

Detroit Labs reaches their ideal client base with LinkedIn Live and Sponsored Content



DETROIT LABS

Location: Detroit, MI
No. of Employees: 51-200 | Industry: Computer Software



“On LinkedIn, you are attracting a more pointed and engaged audience. If anyone stumbles across your live stream, there is always a chance that they are either someone who can do business with you or someone who may apply for a job at your company. You can’t say that about other platforms.”

Dan Ward
Co-Founder and President, Detroit Labs



Challenge

- Video is easier to create and distribute than ever before. Due to its immense popularity, it also makes it difficult for businesses to rise above the noise and connect with the right audiences. Detroit Labs, a custom software development company that targets Fortune 500 companies across a variety of industries, recognized that live video was an ideal way to showcase its brand and engage potential clients as well as prospective team members.
- Video is also more personal. “One of the most important things we’re selling is relationships,” said Dan Ward, Co-Founder and President at Detroit Labs. “Video content gives our clients, and potential clients, insight into who we are and what we value as a company—before we’ve even had a conversation.”
- Detroit Labs decided to focus on live video as a less expensive and time-consuming alternative to prerecorded productions. They used a talk-show-like format called “Labs Live” that features their own team members conversing on different topics. Initially, the series was posted on a competing video platform. “Viewership was just okay,” said Ward. “Everything that we read said you have to really stick with video for a significant amount of time before you start to get a payoff.”



Solution

- After about six months on the competing platform, the team decided to apply to be a beta tester for LinkedIn Live with the idea that they were more likely to reach their core audience on LinkedIn—which is home to many of the world’s professionals and also offers a host of advertising options.
- The live streams have evolved from in-depth, expert discussions to include playful conversations. They have even started hosting March Madness bracket-like tournaments on non-business-related topics (such as ice cream flavors and popular snacks). “We don’t need full-blown Detroit Labs commercials. We want to produce compelling content that everyone can benefit from, yet we happen to offer a service related to most of our content,” said Ward. “Especially as we transitioned to working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was an opportunity for us to have a little fun.”

Results

- The team immediately and consistently saw significantly more views of its video content, both live and on replay, than on the competing video platform. “We ran one test on LinkedIn Live before we aired an actual episode, and even that blew our viewership benchmarks out of the water,” said Elyse Turner, Director of Marketing at Detroit Labs.
- Overall engagement with ads increased by 61%, while a lead generation Video Ad, launched in tandem with the live streams, produced 10 encouraging leads alone. “Live video really, really helped us organically increase our engagement,” said Turner.

61%

increase in overall ad engagement on LinkedIn

14

encouraging leads generated from Video Ads in just four months.

Connecting with the right people

- As a company that is “vertical agnostic,” Detroit Labs needs to reach a wide range of industries looking for customized software solutions. LinkedIn provides an effective conduit to Detroit Labs’ client base of Fortune 500 companies and especially the individuals at those companies who are typically tasked with finding those solutions.
- “Product owners are there, VPs are there, directors are there, and they’re actively engaging,” said Ward. “Ultimately, we believe that if we can cater to that audience, they’re going to take that content or they’re going to connect with us and go to their stakeholders and move it up the chain.”

Increased visibility and credibility

- As the videos gained traction, the team started to add external guests, including executives at companies in Detroit Labs’ target client base. In some cases, LinkedIn helped to facilitate those connections.
- The Detroit Labs team also began a new series of March Madness-like tournaments featuring their favorite cereal, ice cream, or snacks, which saw great engagement. Their comfort with sharing their personalities on live social media, as well as the videos’ informal, low-key nature, gave potential clients a preview of the organizational culture. “That content is primarily for Detroit Labs team members. But if a company is looking for like-minded people to work with, these videos will help them get a sense of who we are,” said Ward.

Supporting recruitment and training initiatives

- LinkedIn Live also provided another channel to promote Detroit Labs’ Apprenticeship Program, which offers the opportunity to learn software development skills from the ground up. Instead of targeting potential applicants, the videos introduce the program to companies that might be interested in participating as sponsors.
- “The program can only exist if there are people that are willing to spend the money to have the program exist,” said Ward. “So we are able to amplify stories from our team members, that have either gone through the program or that are about to go through it, on a platform where there are decision-makers potentially looking to solve similar hiring challenges or diversify their team.”
- The videos also serve as an informal hiring channel for active and passive job seekers and networkers. “What greater way to attract talent than to have content out on LinkedIn as people are browsing and just seeing what’s going on?” said Ward.



“With other competing platforms, we might get an average of 5 to 10 viewers during a live stream. On LinkedIn, we instantly saw 25 to 30 viewers with the potential that one of those viewers was a prospect... all using the same content.”

Dan Ward
Co-Founder and President, Detroit Labs