B Corp Champion

The second key element is the about section which features high up on the profile page and is highly customisable. With 2,550 characters to play with, there's plenty of space to include paragraphs, websites (there is no hyperlink function but we still recommend featuring a website or link) emojis and media attachments such as a pitch deck.

Spend time crafting this section in your own words so it comes across as authentic and personable. Tell a story. We're not huge fans of referring to yourself in the third person as we think it comes across as a bit remote to whoever is reading it.

“

In a study of over 5,000 businesses, it was found that LinkedIn generated the highest visitor-to-lead conversion rate at 2.74%, almost three times higher (277%) than both Twitter (.69%) and Facebook (.77%).

HUBSPOT MARKETING ARTICLE, JANUARY 2020

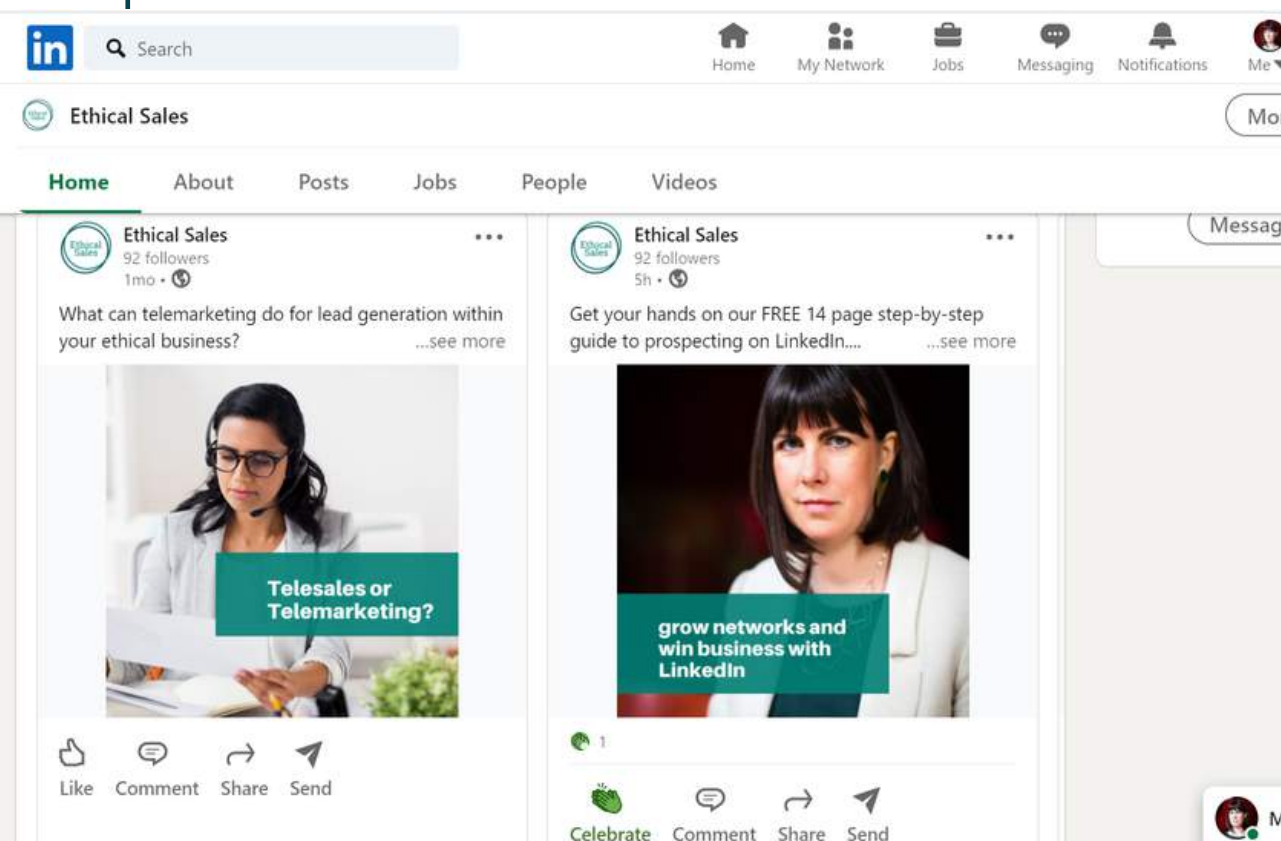
Establishing First Base Connections

The more connections, the greater the reach. This is the premise that LinkedIn is based on and it encourages users to keep adding to their network with new connections.

The best place to start is by adding as many warm contacts as possible, including friends, colleagues, clients and business partners. Go through your email address book! Once this has been exhausted, you can create a strategy to build new connections with suitable prospects who may not know you personally but would still respond favourably to being asked in the right way (more on that later).

Company Page Set Up

We recommend that businesses create a page on LinkedIn and spend some time making this look as professional as possible. Consistency is key with all social selling platforms and as a minimum, we recommend posting several times a week via the Company page, plus keeping all about information regularly updated and refreshed. Think of it a a shop window to your business!



Posting Ideas and Engagement Tips

“Done is better than perfect” should be the mantra of all entrepreneurs, marketers and sales leaders out there who want to start social selling. All the most successful social sellers have one key attribute in common: consistency of engagement.

Creating a regular stream of fresh content can first appear daunting but practice makes (almost) perfect. By trying new ways of posting and experimenting you’ll be able to gather valuable data on engagement levels.

So, what to post? We recommend you start by posting two to five times a week. The most popular times on the platform are Tues-Thurs from 8am-2pm. Here’s a quick rundown of the types of posts that are suitable for LinkedIn. They’re listed from the highest to the lowest organic reach potential, so you know which posts have a better chance of being seen by your connections and followers thanks to the ever-changing LinkedIn algorithm:



Text post: tell a story, facilitate a debate, dispel a myth linked to your area of expertise, write some positive encouragement, motivational or inspirational content.



Native video post: top tips, insight into a product or service, personal update or success story, launch announcement (such as a course, free webinar or masterclass), short interview with a partner. Try and include a ‘hook’ or reason to keep watching in the first few seconds of the video. Uploading a video directly to LinkedIn gives the best chance of it being seen rather than including a link to an external platform such as YouTube or Vimeo.



Photo post: ideally with text as well.

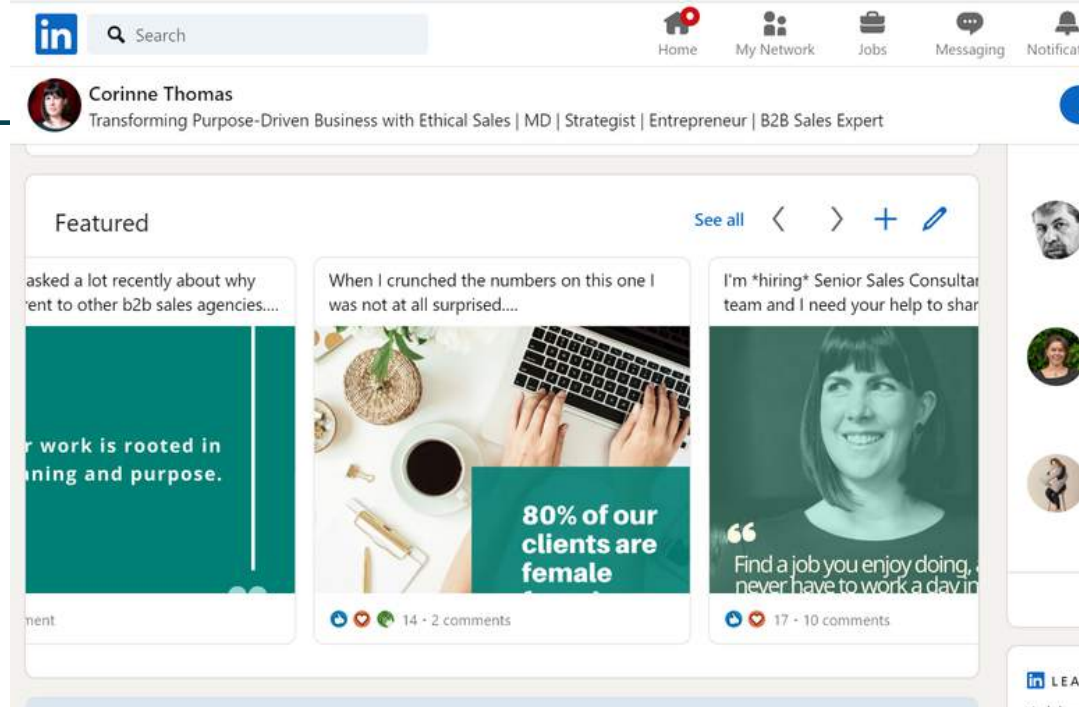


External link: to an interesting news article, piece of PR, blog post.



LinkedIn article: text posts now have a max character count of 1300 and so long form content beyond this should go in a LinkedIn article or external blog post.

Be sure to use some relevant #hashtags at the bottom of your posts to help the LinkedIn community discover them more easily.



Contribution, Value and Reciprocity

As well as posting useful content that provides something of value for the audience, it's very important to also engage with and comment on posts. Always respond to a comment on one of your posts – if someone has taken the time to read and comment they deserve a reply!

If you're struggling to come up with ideas of what to post, consider going out to your client base or community and asking them via a survey, then basing your content strategy around their preferences or ideas.

The ultimate goal here is to start developing a relationship with your audience that's based on trust, credibility and a belief in what you have to offer.

“

An analysis of more than 3,000 LinkedIn posts showed that long-form content performed the best on the platform.

HOW TO POST ON LINKEDIN: 10 TIPS FROM ANALYZING 3000 POSTS, OKDORK, MARCH 2020

Step 2: Connecting With Your Ideal Prospect



Now that you're comfortable with engaging and posting regularly on LinkedIn and you have an excellent profile (which is getting more visits!), you can move onto the second stage – start reaching out to your ideal prospect.

At this point we recommend you take this off LinkedIn and start by deciding which audience, sector, vertical market or persona you're hoping to connect with and what your sales goal is.

Here's a couple of examples:

As the Sales Director of a new talent management SaaS, your sales goal is to connect with a range of HR & talent leaders at FTSE 250 sized companies in the insurance sector and book one to four meetings a month to discuss their interest further.

Or, as a transformational life coach, your goal might be to reach out and engage with 20 professional women a month who fit with the profile of your ideal client and book a 30 min discovery call with at least one of them a month.

Once this goal is set, you can start researching on LinkedIn to discover some prospects who fit with your agreed criteria. We recommend you build a list offline so you can track progress. An Excel spreadsheet or Google sheet is fine for this purpose.

The search function on LinkedIn works well with a key word approach and you can also follow certain #hashtags to get inspiration and a useful flow of content to your news feed.

How to Start the Conversation to Unlock Opportunities

This is the tricky bit. But there are a range of approaches that we know work well, and you can try them out to see which works best for you.

The first is 'engage first and connect second'. Go to a person's profile page and click the 'follow' button - you'll then start to see some of their posts and activity in your own news feed. By starting to comment and engage on their activity you'll become a familiar face and they're more likely to then respond to a friendly connection request.

Another approach is to directly ask to connect with a note, but the most important strategy here is to have a genuine reason for connecting, which is not a sales pitch! Some good reasons could be: you've seen them in a recent news article or list of successful entrepreneurs, you recently read or listened to an interview, you liked their latest blog post or you love the product or service they're offering and you wanted to tell them that.

Build Relationships and Stay Focused

Over time, the connections that have been made will start to feel like relationships are being built. Not with every connection, as it doesn't work like that in real life, but you may find you feel more of a synergy with certain prospects, and after more research into their business or profile you know that they fit your criteria of an ideal client for your product or service.

By staying focused on engaging, connecting and presenting useful content those opportunities will start to appear and you'll be able to act on them.



**What are your
LinkedIn
challenges?**

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B2B marketers report that 80% of their social media leads come from LinkedIn

THE SOPHISTICATED MARKETER'S GUIDE TO LINKEDIN, MAY 2017

Making the Ask or They Find You!

You'll know when it's the right time to ask for a meeting, discovery call or to pitch your product or service to your prospect.

Be prepared for some rejection as this is inevitable. You'll probably be surprised by how many affirmatives you get, however, if you've put in the hard work and followed through with our recommended steps.

The reason why this social selling approach is so effective is simple – your prospects will start to feel like they already know you, they trust you because you've provided them with useful, engaging, content, your profile is impressive and they're likely to be interested in what you have to offer because you've specifically targeted them as an ideal customer.

Be clear and direct when making the ask – don't ask for them to complete a survey if you really want a sales call.

Not every approach will result in a meeting or introductory call but the more you reach out and engage, the higher the likelihood of success.



Corinne Thomas

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Below is an example of a real LinkedIn DM we sent to a prospect, after engaging with them on LinkedIn for a few weeks prior to sending this message. We sent it when we knew their latest crowdfunding round had ended which meant they might be looking for some scale-up support.

Message

Hi X

I hope you are having a good start to February?

I've been following X for a while now and I'm so inspired by what you are doing as a change-maker in the X industry.

I work with fast growth natural, organic and green businesses to help them scale their sales. Our B2B Sales Campaigns help our clients to reach their target market and make sales or generate qualified leads with our proven telephone based methods.

We tend to find clients want to work with us when they are building their teams and need some urgent support on the sales side so they do not lose momentum. Our consultants are highly qualified sales professionals with a background in B2B sales and account management.

Would you be interested in having a call with me in the next few weeks to discuss further?

Kind regards

Response

Hi X

Thanks a lot for reaching out. We haven't started exploring B2B options as yet but I would be interested to discuss the possibilities.

I am free next Friday if that works?

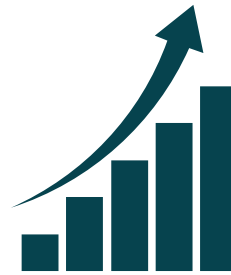
Thanks

X

Outcome: We secured a Zoom meeting with this prospect and sent a proposal with an agreed plan to start a B2B pilot lead generation campaign later this summer.

Another really exciting outcome of this strategy is that your prospects will start to approach you and ask for a meeting or a question about what you offer. This is a sign that what you're doing is really working from a sales perspective!

Using LinkedIn: Top Ten Tips to Grow Your Networks & Win Business



- 1. Join relevant groups. You can then direct message anyone in that group even if they're not a connection yet – just make sure you're offering something relevant and of value in that message and refer to the group you're both members of.**
- 2. Use your existing networks to get to a second or third base connection for a friendly/warmer introduction.**
- 3. Always send a friendly welcome message to new connections who ask to connect with you or vice versa within a day of connecting.**
- 4. Spend a consistent amount of time on LinkedIn with purpose. Around 30 minutes a day is fine but focus on engagement in that time.**
- 5. Experiment with posts and approaches. Be creative and take note of what works and what got tumbleweed!**
- 6. Tag people (using the @ tool) who are genuinely relevant to your post. This will help to increase engagement, but use this tactically and wisely.**
- 7. Remember: conversation and engagement first, pitching and sales second.**
- 8. Direct messages are not email. Think WhatsApp – short and punchy messages that get to the point quickly.**
- 9. No inbox spamming or round robin messages – they don't work!**
- 10. Don't be tempted to use automation tools such as sending DMs or engagement on posts via a 'bot'. LinkedIn will most likely suspend your account and also it's simply unethical practice that doesn't generate results.**

Conclusion – Strategic Social Selling for Sales Success

The steps we've outlined in this guide may feel time-consuming and daunting, but applying these steps will help you get more from LinkedIn. The most important thing to remember is that any activity on the platform needs to feel enjoyable, as the more connected and valuable the engagement you can have, the more results you'll benefit from.

Any b2b sales activity done in isolation is not going to be as effective as one that ties into an overall sales plan. We recommend that a LinkedIn prospecting campaign be planned in conjunction with a telesales or telemarketing approach, a marketing content strategy (such as blogging, webinars, guides etc) and a visibility plan, such as speaking on regular podcasts.

If you'd like to discuss how we can support your b2b sales strategy and approach then please don't hesitate to [contact us for a 30 minute discovery call](#).

We hope this guide has been useful and we'd love to hear your feedback on how you get on with your first LinkedIn prospecting campaign!



Further reading on LinkedIn Strategies:

[Is LinkedIn Organic Reach Dead? – What Still Works in 2021](#)

[How to Increase Your LinkedIn Engagement: 4 Tips](#)

[HubSpot's The Best Time to Post on LinkedIn in 2021](#)

[The Complete Guide to Using LinkedIn Hashtags](#)

[7 LinkedIn Messages You Should Never Send](#)



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YOU CAN FOCUS ON CHANGING THE
WORLD, ONE CUSTOMER AT A TIME.**

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Do you need to improve your sales pipeline, enter new markets or secure valuable partners while staying true to your ethical values?

We are b2b sales specialists for purpose-driven business. We're proud to be the world's first 'ethical' sales agency and work exclusively with purpose-driven businesses all over the globe. A pending B Corp, we aim to demystify sales by sharing free sales resources and best practice examples from the natural, organic and green market sectors.

We can help you to:

- Grow your customer base with bespoke and targeted sales campaigns.
- Set growth goals and create practical sales roadmaps that work.
- Gain insight and support at Sales Director-level when you need it most.

Get in touch:
hello@ethical-sales.co.uk
T: 0117 300 5418
www.ethical-sales.co.uk