



# **GET** CONNECTED!

*Generating new business,  
the new way*

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Power of Relationships

We spend our days managing our time, our money, our employees, and even ourselves. But how often do we remember to manage our relationships?

Relationships, like shares or property, are valuable assets. When mismanaged, or simply left to their own devices, they fall apart the moment we need to lean on them. But when relationships are carefully managed, they bring growth and prosperity.

In any business, developing a system for forming, nurturing, and sustaining relationships with prospects, business partners, and clients is essential.

But as our world changes, the nature of business relationships is changing too. Learning to harness new practices will allow you to build, refine and scale your business quickly. Relying on relationship-building techniques developed even five or ten years ago (let alone twenty or thirty or fifty) to connect with new customers will get you only one thing: left behind.

### REDEFINING RELATIONSHIPS

The digital economy has changed the way we communicate, especially with potential customers. Sophisticated digital platforms and social marketing have made it easier than ever to identify potential customers, contact them, earn their trust, build a relationship, establish yourself as a leader in your space, and ask for a face-to-face meeting. But because we don't understand how to leverage these platforms and tactics for success, many of us still struggle to find new customers, new revenue, increase sales and grow our businesses.

Who can blame us? Learning new and unfamiliar practices can be intimidating. Doing what's always worked before is comforting—we already know how to do it, authorities have approved it, and even when it doesn't work, we can reassure ourselves that we've tried our best and "the market is just against us."

Unfortunately, what worked reasonably well just five years ago is woefully outdated and inadequate today. Sticking with old school techniques means leaving money on the table. It also means your competition eating your lunch when they figure out the new techniques before you, and establishing themselves as trusted industry leaders while you're still making cold calls or hanging out at networking events.

Let's look at the difference between sticking with old-fashioned practices and learning current ones with a pair of business stories.

### GENERATING NEW BUSINESS...THE OLD WAY

After years of working for a big corporate law firm, Sue left and started her own boutique practice. She was confident that a number of her clients would make the

move across to her new firm. Unfortunately for Sue, the client loyalties to the old firm were stronger than their loyalties to Sue. Not to mention that some had to adhere to their company's panel arrangements and were precluded from using her as a result.

So Sue begins hustling every day to find new clients. She's doing all the stuff that's always worked: networking meetings, coffees, lunches, requests for introductions, chamber of commerce meetings, handing out business cards, even spending two days a week cold calling. She's out in the market. But the results are coming way too slow.

After several months of sixty-hour work weeks, Sue has picked up a handful of clients. But now she's finding that as the demands of her paying clients grow, she has less time for prospecting and networking. And the few coffee meetings and lunches she still has time for don't seem to be yielding any new clients. Most of these meetings end with Sue and her new business connection agreeing to "keep in touch," but never actually connecting again.

By now, Sue is really tired. She thinks to herself, "There must be a better way." She realizes it's going to take a methodical commitment, and some sort of organized system or process, to stay in touch with these contacts and develop an ongoing business relationship with them. But she only has so much time for coffee and lunch meetings, which already take too much time and just aren't scalable.

Thinking about the future of her business, both short and long term, Sue begins to realize that servicing an existing client list and also making time to prospect for new business is impossible for her small firm. Sadly, she considers folding her new venture and going back to work for a BigLaw.

Her story is all too common. She grew up in an era where old school business development techniques were handed down and passed on – and change was seen as “risky” or too “sales-y”. But the world is changing, and while Sue knows on some level she needs to change with it, she's just not sure how.

#### GENERATING NEW BUSINESS...IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Now let's look at a very different approach. Examine the story below and consider how a novel strategy makes all the difference.

Rob had a long career working for in management consulting, for boutique consulting firms and in “big Four” firms. He knew that his skills were in demand, and that there was no shortage of companies that needed help. So he decided to set up his own consulting business.

Prior to striking out on his own, Rob spent several years following the growing importance of digital media and social marketing. He knew that the right way to grow his business was not by attending networking events, going to chamber breakfasts, meeting potential clients for coffee, and handing out business cards to

everybody he meets. Rob knew he could spend that same time much more effectively.

So Rob set up his new firm's sales practices to leverage the new paradigm for generating leads and building a scalable business. Rob knew that it was absolutely possible to design a system to bridge online with offline activities, so that he could systematically build relationships with thousands of potential clients in a short amount of time. Rob was certain that he could take the old school principles of networking and referrals, combine them with all of these new online tools and platforms, and create a powerful formula for generating leads consistently.

Within just a few months, Rob had built an online networking and lead generation machine that was reaching an audience of targeted prospects fifteen times larger than his more old fashioned competitors could reach. On top of that, the system allowed him to establish himself as a trusted resource and keep his name in front of these prospects on a regular basis, in a personal one-to-one manner. Rob now has a steady stream of new clients approaching him to discuss business and an outbound marketing effort that produces new opportunities every day. Now his biggest problem is hiring enough employees to handle all the business.

What these two parables illustrate is that face-to-face, in-person networking and relationship building takes a tremendous amount of time and effort. Every minute you spend driving to a coffee meeting and making small talk is time away from running and managing your business. And if that meeting doesn't result in a new paying client, it's essentially wasted time. The process is inefficient. You have to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy to reach a small number of potential clients.

Not only that, prospecting the old-fashioned way, in person or via cold calling, simply doesn't scale. It's impossible to go for coffee with a thousand prospects in a year. It's nearly impossible to go for coffee with a couple hundred, unless that's your only responsibility.

But when you leverage the power of the Internet, you find possibilities today that never existed before. Smart companies are using large, existing digital platforms to get their message out to thousands of potential customers all at the same time. Try doing that at Starbucks.

The only hurdle is that these technologies are new. Implementing them means learning specialized techniques you've never used before. But this is actually an advantage, because by reading this book and putting the plan into action, you will be getting a big jump on your competitors.

## WHAT THIS BOOK WILL TEACH YOU

This book will show you how to systematically develop relationships with thousands of cold prospects, converting them into warm leads over time, all done utilizing online

tools you already have at your disposal. I'll teach you how to do this in a way that's easily scalable, primarily using LinkedIn.

You'll have more leads, better leads, more referrals, and you won't churn through prospects as fast. You'll be able to proactively pluck out the very best prospects and market to them in a specific way that culminates in a request for a phone call or a meeting, so that all you'll need to do is bring them into your sales process and close the sale. And once this system is in place and functioning, your marketing machine will be continually running in the background, so you'll finally be able to step off that roller coaster of constantly chasing the next sale.

This is not a book about social media. It is not a marketing textbook. It's a recipe for finding new customers and winning their business in the digital age.

#### WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS SYSTEM?

This book is for business owners, professionals, marketers and sales people in B2B companies or firms. If you sell to other businesses, especially high-ticket services, then this book is for you. It doesn't matter what industry you're in; the tactics in this book are universal. For example, consulting services, enterprise software, design and construction, manufacturing, information products, law firms, accountants, IT services, and many other industries have expensive products that require trust and a relationship to sell. Customers don't need a relationship with you to buy a \$5 product, or to hire a graphic artist for \$300 to design a one-off brochure, but they sure do need to know you if they're going to hire you to run their next merger transaction, their high risk litigation, or their million-dollar monthly payroll.

Another important requirement is that your target customers must be companies or people that you can identify on LinkedIn. Although more and more businesses of all types are building an online presence, some industries simply aren't there yet. But if you can find them online, especially on LinkedIn, then this system will work for you.

#### YOU CAN DO THIS

If you're like most business people these days, you have more than a little trepidation about boldly entering the digital/social marketplace. Terms like "hashtag", "blog" and "clickbait" may make you start sweating. But don't panic. By the time you're finished with this book you'll be ready to run a lead generation system like a regular online marketer. You'll understand it. You'll know how to use it. And soon you'll be on your way to generating hundreds of new leads to help take your business to a whole new level.

Let's get started.



## CAVEMAN PSYCHOLOGY

Why do you almost always reject a sales call from a complete stranger? Why does cold calling yield such low results? What makes a prospect trust or mistrust you? And what's the best way to make sure they choose to trust you? The answers to these questions lie in millions of years of human evolution.

### **Evolutionary Psychology**

There is a well-established branch of the social and natural sciences called evolutionary psychology. According to evolutionary psychologists, the brains of modern humans operate essentially the same way today as they did in the days of the caveman.

The brain evolves, but it evolves slowly. So while the modern human brain is very different than the brain of a Homo Erectus on the African savannah one million years ago, it likely isn't so different from the brain of the early Homo Sapiens. Although our brains were similar, our lives couldn't be more different. Early Homo Sapiens spent their days running around with spears hunting mammoths, hiding from sabre-toothed tigers, and clashing with other hostile clans. Survival in that prehistoric world depended in large part on how well individuals learned to evade danger, find food and shelter, work together and avoid hostile tribes. As our ancestors faced social and survival problems, they developed ways to adapt. Evolutionary psychology shows that these thousands of years of learned behaviour eventually became ingrained as instinct—what we commonly refer to as "human nature."

Today, we don't need to sit down and puzzle out how to respond to many situations. Our instincts respond for us. And that doesn't just happen in fight-or-flight instances of fear or anxiety. Here's an example of how it shows up in a regular business scenario.

According to Harvard Ph.D. and behavioural scientist Dr Samuel Bowles, as a consequence of tribal warfare, humans evolved to be more cooperative with members of their own tribe, and more hostile to members of unknown tribes.

So when a copier salesperson cold calls a purchasing manager whom he has never met, is it any surprise that the purchasing manager won't return the call? The salesperson is not in the purchasing manager's tribe—they don't work together, they don't know each other, so human nature warns the purchasing manager to be suspicious and not respond. Trying to set up a sales meeting with a cold prospect you've never met is difficult because you are literally trying to bypass thousands of years of ingrained human behaviour.

So what's the solution?

Instead of working against human nature, learn to work with it. You'll see how the most effective way to turn cold prospects into warm leads is to gradually entice them to join your clan.

We'll talk more about how to do all this in a moment. First, let's look at why these switches work so well.

### **The Power Of Familiarity**

Humans are naturally wary of strangers. If a person we have never seen before approaches us on the street, we instantly put our guard up. However, if someone approaches who we've seen many times walking her dog around the neighbourhood, our natural instinct will be to greet her with a smile, even if we've never met. Social psychologist Dr Elliot Aronson writes in *The Social Animal*, "All other things being equal, the more familiar an item is, the more attractive it is. People prefer faces they've seen ten times to equally attractive faces they've seen only five times."

In other words, the more often people see something, the more comfortable they are with it simply because they've seen it before.

Why is this? Largely because of what's known as priming.

Priming works like this: When someone is exposed to a message repeatedly, they naturally start to believe and trust it. The higher the exposure, the deeper the trust.

The multi-billion dollar advertising industry is based on this very principle of priming. Aronson writes, "In the case of many consumer products, the public tends to buy a specific brand for no other reason than the fact that it is heavily advertised."

### **Words Matter**

Priming is not complicated. Many studies have shown that simply being primed with certain types of words can lead to a distinct change in behaviour. A study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* showed how priming with different types of words elicits different behaviours.

In this study, one group of students was primed with negative words, including: rude, bother, disturb, intrude, annoyingly, interrupt, audaciously, brazen, impolitely, infringe, obnoxious, aggravating, and bluntly. A second group of students was primed with positive words: respect, honour, considerate, appreciate, patiently, cordially, polite, courteous, graciously, sensitively, behaved, and unobtrusively. Then, still part of the experiment, each student was asked to go out into the hallway and fetch the professor, who was engaged in an important conversation with another colleague. The students primed with negative words were far more likely to rudely interrupt the professor's conversation.



This study and others like it show how vital it is to consider the types of words you use—especially with potential customers. Whether you're considering ad copy or personal messages to prospects, you want to use positive words. Words like success, win, celebrate, affordable, profit, future, happy, prosperity, affluence, and wealth will serve you and your clients much better than words like/ail, lose, disappear, shrink, competition, expensive, and losses.

When you use these words is also important. Upbeat words and optimistic communications trigger positive emotions in the brain, which will cause your prospects to associate you with feeling good.

So to get that association going as soon as possible, start using positive words from the get-go. Open the relationship by communicating something positive or even inspirational. It can be as simple as, "Hey, thanks for connecting here. I'm impressed by what your company has accomplished."

Now what about the idea that the strongest marketing strategies play on the desire to avoid losing something? Oftentimes the promise of helping your client not lose what they already have can be more effective than the promise of future gains. But it is possible (and preferable) to couch this technique in positive language! If you constantly tell your potential clients that they are about to lose something, they'll start tuning you out, so make sure you stay positive even when talking about loss avoidance.

In addition to using positive language, make an effort to share positive content as well. Here's an example of how that works:

A marketing agency we work with has a client who owns a manufacturing company that sells equipment to the mining industry. There are a lot of negative topics and sad news in the mining industry—mining accidents, lawsuits, environmental controversies, protesters, negative publicity and news reports, and so on. If they were to focus on those negative headlines in the communications they write for this client, their readers and customers would get depressed about the shape of the mining industry. Worse, they'd associate the company giving them mining news—their client—with their own feelings of depression, and probably not support or buy from that company. Their client would be sunk!

So instead, when they write this client's communications they try to find a great success story, or talk about rising ore prices, or favourable legislation, or charitable donations to local communities. There is always good news, even if you have to look hard to find it, and focusing on that good news will help your potential customers associate you (the source of the good news) with the good feelings they get reading it.

## **Set Yourself Up As A Leader**

It's not enough to simply "prime the pump." To really get the best results, your prospects need to view you as a leader in your space. Why is that? To break it down to the core, let's take a look at another Harvard University study. In this study, a lecturer presented a speech to two different groups of students about the importance of arithmetic. To one group, the presenter was introduced as an award-winning scholar from a prestigious research university. To the other group, the presenter was introduced as a dishwasher in a restaurant. As you might imagine, the students responded much more strongly to the "professor" than to the "dishwasher."

So if your prospects see you as the dishwasher, you're facing an uphill battle to convince them to do anything. You have to establish yourself as an expert or an authority in the field. Luckily, there are some relatively simple steps you can take to position yourself and your business as real leaders in your industry. We'll cover these steps in a later chapter.

### **Earn Their Trust By Not Selling To Them**

Relationships are all about trust. If you want people to trust you, you have to keep them from thinking that you're just another salesperson trying to separate them from their money. So the best way to prime somebody for a sales conversation is not what most salespeople typically do; that is, telling them all about your company and your products or services.

So if you shouldn't talk about your company and your products or services, what should you talk about?

Easy: Talk about them. If you know their business well, give them information pertinent to that business. If you don't know their business well, ask them about it! People love talking about their businesses. Explore their needs and desires with them, and use your expertise to share ways to meet those needs. Sales will come later—right now your job is to earn their trust, and the way to do that is to give them everything you can without asking for anything back. Their instinct will be to look for the spoiler behind your words, so flip the script and don't have one for them to find.

Now that you have a beginning understanding of human nature and why it works the way it does, we're going to look at the specifics of how to achieve the objectives we discussed in this chapter. In the coming chapters we'll explain exactly how to use tools like LinkedIn groups and strategic messaging campaigns to turn cold prospects into warm leads, establish trust upfront, and place yourself as a leader in your industry. We'll also explore some examples, case studies, and success stories that demonstrate the power of this process. Let's dive in.

## THE PROBLEMS WITH OLD SCHOOL MARKETING

Just fifteen years ago, marketing and business development were much different than they are today. The Internet hadn't yet developed into its current state, and the ability to connect with a massive audience of targeted prospects was available only to major corporations with huge marketing budgets.

Today, marketing, selling, and the internet could not be more closely intertwined. These days, even a solopreneur on a tight budget can leverage online tools to reach an audience of international clients.

But what even is marketing now? The game has changed so much that definitions from even a few years ago don't fit anymore. For instance, Wikipedia defines marketing as:

"The process of communicating the value of a product or service to customers, for the purpose of selling that product or service."

That definition is outdated. If you're a B2B company and your marketing is solely focused on communicating the value of your product or service, you are missing a key part of the equation. Marketing in the digital age requires a different strategy.

We now have widespread mainstream digital platforms that allow you to put your marketing message in front of exactly the right people. But here's the catch: If you use that technology simply to tell people about the value of your product or service, you'll get an extremely low response rate. People will tune you out. Even the right people are so saturated with that kind of marketing that they won't even look twice at yours. No, the true power of technology in marketing is relationship building.

Remember the objectives from the last chapter? Instead of just trying to sell products, if you use these tools to first build an online relationship, then establish trust and position yourself as a leader, you will almost never have a cold call in your life.

Still, the old-school marketer might argue, "Who has time to do all that networking with even a few hundred prospects, let alone several thousand?" And that's a valid question.

You remember Sue and her shiny new law firm from the introduction of this book. Doing things the old-fashioned way, well, it just wasn't cutting it. Sue's been trying the relationship-building route by networking and meeting prospects over coffee. Her interactions with people feel genuine, but she can already see that the numbers just don't add up. There is a limit to how many coffee meetings she can schedule, and it's not very many. And most of her meetings don't result in new clients anyway. Her work doesn't scale. What Sue (and other old-school marketers) is missing is a systematic approach for combining both the social and psychological principles that turn prospects into customers and the new online tools that can reach tens of thousands of potential prospects.

Integrating these two seemingly-different approaches is known as Systematic Relationship Marketing. It is this process of using these new online tools, combined with classic social and psychological principles, which turns cold prospects into warm leads. It works like magic. So why are so few people doing it?

### **Old Habits Die Hard**

You'd be hard-pressed to find a legitimate company that's not doing something to promote their products or services online. The Internet is arguably the most powerful business tool since the invention of the telephone. But sadly, most companies aren't using it effectively, so they simply aren't getting the results they want or expect. Why is that?

In an article titled "The Power of the Internet," marketing guru and blogger Jason Thibeault wrote that the power of the Internet is that it enables the average person to have a voice that can be heard by thousands. In other words, the Internet gives everybody a megaphone. And when you have a megaphone, you want to start shouting things through it.

Most business people will consider two options for their Internet Megaphone Shouting Campaign:

1. The kind of marketing and advertising they've been exposed to all their life. "It's worked so far, right? Why fix what isn't broken?"
2. The kind of marketing and advertising they're currently seeing on the Internet. "Everyone else is doing it, so we should too!"

More times than not, the marketing and advertising we are accustomed to, online and offline, is interruption marketing. Interruption marketing is exactly what it sounds like: marketing designed to interrupt whatever you're doing, grab your attention and direct it toward a product. This includes banner ads, pop-ups, radio commercials, Google ads, magazine ads, billboards, telemarketers, trade show booths, Facebook posts, television commercials, and on and on.

Our brains associate these types of communications with advertising and marketing—we know instantly they are trying to sell us something. We're very accustomed to the constant bombardment of commercials, billboards, and Internet ads. So when we think about how to promote our businesses, our brains automatically jump to interruption marketing because we've seen so much of it already. Remember from the last chapter: our belief and trust in something is hugely influenced by how often we've already seen it.

Unfortunately, interruption marketing is an old-school marketing tactic that frankly doesn't work very well anymore—if it ever really did. Imagine someone following you around with a megaphone and interrupting you with product pitches every two minutes. You'd tune them out (or smash the megaphone!) pretty darn quick. And

that's exactly what potential customers do online—they tune out the ads or block them entirely.

But because your brain has seen these interrupting ads so many times, it assumes they must work. So you think, "If only I can come up with the right message and copy for my new ad, people will see how great we are and will be beating our door down to hire us." And when that fails, you think that Internet marketing just doesn't work for your business.

Internet marketing isn't the problem. The problem is that your approach is based on old beliefs and outdated ways of doing things. Buying ads for the sake of buying ads will not get you the results you want.

Instead, we all need to change our approach to how to interact with prospects. The next chapter will begin to show you how.

## THE NEW MARKETING BLUEPRINT

Through modern digital platforms like LinkedIn, any marketing professional or business owner can have their voice heard by literally thousands of people. The key to Internet marketing success is to know what to say, how often to say it, and where to say it.

The program described in this book will revolutionize your B2B marketing efforts by helping you develop more warm leads than you imagined possible. This system will walk you through the steps to do the following:

1. Identify prospects
2. Create a community to appeal to those prospects
3. Reach out to them in a strategic way
4. Bring them into your network
5. Develop a relationship with them
6. Establish yourself as a leader they can trust
7. Keep your name in front of them on an ongoing basis in a way that creates value and comfort for them
8. Gradually work them through a messaging process that culminates in a call to action (CTA)

By following the steps of this system, you will guarantee a much higher response rate to your CTA's than typical or old school marketing tactics could get.

Here's why this system works so well:

Instead of targeting just a few dozen potential clients through face-to-face networking and in-person meetings, our system allows you to target and reach literally thousands of potential clients. It's almost infinitely scalable, and it works continuously to provide a constant stream of new prospects, so your sales pipeline won't dry up when you get busy.

### **It's Not One Or The Other, It's Both**

One important note here: once you start using this system to harness the marketing potential of the Internet, you don't then have to abandon everything else. Face-to-face networking and in-person meetings still have tremendous value and will always play a part in your marketing strategy. You just won't have to rely only on those things anymore! Instead, with this system you'll limit your face-to-face meetings to bona fide warm leads with whom you've already established trust. So when it comes to online vs. offline marketing and prospecting, it's not a case of doing one or the other; you'll do both. You'll just do them better and scale them bigger.



## **But I'm Not Tech Savvy!**

As noted above, technology has advanced and progressed freaky fast. Learning how to work with it can be like learning a whole new language. As a result, a lot of people, especially executives and businesspeople with decades of experience in traditional marketing, tend to feel intimidated by or skeptical of this new type of tech-central, Internet-heavy social marketing at first. You may be one of those people. The idea of taking so much of your marketing online might have you shaking in your shoes. You may not know where to start—or even if you want to.

That's okay. Really. We get that this can seem overwhelming, and so this system is designed to be simple and user-friendly. With a little time and focus, you can learn everything you need to feel completely comfortable with the system. You don't need any technical expertise, social media know-how, or above-average computer skills. All you need is the desire to do it and this book to show you how.

We'll start digging into the step-by-step process in the next chapter. But first, check out the case study below. The results you'll see in it are not a fluke. Many businesses easily achieve comparable sales results by learning this system, and yours can too!

### **CASE STUDY: U.S. Spray Foam**

U.S. Spray Foam is a nationwide supplier of spray foam equipment. Their primary business is renting professional spray foam gear to contractors and homeowners, as well as providing training. Historically, most of their business has come through their website via Google traffic. Looking to grow and take a more proactive approach to developing new business, they asked the question, "Where can we find and reach our best prospects, and how can we go about targeting them to generate qualified leads?"

U.S. Spray Foam owner Corey McDonald worked to identify the following ideal prospect profiles: general contractors, commercial contractors, project managers, construction management firms, home builders, remodellers, and estimators. Using LinkedIn's Advanced People Search, he quickly identified over 107,000 ideal prospects in the United States. With that size of prospect base, there was no doubt the campaign would generate a flow of qualified leads literally for years to come.

### **The Campaign Plan**

Given the massive size of the construction market, a fairly direct approach made the most sense. Contractors are always happy to take a look at another bid, and sometimes urgently need additional options to consider. So getting in the door was going to be relatively easy for U.S. Spray Foam.

With that in mind, a LinkedIn campaign was structured to go after exactly the right prospects. The company wanted to funnel leads to sales reps based on different market segments, so the campaign was structured around the sales reps' LinkedIn

accounts. The system devised with McDonald and his team began delivering weekly batches of targeted messages from each sales rep to the prospects in that rep's segments.

## **The Results**

The campaign started generating leads in the first week, and it hasn't let up.

On average it's generated 23.4 new leads per month. And these are qualified prospects with both short and long-term needs. Many of the leads have resulted in immediate sales opportunities. And nearly all of them have built the foundation for lasting relationships that will generate hundreds of thousands in revenue over their lifetime. McDonald also noted that "the long-term outlook from these leads is awesome... most of the projects these conversations lead to have been the biggest we've been involved in."

With the system in place, your business could have the same kind of tremendous results. In the next chapter, we'll show you how. You ready? Let's do this.

## SETTING UP A LINKEDIN CAMPAIGN

Let's start this at the very beginning.

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn.com is an online business network where you can connect with other professionals: people that you've worked with, people that you're friends with through work, peers in your industry, people you know, or people you would like to know. If Facebook is for your personal network—friends and family—LinkedIn is for your business network.

LinkedIn is an enormous platform and it's getting bigger. At the time of writing this, LinkedIn membership is approaching half a billion people, and the company's stated goal is to reach three billion total members. According to internal company usage stats, 40% of members check LinkedIn daily.

The people who use LinkedIn are decision makers in their organizations. According to independent market research of over 300,000 business executives, LinkedIn reaches more C-level executives (CEO, CFO, COO, etc.) than any other news or business website. And 90% of members say they are involved in purchasing decisions. If you're selling B2B, these are the folks you want to meet, and LinkedIn is the place to meet them.

### **Why LinkedIn Is Essential**

Kind of like being on Facebook, setting up a LinkedIn profile has become something you just need to do. By this point, if you're a business professional and you're not on LinkedIn, people are going to wonder how legitimate you are. If you're a business, you should also create a company page to go along with your personal profile.

### **Common Practices On LinkedIn**

The most common way business people used LinkedIn is for an online, up-to-date Rolodex—an enormous, accurate database of professional contacts. Members set up their own profile pages so others can find them and learn about their company, title, skills, work history, etc.

Most LinkedIn users do much more than just set up a profile. They seek out friends and colleagues to form connections. They log on frequently to send messages and to see who has messaged them. And with one of the most popular features, they look to see who has been checking out their profile. People can't seem to resist finding out who's interested enough in them to peruse their profile. In this way, it's a lot like Facebook or any other social network.

There are also more strategic ways people use LinkedIn. A common one is for recruiting employees. LinkedIn is now the number-one tool that recruiters and headhunters use to find staff. A potential employer can view your current position,

your employment history, your skills, and see if you know any of the same people. The second way, a mirror of the first, is as a job-seeking tool. LinkedIn is a great way to reach out to potential employers and ask if they are hiring.

But none of these common practices leverage the true potential of this robust business tool.

### **Harnessing The Real Power Of LinkedIn**

Now we're getting to the good stuff. What's coming up here is one of the most powerful ways to use LinkedIn—as a B2B marketing tool to grow your business. This practice includes a number of focused, targeted, and systematic ways to connect with prospects and turn them into sales leads directly on LinkedIn.

First, you can search for and join some of the different LinkedIn groups that have been created around all sorts of subject matter and interests. Whether you're a public accountant, former collegiate athlete, engineering major, food truck operator or plumbing contractor, you can find groups filled with people who have similar interests and backgrounds. If your title is chief technology officer, you can find groups for CTO's and senior-level technology people. If you're in hot tub sales, you can find groups that are all about selling hot tubs.

There are also groups based on geography. So if you work for a chain of clothing stores in Topeka, Kansas, you can find a Topeka retail group. If you are a business out of Australia, you can find groups of other businesses based Down Under.

There are over two million LinkedIn groups. And some of the most popular ones have hundreds of thousands of members. There are even a few with over a million members. Once you're a member, you can post content in these groups and many of the people who are members of the group—whether it's 50 or 50,000—will see that content. This ability to get your content in front of so many people is a super-powerful feature of LinkedIn.

And you can join lots of different groups. Currently, you can be a member of up to fifty groups on LinkedIn. When you're in fifty of the right groups (i.e. the audiences you want to reach) and you have a plan for sharing content into those groups on a regular basis, a tremendous number of interested people will see that content. It's powerful.

In addition to just sharing content into those groups, you can also get involved in discussions in your groups. You can jump in and start conversations of your own, or comment on other people's ongoing discussions. It works kind of like the old school bulletin boards from back in the day, only online and in a group that's already curated around a common interest.

### **Taking It To The Next Level: Creating Your Own LinkedIn Group**

So you've seen how you can get significant value by simply joining existing groups and sharing your content in them. Now the next-level payoff comes when you start your own group.

Do you remember that one of the objectives we started out with was to position yourself as a leader? By creating a LinkedIn group you automatically place yourself as the default leader of that community. When you're running the group, you determine who is invited to join, so you can target your top sales prospects. And when you reach out to those people to talk business, they're much more open to you because they view you as a leader in that space.

Another big advantage to creating and leading a LinkedIn group is that you can send out a group email blast or newsletter, called an announcement, once a week. That's basically an email blast to your entire group in which you can say whatever you want. You can use it for promotion. You can use it to share content that's valuable to the group. You can tell people about a webinar you have coming up. You can use it to highlight a case study.

Whatever you want to say, as group leader you have access to the inboxes of everyone in your LinkedIn group. That's a pretty powerful tool and a really nice feature that comes along with running your own group. We'll go deeper into harnessing the power of creating your own LinkedIn group in a later chapter.

But before you launch your own group, you need to spend some time figuring out exactly whom you want in the group. In other words, who are your best prospects?

### **Identifying Your Ideal Prospect**

Identifying your ideal prospect is the first step in the process. We call this step "prospect profile development." Essentially this means figuring out who are the decision makers that you're trying to reach, and writing down a description of them. Start with the industries that you are interested in targeting, the geographic areas you want to focus on, in what countries, what cities, and what states. Next, determine what size companies to target.

Pro tip: it's almost never "any size company." Most businesses are going to have some sort of sweet spot that their ideal prospects fall into. Maybe you want to work with businesses that have over five million in sales but less than fifty million, or ones with between fifteen and one hundred employees.

Next up: Decide which types of people within those target companies you want to form relationships with. Who are the actual decision makers? The VP of purchasing or the plant manager? The CFO or the CTO?

Start by looking at your current customers. Note the people who typically do the buying from you, and what positions and titles those people have. For example, if your company supplies cement to the construction industry, the decision makers you

deal with from company to company could be the purchasing manager, the project manager, the project foreman, the COO, or even the CEO. Make a list of those different job titles.

Finally, search LinkedIn for the different job titles you just listed. You should find thousands—which is great, because now you know you have plenty of prospects to reach out to. Now narrow them down by the criteria you decided on above: geographic location, company size, etc.

For example, let's say you're looking for shop foremen. Here's the procedure you'd follow:

1. Type "shop foreman" into the top search bar on LinkedIn. You'll see close to 20,000 results.
2. Narrow that search by location—say, shop foremen in Chicago. 473 results.
3. If desired, narrow it down even further—say, shop foremen at Chicago companies that have ten or fewer employees.
4. Repeat this process with any other job titles you want to look for.

### **Your Target Prospects Should Be Active On LinkedIn**

Next, you want to make sure that the prospects you're targeting look like they're somewhat active on LinkedIn.

What does that look like?

Check to see if a prospect:

- Has a profile picture
- Has more than just a few connections
- Has written a well-developed profile

If a prospect is missing any of those elements, they're probably not all that tuned in to LinkedIn. So don't pursue that prospect—they won't be engaged enough to respond to your messages.

Fortunately this level of non-engagement is relatively rare. Most of the time, we find thousands of highly-engaged prospects to go after—sometimes tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands.

Pro tip: Launch one campaign at a time. Focus that campaign on one core type of prospect, especially when you first start. If there are multiple different markets for your product or service, that's great. You can absolutely plan additional campaigns targeted to those other markets. But do it after your first campaign is up and running and successful.



For example, say you provide information technology services. The first campaign you do might target the healthcare market. After the success of that first campaign, you could then launch a second campaign targeting insurance companies. The two campaigns would be completely separate because the content, messaging, prospects, and LinkedIn groups are completely different for those two target markets. So trying to do them at the same time divides your efforts and scatters your fire, while doing them in sequence allows you to focus fully on each one.

### **The Initial Database Build**

Before you begin your first campaign, narrow down your list to the couple thousand absolute best potential clients for your business. Always aim for the decision makers, the people who can buy your product or service. Keep refining and narrowing your search until you get down to about 2,000 to 3,000 solid prospects.

Once you have your list of prospects, it's time to start reaching out via connection requests. To do this, reach out to each prospect through LinkedIn and invite them to connect with you. These invitations include personal messages between you and the prospect, no one else. So not only does this tactic create a feeling of professional intimacy, it also allows you to customize each message to the prospect.

Include their first name, mention something you admire about their business, a mutual LinkedIn connection or something you have in common, and ask to connect with their LinkedIn profile. Make sure you set aside enough time to give each message its own personal touch. Because these messages are personally customized and you're only asking them for a connection (do not try to sell them anything in this initial message!), the acceptance rate is usually pretty high, often between 50-75%.

So even though these are cold prospects who don't know you, more than half will usually accept that connection request from you. And just like that, you now have a database of strong potential clients to start working through the process.

### **Messaging Campaigns**

Once you've done your initial database build, it's time to begin a personal messaging campaign.

Start by sending a few friendly messages—nothing about your business, no selling, just connecting and sharing things that might interest them. Keep them informal, use your own words, and be genuine. For example:

Message 1: "Hey, Mark, thanks for connecting. Congrats on your success."

Message 2: "I came across this article the other day. I really thought you might be into it. Would really love to hear your thoughts."

Message 3: "There's a discussion going on in my LinkedIn group right now on [subject the prospect works with or has interest in]. I bet you'd have some great insights to share. Here's the link if you're interested. "

(Repeat and vary messages 2 and 3 as often as desired—the idea is to share lots of valuable content with the prospect while keeping your name in front of them.)

Message 4: "Hey Mark, we've been touching base here on LinkedIn for a while. It'd be great to learn more about your business. Do you have time for a call next Thursday any time between 10 a.m. and noon?"

Note that the first three message types are all about building a relationship with the prospect. They are consistent but not eager, friendly but not flattering, personal but not sales-y, and professional but not formal. They feel like a casual note a friend would send, not a warm-up to a sales pitch.

The genius of messages like these is that even though you're sending out hundreds of them, maybe even thousands, in a campaign, each one reads like you're only sending it to one person. This is why making each one personal is so important.

No one will respond well to a message that looks like you've sent the same message to 200 other people and just changed the salutation. But almost anyone will respond well to a message that reads like a letter written just to them.

But won't this take a ton of time?

In a word: yes. Because the messages are all personalized and there is no way to automate the process, there is legwork involved. All these one-on-one messages have to be sent manually and individually. But that's why it works so well! Because it takes effort and time to execute, most people aren't willing to do it. And that's how you're going to stand out.

Again, there is no way to automate this part of the process. You or someone on your team will need to sit at the computer and send several hundred messages to the prospects in the messaging campaign. It's going to take some time; typically an hour for every couple hundred messages. (As the CEO of your company, you will not want to do this entire project yourself. Design and oversee it, yes. Do all the writing, no.)

Fortunately, there are two important factors that make it absolutely worth putting in that time.

First, you don't have to do this all at once. In fact, you absolutely shouldn't—receiving all four of the above messages within a month, let alone a week, will put a prospect's guard up and make them wonder if they're being set up for a sales pitch.

Remember the schedule we discussed earlier. For each prospect, the path from message one to message four should take between two and three months. That's

one message every three weeks or so. If you want to accelerate things, we recommend going no faster than every two weeks. Over several hundred prospects, that's still a lot of messages to send, but now the workload is spread out over a much more manageable timeframe.

Second, many people just don't have the discipline to do this. Because it can be such tedious work, very few people bother to do it all. So when you do put in the discipline and time to do it, you automatically stand out. You're the 1% who's done what the other 99% wouldn't do. So while your prospects are receiving and forgetting dozens of sales pitches from your undisciplined competitors, they'll remember the effort you made to genuinely connect with them—and jump at the chance to get on the phone with you.

I'm not including the exact instructions, clicks and screenshots to set up a messaging campaign and send messages here, for a couple reasons. One, because LinkedIn is very intuitive and easy to use. If you can use Facebook, you can set up your own group and send messages on LinkedIn. Two, each business requires a different approach.

### **Keep Track Of Everything**

It is essential that you keep track of these messaging campaigns. You need to be able to tell at a glance whom you have reached out to, with which message, and when and how to follow up with them. When you've got a couple thousand people in your campaign, it's super easy to lose track and get disorganized very quickly. Once this happens, getting back on track will be almost impossible. So don't let it happen!

A simple spreadsheet that records what clients or prospects have received which messaging campaigns is really all you need at this stage. Keep it simple – the main thing is to make a start and not get bogged down by trying to create the perfect tracking system.

After you've built your prospect list and started running your messaging campaign, it's time to launch your own group.

### **CASE STUDY:**

#### **Cohen Architectural Woodworking: \$10 Million in Revenue Growth**

How do you go from being an old-school regional supplier to the construction industry to one that closes long-term, multi-million dollar contracts with international corporations? Cohen Architectural Woodworking (CAW) was hungry to answer that question. And the way they achieved it was certainly not by doing more of the same old-fashioned sales and marketing grind.

In business since 1975, the Cohen family has maintained a phenomenal reputation among its client base. But historically most of these clients only placed occasional

orders for special projects. While many of these were large projects and quite profitable, the seemingly never-ending revenue roller coaster that comes along with being a "job shop" just wasn't working long-term.

Instead, CAW wanted to upgrade. Their new goal was to focus almost exclusively on national accounts—major corporate clients that would name CAW as the single-source vendor for all their new and remodel construction projects. The only problem was that the traditional ways of selling just weren't generating results. CAW's sales team wasn't getting in the door to forge the relationships with the buyers and key decision makers in the construction management departments.

Realizing that the old ways weren't working, the Cohen management team turned to something new. Even though all this LinkedIn marketing stuff seemed a bit foreign to them, they believed the system could deliver a scalable campaign to reach these high-end corporate decision makers. And after they worked through a systematic relationship building process, a large percentage of their highest-level prospects were happy to schedule a call.

For Cohen Architectural Woodworking, this was achieved in two ways. First, they built and quickly grew a LinkedIn group catering to their ideal prospects. Not a group about woodworking, but an industry-focused group that their prospects would actually enjoy and care about. The group has since grown to over 15,000 members!

The LinkedIn group regularly keeps the CAW name in front of thousands of prospects. They see the group leader, Ben Cohen, VP of sales, and CAW as leaders in the space. The top-of-mind awareness it has built for CAW is massive.

Second, they developed several thousand direct connections (highly-targeted prospects) via Ben Cohen's LinkedIn account. These first-degree connections were exposed to daily status updates and other communications, most importantly lead generation messaging campaigns.

Working the most high-value prospects through personal messaging campaigns results in a steady stream of sales opportunities. Some of these conversations result in quick sales orders, while some are more introductory. But either way, the value of getting a foot in the door with that many qualified prospects is huge.

Overtime, they nurture both of these databases (the LinkedIn group + the direct connections) to position CAW as one of the good guys—not pushy salespeople always talking about themselves, but sharers of relevant and balanced content that isn't intrusive or annoying. That's why, after working prospects through the system, approximately 29% agree to a phone call. That's huge.

To date, their campaign has generated more than \$10 million in new revenue for CAW. Furthermore, the campaign has positioned CAW as a leader in the industry, and maintained a top-of-mind campaign in front of thousands of prospects.

## LEAD YOUR PACK

There are two primary ways we build relationships with prospects on LinkedIn. In the previous chapter we talked about the first one, personal messaging campaigns. In this chapter we'll dig into the other one, creating and leading your own LinkedIn group.

Let's start with an example. A lawyer we know who concentrates on building and construction law created a professional LinkedIn group called The Saint Louis Contractor Referral Network. As the founder and president of the group, he invites key executives from the industry to join the network, and he organizes conferences, panel discussions, keynote speakers, and social events. He sends out mailings, contacts executives about speaking on panels, and introduces the keynote speakers at those panels.

By doing these things he has established himself as a respected authority and well-known leader in the industry—even though he's probably never operated a cement mixer or driven a dump truck. So when a building or construction executive in the Contractor Referral Network needs a lawyer, guess who they think of first? Conversely, when the lawyer calls a construction executive and asks for a meeting, they usually say yes. They see him as a peer and a real player in the industry.

LinkedIn allows you to do exactly what the Saint Louis Contractor Referral Network does, but online. As the founder and creator of the group, you will control who joins, you will share content with members, and you will be the leader of all group initiatives. Creating and running your own LinkedIn group positions you as a leader in that industry, space, market, or geographic region where you do business. The value of being seen as the leader of a group of high-level business professionals cannot be overstated.

There are many ways to establish yourself as an authority in your field of business, but most of them are either very expensive, or very difficult, or both. Let's take a look at some of the typical or traditional ways you might go about it:

- Write a bestselling book on your industry. Not easy.
- Market yourself as a keynote speaker for industry conferences and conventions. Difficult and potentially expensive.
- Hire a public relations firm to get your name mentioned in newspapers and magazines. Expensive.
- Write a hundred articles and pitch yourself to become a featured columnist in your industry's trade publications. Not easy.
- Organize and run an annual conference. Expensive and difficult.

What's more, none of these ways guarantee the result of being seen as an industry leader for more than a little while—if they even work to begin with. So if none of these tactics are the best way to become an industry leader, what is the best way?

### **LinkedIn Leadership**

The great thing about creating and leading your own LinkedIn group is that you can do it very systematically, in your free time (or even delegate the heavy lifting to somebody on your team), and at comparatively low cost. Imagine how much time, effort, and expense would be involved in launching a new industry conference, or writing a bestselling book. Or paying travel expenses to fly all over the country giving lectures and seminars. (Not to mention the risk that these strategies might flop. The book may never find a publisher. The conference might never catch on.)

In contrast, on day one of founding your LinkedIn group you have already positioned yourself as a leader in that space, and on day two your prospects will begin to see you as an authority—all because you are the founder and leader of the community.

Here's another example. A colleague of ours runs a payment processing business. He tries to sell companies on letting his firm process all their credit card transactions. So he started a LinkedIn group that focuses on wholesalers and distributors from California. He invited mostly CFO's and CEO's of large wholesalers and distributors to join the group. On day one, he was seen as a leader in this space—even though he had never run a wholesale or distribution company in his life. To be honest, he's not even in that industry. He's in the payment processing business. But he knew enough about the wholesale and distribution business to find and share pertinent content with the members, and lead the group discussions. The group now has a constantly-growing membership of targeted executives that our client is looking to do business with, and they all know who the group leader is.

LinkedIn groups are a highly efficient, cost-effective way to reach out to the key prospects in your target market from a position of strength and authority. And when you approach the C-level executives who are your prospects as a peer, on their level, you'll have much greater success.

### **Who Should Be The Leader?**

Since the end result of this process is more sales leads, some companies consider having a salesperson or a sales manager be the one to create and lead the LinkedIn group. This tactic almost never works.

Why?

Because of the idea of peerage.

A peer is someone working at the same level as you. In Britain, "the peerage" refers to a social class where all members are at the same level of nobility. And we all



know how powerful "peer pressure" can be when people at our own level ask us to join them.

The leader of a LinkedIn group will be approaching high-level decision makers and buyers. But those prospects will be most open to approaches from their own peers. A CEO or CFO at a prospect company is going to view your company founder or CFO as a peer. So if a lower-level sales rep contacts the CEO, then the CEO is likely to think the sales rep is just trying to sell him something.

Now that doesn't mean that your CEO or founder will necessarily run the group! But all of it can be done from the CEO's LinkedIn page, or that of an equivalent peer.

### **Research Existing Groups**

Before launching your group, do a search to see what other groups are out there and how similar they are to yours. Of course, you can't use the same title as an existing group. But even if there are groups very similar to yours, you can still launch a new group into that same space. In fact, the existence of similar groups shows that there's an audience for you to tap into!

It's just like deciding to launch a new blog into a crowded marketplace, like a new travel blog, for example. If you've got something to say, and a unique position or spin, then there's room for your blog too.

Same goes for LinkedIn groups. Even if you find a group that's exactly like the one you want to create, it's unlikely that all the people in the industry are in that group. And just because they are in that group doesn't mean they won't also join your group. There is plenty of room for more groups, especially groups where the leader is actively engaged in sharing great content.

Be sure to position your group as exclusive, and for high level people. The name of your group should communicate exclusivity and seniority. If there is already a group called "Reality Television Professionals," launch your group and title it something like "Reality Television Executive Leadership Network." It's a subtle difference, but look at how much more powerful the second group name sounds.

### **Inviting Prospects To Join Your Group**

In the previous chapter we talked about how to do a database build by reaching out to about 1,500 prospects via personal one-on-one connection requests. Once that database of first-degree connections grows to a decent size, somewhere between 300 and 500 prospects, you're ready to launch a group.

Now reach out to those prospects through another personal message and invite them to join your group. We typically see a couple hundred of them join the group off the back of that initial invitation. As you keep marketing your group, it should grow by at least a couple of hundred members every month. Your goal will be to grow it to several thousand members. And the bigger the group becomes, the more

momentum it has to keep growing—eventually it will basically market itself and grow on its own.

By this point you will have two databases: the LinkedIn group, and your first-degree connections. There will likely be overlap between the two—some people will agree to connect with you, others will join the group, and some will do both. (Yes, some also won't do either. But if you have both to offer them, you're going to increase the chances that they will at least do one!).

### **Keep Promoting And Growing Your Group**

One of the best ways to grow your group is by visiting other, similar groups for your industry, or any groups that your prospects are likely to belong. Then message the members of that other group and invite them to join your group. For example, if the group you launched is "The Chicago Banking Forum," you may want to visit groups like "Chicago Finance Executives" or "The Chicago Financial Forum."

In addition to personal one-on-one invitations, there are a number of ways you can continuously grow your LinkedIn group, including:

- Sharing content from the group with your email list.
- Promoting the group on your other social media properties.
- Promoting the group on your website.
- Regularly posting status updates on LinkedIn about your group.
- Sharing discussions from your group in other LinkedIn groups.
- Running LinkedIn ads to promote your group.
- Negotiating partnerships with other group owners to promote your group.

Okay, now that you have all these awesome prospects in your group, what do you do with them? How do you strategically form relationships with them? And more importantly, how do you make the group worth their time? In the next chapter we'll show you how to lead your pack. But first, check out the case study below. The Swip Systems story is a great example of how it all comes together.

### **CASE STUDY**

#### **Swip Systems**

Return on Investment: 447%

Swip Systems is a technology company based in Illinois. Their services include software and mobile development, infrastructure, cloud solutions, automation, and intelligence. The landscape of the IT industry is crowded and competition is fierce. Swip needed a way to stand out from the pack and be seen as a premium solutions provider.

Their system allowed founder and CEO Tom Swip to position himself as a peer to the senior C-level decision makers he targets—the CEO, CFO, and CTO. To reach these

prospects, he first created and promoted a LinkedIn group called Midwest Manufacturing Leaders, with himself as the leader of the group. He targeted only senior-level manufacturing executives who had the power to make key buying decisions. The group has since grown to more than 5,000 members. Second, he developed several thousand direct connections via his LinkedIn account. He sent these connections regular communications and updates, constantly staying in front of them and building brand awareness of Swip Systems.

As always, position relevant and balanced content in front of prospects in a way that isn't intrusive or annoying. That's why, after working prospects through the system, again, approximately 29% agree to a phone call. Swip Systems then plugged those leads into their existing sales process, and converted a percentage of them to paying clients.

The results?

- Number of prospects in funnel: 6,557 and counting.
- Positioned the Swip Systems brand as a prestige service provider in the manufacturing systems industry.
- Maintained a top-of-mind campaign in front of thousands of high-value prospects.
- Generating a steady stream of leads and calls with highly-targeted prospects.
- ROI on investment: Over \$600,000 in new business.

## BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BY SHARING VALUE

Now that you've created two large databases of potential customers, what's the best way to earn their trust and eventually earn the right to ask them for a call or a sales meeting?

We've talked about it a little already.

In a word, it's value.

The key to building relationships with your prospects is to add value to their world. How? By giving them meaningful, useful information that can help them in their business.

You can't add value to your potential customers by aggressively pestering them to buy your products or service. That will just annoy them and make them regret connecting with you on LinkedIn. Instead, go out and find information that is both timely and helpful to your potential customers—and then share that info with them without asking for anything in return.

In this chapter we'll show you how to set up a systematic plan for finding and sharing that content. We'll talk about some software tools that will help you automate the process to make it even easier. And we'll give you a few strategies to encourage discussions and activity in your LinkedIn group.

### What Content To Share

How will you know what content will appeal to your target customers? Cat videos and BuzzFeed quizzes aren't going to cut it for this kind of connection. Fortunately there's a very simple rule for determining what content to use—and it's one you'll recognize if you've ever taken a public speaking class.

Know your audience.

The better you know your potential customers—and their industry—the better you'll be able to recognize what type of information they will find helpful. So use that knowledge to post and share content that they will truly care about.

Ask yourself: What do my potential clients care about, what challenges do they face, what do they worry about, what makes their lives easier, and what's important to their business?

If your business sells electrical supplies and you have twenty years' experience calling on customers in the industry, you probably have a clear picture of who they are and what matters to them. So if you've built a LinkedIn group of independent electrical contractors, it's a good bet they care about issues like:

- Preparing competitive bids
- Dealing with labour union issues

- Recruiting qualified apprentices
- Staying in line with ever-changing government regulations
- New electrical technologies
- Product recalls
- Maintaining a fleet of vehicles
- Cutting costs on wiring
- Preventing copper theft
- Fire and safety codes
- Trends in interior design and lighting
- Dispatch and scheduling efficiency
- Economic data, like construction figures and new housing starts
- And many more topics along these lines

If you post useful content about these topics to a LinkedIn group full of electrical contractors, they will love you.

See, these people really need to know this stuff, but they don't always have time to look for it themselves. All the information you'll share with them is already out there somewhere, sure, but it's not aggregated, curated, or all in one place. They'd have to spend a few hours every day searching the Internet for it.

That's where you come in. Using the automation tools in this chapter you'll streamline and automate the information aggregation, curation, and sharing process, so your prospects won't have to spend hours digging to find this information (and neither will you). Before long these potential customers will consider you to be some sort of industry guru—or at least a very helpful person who really understands their business.

While you're thinking about that, think about this.

Everyone in your LinkedIn group of independent electrical contractors will know that you sell electrical supplies. You won't make any secret of that—it's your business and you're proud of it. But even though you sell supplies your group members could use, you rarely, if ever, ask them to buy anything. You don't post about your own business and products at all.

So when you regularly post helpful articles about the industry without trying to sell anything, you look like a hero, not to mention a super-knowledgeable industry leader. Over time, your potential customers will gradually come to view you as a trusted resource for their business. And when they need a new electrical supplier, guess whose name will be first on their call list?

Okay, that's great for people who know their potential customers inside and out, but what if you don't know the industry all that well? For example, you might be a CPA firm that spent the last ten years specializing in auditing hospitals, but now you want to expand into the construction business. How do you handle that?

Actually, you'll do exactly the same thing as when you do know the industry—you'll just need to do more research ahead of time. Talk to some of your potential clients in the target industry. Take them to lunch. Get to know them. Ask them about the state of their industry, what's going well, and what challenges are on the horizon. What are their concerns? What government regulations do they struggle with? What's it going to take to have a great year?

Don't have time for lunches? You can shortcut the process by reviewing the discussions happening in online forums or other LinkedIn groups. With an hour or two of research, you'll uncover the hot topics that your target market is really keyed in on. Once you figure out which information and topics will resonate with your group, it's just a matter of doing a little Googling to find your sources.

### **Finding And Organising Your Content**

In an hour of searching the Internet you will be able to find industry websites, trade publications, and blogs that focus on the content your prospects are interested in. Save these links in your bookmarks.

Then find some of the leading experts, opinion leaders, or speakers in your industry and visit their websites. If they don't have websites, look for articles they've written or talks they've given. Bookmark all of those links too.

Next, set up some Google alerts based on keywords and topics that you've identified as important to your prospects. This way, anytime a new article or post on any of them goes up, you'll get a notification so you won't miss it.

Keep in mind—to continue our electrical supply example above—you won't just be looking for electrician and electrical industry websites. You'll be finding websites and blogs about other topics too, like unions, interior design, lighting and ceiling fixtures, fire safety, economic data on construction, maintaining fleets of vehicles, scheduling and efficiency, energy conservation, management, accounting, marketing, and so on. Get as broad—and as specific—as you can.

So once you collect all these sources, there's an easy way to organize them using a feed aggregator—we recommend Feedly. The term "aggregator" sounds intimidating, but it's really simple. You sign up for a free Feedly account at [Feedly.com](http://Feedly.com), and dump in all of your website addresses. Then instead of taking the time to visit all of those sites every week, you just go to your Feedly every few days, review the fire hose of content that's accumulated there, and pick out the best stuff to share. Keep a spreadsheet of which content you shared and when, so you can keep track of it and not post the same content twice.

### **Posting Content**



Ideally, you'll want to post new content pretty much every week. You can even post more if you're so inspired. If you have Feedly set up with enough different sources there should be plenty of content to allow you to share something frequently.

To keep from overwhelming yourself or your marketing team, you definitely want to automate this posting process. We recommend a program called DA Social. With this tool you can automate the distribution of your content right into your preferred social media channels. And while it does not currently share into groups, it's the best tool for automating all of your status updates. Hootsuite is another option.

You can put your content delivery on autopilot by scheduling it weeks or months in advance. So if you're going to Maui for vacation, it will keep posting content while you're away, so it looks like you're at your desk instead of on the golf course.

### **Stimulate Group Activity**

In the early days after the formation of your group, don't be discouraged if it's not bustling with activity. Building momentum and activity within the group takes time. But as your numbers grow to a few hundred or more, the amount of posting and discussions will also increase. The best and most successful LinkedIn groups are vibrant places where many people engage in posting content and discussing topics. So you want to encourage others to be active in your group. There are two effective ways to do this.

The first way to get others to actively participate in your group is to go recruit members who are active and vocal in other groups. If someone is active and engaged in a different group, they will probably bring a lot of life to your group as well.

The second way to build participation and engagement in your group is by discussion promotion. Instead of posting an article, or a resource, or a case study, you just post a question to the entire group. For example, "Hey, what are the things that you're planning to do next year to grow your business?" To make sure the discussion gets going, message about thirty or forty group members and ask them to weigh in. "Hey, Linda, I posted a discussion question in the group. I know you have big things planned for this year and I'd love to hear your thoughts. If you'd leave a comment, that would be awesome." Usually when a few people start commenting, that's all it takes for the discussion to take off.

Pro tip: This technique works best when there are already a hundred or so people in your group. The fewer people in the group, the more messaging you'll need to do to get the discussion going. But once your group grows to 500 or more, discussions tend to take off on their own and active promotion is usually no longer necessary.

Once the group starts to come to life, human nature will kick in and the group will become even more popular. People want to be a part of something that's happening and vibrant. No one wants to join a ghost town. So you'll have to work a

little harder initially to stir up activity until the group grows big enough to take on a life of its own. Once it does, you'll be amazed at the number of inbound connection requests you'll be receiving as the leader of the group. When you position yourself as the leader of an active group and an authority in the space, people will want to connect with you and join the group.

### **Keep Growing The Group**

As the group members get in the habit of posting content and participating in discussions, the group will organically grow. But as the leader, it's your job to help that growth along. So until the group starts growing faster than you can send invitations, definitely keep sending direct connection requests inviting others to join. This not only helps fuel the group but also allows you to continue reaching out to really targeted prospects.

It's important to point out one thing: Initially, you grew the group by inviting your connections. So you might be thinking, why not just continue sending connection requests first, and then inviting those new connections to join the group? Because there is a limitation that LinkedIn places on direct connection requests.

You can have no more than 5,000 connection requests per person. At some point you may bump up against that. Which means that you need to carefully craft your messaging when approaching new prospects via a connection request. The better your hit rate, the more runway you'll have. This limit only applies to direct connection requests, though. If you do hit this limit, congratulations! You'll likely have some pretty awesome results on your hands. And it's easy to turn to other strategies to reach new prospects, to continue developing new connections and leads. Or, consider utilizing another profile from a colleague in your office.

### **More Prospects Than You Can Handle**

By posting great content, promoting discussions, and continuing to grow your group, you will regularly boost the number of warm leads you're generating for your business. These strategies will grow your connections in a really targeted way, and most of the people connecting with you are going to be a good fit with your prospect profile.

The sales pipeline can be viewed as a funnel. Using the tactics described above helps create a constant flow of new prospects pouring into the top of the funnel. If you do this consistently you'll have a predictable stream of warm leads coming through every month. You can literally run these campaigns and groups for years.

What to do with all these prospects? After a few months of this flow, you may have more than you have time to connect with!

Of course, you could hire more staff to handle the overflow, but before you call your HR department, try this:

Go through all the prospects in your group, and pick the very best ones, the ones you're practically salivating to work with. Start working those through a targeted messaging campaign, the kind we talked about in Chapter 4. After a couple months of messaging, you send them Message 4 and request a phone call. As we've seen, on average 29% of those prospects agree (compared to a measly 1-2% without the relationship-building work).

And there's an added bonus. Every once in a while people in your group will reach out to you and say, "Hey, I'm in the market for what you sell. Would you like to talk?" And you didn't even need to do any extra work for that to happen!

## **CASE STUDY**

### **Louder Online: 384% Return on Investment**

Aaron Agius runs one of Australia's leading marketing consultancies, Louder Online. The firm specializes in search, social, and content marketing. When Aaron was looking for a strategy to not just generate more business, but to also position his company as the leader in his space.

#### **CHALLENGE MEETS OPPORTUNITY**

The challenge for Aaron's business is pretty simple. As with many consulting firms (and especially marketing firms), the competitive landscape is crowded. There are literally thousands of other marketing agencies competing for the same business. And some of them are pretty aggressive in their tactics.

On LinkedIn, that aggressiveness really poisons the well. SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and marketing service providers are hammering their prospects with messages on LinkedIn. Naturally, these prospects quickly tune out all these overt sales pitches.

But believe it or not, that aggressive environment actually helps Aaron. With the right tools and approach he can cut through this toxic perception and position himself as a peer to the senior marketing decision makers he targets.

#### **THE TARGET MARKET**

Aaron's company isn't looking to work with mom-and-pop operations. They have big-ticket engagements and work with Australia's largest brands. The people he targets within these companies are often digital marketing managers, marketing directors, CMO's, etc. These kinds of people aren't easily sold just because you sent them a message on LinkedIn.

To reach these high-level prospects, he knew he needed a unique approach to stand above the crowd. An approach that would position him as a true leader in his space, keep his name consistently in front of his best prospects (in a non-spammy

way), and make his presence so rock solid that his prospects would jump at joining his community and (eventually) doing business with him.

## THE CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

First, Aaron built and quickly grew a LinkedIn group catering to his best prospects. Not a group about the services that Louder provides—SEO and inbound marketing—but rather an industry focused group that prospects would actually enjoy, care about enough to join, and stay engaged in for a long time.

The group has grown from zero to over 6,000 members.

The LinkedIn group allows Aaron to keep his name in front of thousands of prospects for the long term. They see him and Louder Online as leaders in the marketing arena. Furthermore, the discussions cultivated within the group allow Aaron to directly engage with potential clients. Also, Aaron gets great insight that feeds new product or service development because discussions often mention problems that require a solution that he can build ahead of any competitors.

Additionally, he developed several thousand direct connections with highly-targeted prospects via his LinkedIn account. For these direct-messaging connections, he communicates with them via frequent updates and content sharing so that Louder Online is always top-of-mind.

## WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

- Number of prospects in funnel: 8,505 and counting.
- Positioned the Louder Online brand as a leader in their market.
- Maintained a top-of-mind campaign in front of thousands of prospects.
- Generating a steady stream of leads and calls with highly-targeted prospects.
- ROI on investment: 384%

## CONCLUSION

You made it! You've finished this book. You now know how to leverage LinkedIn to supercharge your business, generate a ton more leads, build relationships, establish yourself as an industry leader or domain expert, and automate your systems to keep your growth going into the future.

You've been given a lot of information in this book. It might seem like a lot to wrap your head around, but don't panic! This will all start to make sense as soon as you begin taking steps to put the pieces in place. The best way to learn is to jump right in!

### Take It Slow

Don't try to execute too many strategies at the same time right away. Ease into them. If you take on too much at one time it's harder to get any of them to work. You'll get frustrated – and you'll blame the system when you don't get the results.

Start with one technique, get it up and running, learn from that process, and then move on to another if you need to.

### You Have To Start Somewhere

Knowing where to start is important. Which technique should you use first?

Think about what makes sense for you. If there was an approach in these pages that particularly got you thinking, then start with that. Just be as comfortable as you can be.

### Hiring An Agency

Be careful. There are hundreds of digital marketing consultants and media agencies out there, but the vast majority are generalists. They do a little bit of everything. If you ask them if they can implement a LinkedIn strategy they'll always say "yes" to get your business ... and then they'll learn how to do it on your dime!

Most agencies implement these sorts of programs on a retainer basis. They want the recurring revenue that comes with that. Be careful you aren't paying for a lot of dead time.

### Get Started

It all comes back to this. Regardless of *where* you start, the most important thing is that you *make* a start.

A good friend of mine is a successful software entrepreneur. He always liked to say that "fortune does not just favour the bold ... it also favours the active".

Just like starting anything for the first time, it comes down to committing to go forward, doing the work, learning as you go, and then ratcheting it up.