

THE *Sophisticated*  
MARKETER'S  
Product Showcase Series

LinkedIn  
**SPONSORED  
CONTENT**

A best practice handbook  
about content marketing for  
a professional audience, featuring  
expert advice from LinkedIn's  
Certified Marketing Partners.

**LinkedIn**





# Contents

**A Note to the Sophisticated Marketer**

**What is Sponsored Content?**

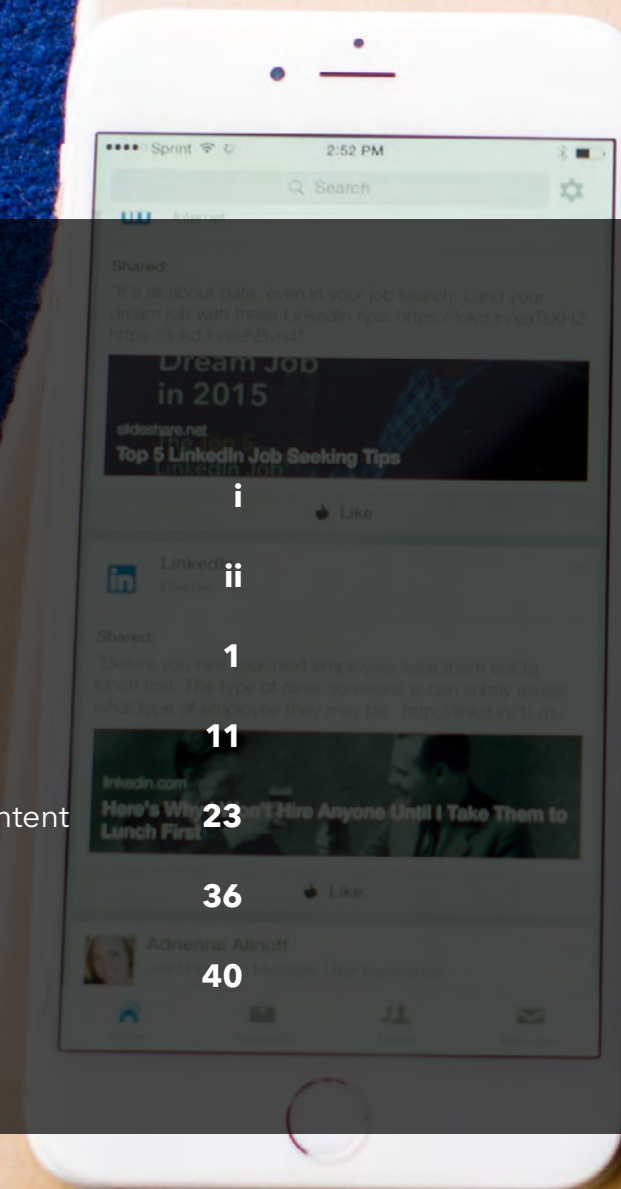
**Step One:** Know your goals

**Step Two:** Create great content

**Step Three:** Turn your content into compelling Sponsored Content

**Step Four:** Test, learn, and optimize

**Conclusion**





A close-up photograph of a person's hand resting on a laptop's trackpad. The laptop is silver and open, with its screen tilted back. The screen displays a dark interface with some light-colored text and graphics, though they are out of focus. The background is a blurred office environment with various objects and lights. A semi-transparent blue horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text in white.

# A Note to the Sophisticated Marketer



## A Note to the Sophisticated Marketer

**All audiences are not created equal. If you're a B2B brand or a high-value B2C brand, there's a good chance you'll want to reach an audience of professionals: influencers, business decision-makers, and individuals with above-average purchasing power.**

As a marketer, you have many platforms on which to publish your content and run native advertising campaigns. How do you choose the right platforms for your business?

**Here is a simple guideline:** You want your brand to be visible on platforms where your prospects and customers spend their time. In other words, go where your audience is.

If any of the above sounds like you, then LinkedIn offers a great content marketing opportunity for your brand. Why? Because over half of the world's professionals are on LinkedIn. In this guide, our goal is to help you engage the LinkedIn audience of more than 380 million professionals with Sponsored Content, LinkedIn's native advertising solution for publishing relevant content to the world's only professional news feed.

**In this guide, you'll learn how to:**

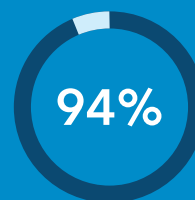
- Set smart goals for your content marketing and native advertising efforts on LinkedIn.
- Develop a sound content strategy for a professional audience.

- Turn your content into great LinkedIn Sponsored Content campaigns using best practices and insights gleaned from real-world use cases.
- Test and optimize your campaigns to maximize your results.
- Create a bid strategy and set a budget that makes sense for your business.

Throughout, you'll also find expert tips from LinkedIn's Certified Marketing Partners, companies that provide strategic guidance and sophisticated technologies to help you get the most from your campaigns.

Let's get going! Thank you for reading this guide, and as always, send us your feedback by contacting us at [marketing.linkedin.com](mailto:marketing.linkedin.com).

**Andrew Kaplan**, Sr. Product Marketing Manager, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions



**94% of B2B marketers use LinkedIn to distribute content.**

Content Marketing Institute: 2015 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks Report



# What is Sponsored Content?

Sponsored Content is LinkedIn's flagship native advertising format. With Sponsored Content, you can publish relevant content straight to the LinkedIn feed and reach a targeted audience of professionals beyond just your LinkedIn Company Page followers.



## Three things set Sponsored Content apart from other native ad formats:



**Accurate targeting:** LinkedIn lets marketers target their audience using up-to-date data in the professional profile (e.g., characteristics like job function, company name, seniority, and skill set).

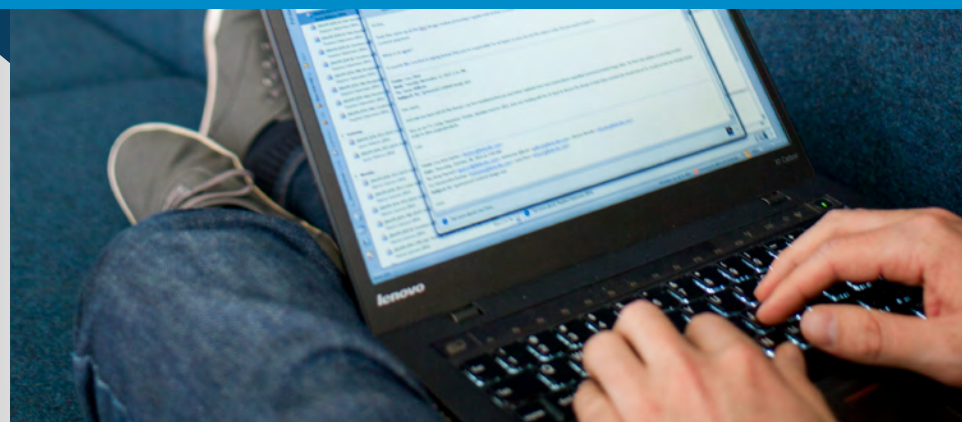


**Professional mindset:** Because LinkedIn members engage with our platform to further their professional goals, they are highly receptive to messages from brands that provide useful, high-quality content that addresses their desire to become more productive and successful.



**Premium audience:** Four out of five LinkedIn members impact business decisions within their organizations, and LinkedIn members tend to have higher purchasing power and levels of education than the average U.S. adult online.

Read our [product data sheet](#) to learn more.







# Step One:

Know your goals



## Will You Know Success When You See It?

You've heard of "putting the cart before the horse", right? In most cases, it's a bad idea. But when applied to content marketing, this approach can work brilliantly. In fact, it's how best-in-class marketers today begin their content marketing and native ad campaigns. On LinkedIn, they reverse engineer their campaigns first by visualizing their end goals and then backing those goals into a Sponsored Content strategy. Why start at the end? Because a successful campaign is about achieving meaningful, measurable business outcomes.

Before you think about setting up a Sponsored Content campaign, ask yourself: "What outcome do I hope to achieve?" Most marketers' goals tend to cluster into two categories:

- Brand building through **Thought Leadership**
- **Lead Generation**

The first step toward succeeding with Sponsored Content is to ask yourself which goal is most relevant to your business.



"If you want to develop customer relationships, you need to get people to choose to engage with you by offering relevant, high-quality content that's worth their time. The thing to remember is: brands aren't just competing with each other; they're competing against the entire media landscape."

**Joe Lazauskas**, Editor in Chief,  
Director of Editorial, Contently



"You need to translate metrics to your objective: If you're trying to drive awareness, look at impressions. If you're driving traffic, look at your CTR. If you're driving brand engagement, look at your engagement rate."

**Leire Bascaran**, Sr. Data Analyst,  
Brand Networks





## Build Trust in Your Brand by Sharing Your Unique Point of View

Ask 10 people how they define thought leadership and you'll likely hear 10 different answers. In fact, you'll likely hear lots of confusion when it comes to explaining the connection—and differences—between thought leadership and content marketing. It's actually quite simple: thought leadership is a form of content marketing—one that can deliver measurable value to your organization.

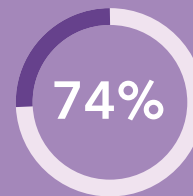
### Why is thought leadership important? Because buyers:

- **Are savvier than ever:** **Google** finds that they typically engage with 10 pieces of content during their research leading up to a purchase.
- **Expect brands to add value early through helpful insights:** **In one study, 74 percent of B2B buyers** chose a company that was first to help them in the purchase process by providing useful content and information.
- **Are awash in information:** Thought leaders can truly stand apart by helping them sift through the deluge of irrelevant information to focus on timely, useful, insightful ideas.



"Take a stance on an issue that's on your audience's mind, and tie these ideas and opinions back to your brand. Next pick an interesting way to tie in very right, unique, visual content. Then amplify your best content with paid ads to reach a broader audience."

**Chris Bolman**, Director, Integrated Marketing,  
Percolate



of B2B buyers choose a company that is first to help them with useful content.

## Start a Conversation Around Interesting Insights

**Don't just think of thought leadership as a singular category. You can become an expert in one or more of the following three categories:**

1. **Industry thought leadership:** A point of view on news and trends in a given vertical
2. **Product thought leadership:** How-to's and best practices, strategy
3. **Organizational thought leadership:** Company culture, talent development, innovation, etc.

After developing your unique ideas and shaping your insights, you need to share those with your target audience. Your best bet is to engage buyers in the channels they frequent by delivering content and sparking conversations around their most pressing questions. You know you've succeeded when you inspire them to view an issue or concern in a new way, or adopt a new approach to an entrenched business problem. As Jeff Ernst, former principal analyst at Forrester Research, says, "**Business buyers don't 'buy' your product or service, they 'buy into' your perspective and approach to solving their problems**". Your job is to create a conversation that will get buyers to associate your brand with expertise in an area that's strongly tied to your business goals, product focus, and customer needs.





## Eight Criteria for Thought-Leading Content

What makes great thought leadership content? Here are some excellent tips that we love from [The Bloom Group](#), a top thought leadership consultancy.

- **Relevance**—Addressing a burning issue for your target audience
- **Novelty**—Having a fundamentally new way to solve a problem
- **Depth**—Possessing substantial knowledge about the problem and how to solve it
- **Validity**—Proving your solution works through real examples of companies that have solved it your way with measurable benefits
- **Practicality**—Demonstrating you have a well-thought-out approach to overcome the obstacles to adoption
- **Rigor**—Having hard-to-dispute logic about the problem and the best way to solve it
- **Clarity**—Communicating the point of view in words your audience understands
- **Coherence**—Having frameworks or models that simplify the problem and/or solution



## Create Content so Valuable Your Prospects Will Gladly Trade Their Information to Get It

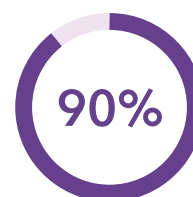
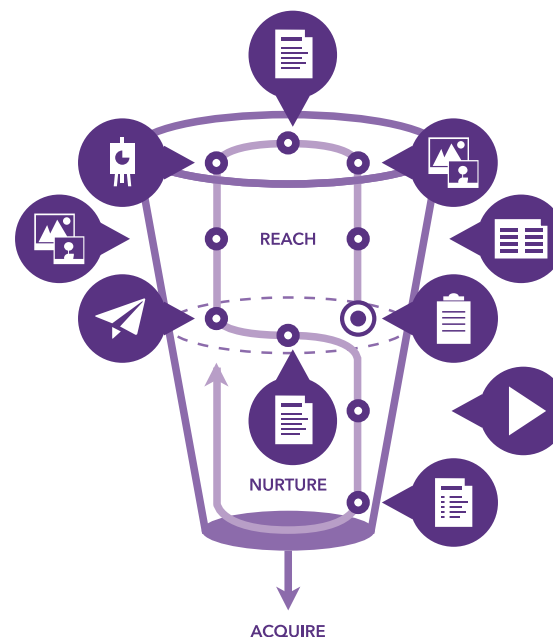
If your goal isn't using thought leadership to build brand awareness and credibility, it's likely lead generation. According to a 2015 report by the [Content Marketing Institute](#), 83 percent of the most effective B2B content marketers and 69 percent of B2C marketers cite lead gen as a top goal.

The key to successful lead gen campaigns is to engage prospects in relevant conversations throughout their purchase consideration process. Because buyers are **up to 90 percent** of their way through the "buyer's journey", or purchase decision, before making contact with your company, it is critical to build a relationship early through compelling content. As HubSpot's VP of Marketing [Kipp Bodnar says](#), "Publishing and sharing content online is the single biggest lever to increase lead generation."

On LinkedIn, lead generation is one of our advertisers' most common goals, and plenty are finding success through Sponsored Content. In fact, 93 percent of B2B marketers rate LinkedIn as the most effective social media site for lead gen (see our [Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn](#) for more details). What's more, 80 percent of all social media B2B leads come from the LinkedIn platform.<sup>1</sup>

1: 'LinkedIn for B2B Lead generation' infographic by Oktopost as shared by business2community.com, March 2014.

### REACHING YOUR PROSPECTS IS A JOURNEY



**90%** of the purchase decision is complete before a customer even calls a supplier  
—Source: Forrester Research



**10** pieces of content are consumed before a purchasing decision is made  
—Source: Zero Moment of Truth Study, Google



## You Need to Give Value to Get Value

HubSpot finds that **43 percent of marketers** say they have sourced a customer from LinkedIn. And in many of those cases, it all started with Marketing delivering valuable information and content.

Like anything worth having in life, you need to give in order to receive. Start by asking yourself what questions your audience has, and provide actionable insights that answer them. Such an approach will generate far better results than going for a hard sell. After all, as Jay Baer, marketing consultant and president of Convince & Convert, says, “Sell something, get a customer for a day. Help someone, get a customer for life.”

Sophisticated lead gen marketers understand that buyers are on a journey toward a purchase decision. These marketers plan content marketing campaigns for each stage of that journey. Need guidance mapping your content and campaigns to that journey? Visit [Marketo](#) for templates and recommendations.



“If you’re selling a high-value product, you’re looking at a long, complex sales cycle with many stakeholders. This requires you to nurture relationships over time with helpful content suited to each stakeholder. With LinkedIn, you can reach multiple stakeholders across an organization, offering them content that provides value by delivering information and insights and takes them through a journey toward a final sale.”

**Chris Jacob**, Director of Product Marketing,  
Salesforce Marketing Cloud



## Customer Success Story: HSBC

HSBC uses Sponsored Content to establish key global connections



# HSBC

### Challenge

HSBC aims to form partnerships with members of its key audience—international, middle-market businesses. “Our challenge is to be seen as a strategic partner rather than just a transactional partner,” says Amanda Rendle, Global Head of Marketing, Commercial Banking and Global Banking at HSBC.

### Solution

LinkedIn’s quality audience and professional context made Sponsored Content a natural solution to drive awareness and establish thought leadership around their new Trade Forecast Tool. HSBC leveraged targeted Sponsored Content to deliver timely updates that were personalized according to each market. “Sponsored Content allowed us to select content that we feel has greatest relevance at a particular time or on a particular topic, and then highlight it to an interested audience by placing it in the LinkedIn feed,” Rendle explained.



# Customer Success Story: HSBC

HSBC uses Sponsored Content to establish key global connections

## Results

- Drove over 40,000 interactions with HSBC content.
- Boosted organic content impressions by 1,500 percent and social interactions by 900 percent.
- Created long term value, attracting over 3,750 new followers to the HSBC Commercial Banking LinkedIn Company Page.
- Delivered reach and engagement from over 50 industries.

## How they did it

- Posted timely articles on topics of interest to the brand's specific professional audiences.
- Tailored content according to what was happening in each of its global markets and used LinkedIn geographic targeting to promote the content to the audiences in those markets.
- Promoted and monitored the performance of several pieces of content simultaneously and then invested in those pieces that performed best.

**HSBC Commercial Banking** · Sponsored

How will the growth of the renminbi impact your business and do you know the benefits? HSBC experts discuss how the liberalisation of the renminbi will affect world trade



THE RISING RENMINBI

**The Rising Renminbi**  
globalconnections.hsbc.com · Fifteen years ago China's growth was led by exports, mainly to Western countries eager for its low-cost goods. Now investment and consumption in China is a major driver of growth, and imports have risen sharply...

✚ Follow HSBC Commercial Banking · Like (90) · Comment (6) · Share · 2mth ago



"We needed to find new and innovative ways to engage an audience short on time but hungry for insight that can help take their business further."

**Amanda Rendle,**  
Global Head of Marketing, Commercial Banking and Global Banking, HSBC



# Track Metrics That Matter to Your Business

Whether you aim for thought leadership or lead generation, you want to measure outcomes that have the biggest impact on your business.

## For thought leadership campaigns, consider tracking these metrics:

- **Engagement with your content:** The number of clicks, likes, shares, comments, company follows, and downloads are all indicators of audience engagement.
- **Site traffic and time per visit:** How much traffic you get to your site and how long visitors stay when they get there is also a good indicator of how people are engaging with your content.
- **Brand lift or purchase intent:** You can measure brand lift by surveying a random sample of site visitors and comparing responses from people who saw your campaign with responses from those who did not.
- **Executive-level follow-up:** You can see if your content is reshaping your company's standing within your industry by tracking activities like the number meetings scheduled or advisory board invitations accepted.

## For lead generation campaigns, consider:

- **Volume of qualified leads:** HubSpot offers a terrific framework for qualifying leads based on prospect goals, needs, budget, timeline, etc.
- **Cost per lead (CPL):** CPL is based on your conversion rates and customer lifetime value (CLV). This is discussed at greater length on page 38 of this eBook.
- **Marketing-influenced or marketing-sourced bookings:** By linking your CRM to leads captured from your campaigns, you can tell whether your campaigns sourced a customer (e.g., the customer bought within 30 days of exposure to your content) or influenced customer acquisition (e.g., the customer bought within one quarter of exposure to your content).



"As a brand, you really want to measure the relationships you're building. One key indicator is the time that people spend with your content. Per **Chartbeat**, if someone spends 3 minutes of engaged time with your content, they're twice as likely to return to your website within a week compared to someone who spends only one minute with your content."

**Joe Lazauskas**, Editor in Chief,  
Director of Editorial, Contently



A creative workspace with a laptop, keyboard, mouse, and various art supplies like pencils, pens, and color wheels. A hand is holding a pen, ready to write on a piece of paper. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. A red semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the left side of the image.

## Step Two:

Create great content



## Fill the World With Insights, Not Content

The foundation for great content is customer empathy: understanding your buyers' business challenges, aspirations, and interests, and reflecting those in your content. As Altimeter's principal research analyst Brian Solis says in an interview with LinkedIn:

"Can you tell me the top 10 problems your audience has at any given time? How about the top 10 aspirations? Are you thinking through where your audience wants to be, compared with where the market is going? That's what inspires me. Someone who is honestly trying to better understand the people they are trying to help."

Whether you're interested in thought leadership or lead generation, crafting content that addresses your customers' biggest questions and interests is how you begin to craft elegant Sponsored Content campaigns. Perhaps Ann Handley, author of *Everybody Writes* and Chief Content Officer at Marketing Profs, says it best: "We don't need **more** content; we need **better** content."

Remember, your audience is on a journey. They're online and on their devices looking for insights. Meet them halfway with helpful content, and you might just spark a conversation that builds your brand's reputation or brings in your next customer.



"Context is always important when it comes to content. Because LinkedIn is a destination for professional content, any insights-oriented content from a brand is well-received because it's the kind of content people expect to see on LinkedIn."

**Chris Jacob**, Director of Product Marketing,  
Salesforce Marketing Cloud



## Speak to the Professional Mindset

Not too long ago, we set out to understand how members use LinkedIn. How do they approach the platform, and what are their goals in using LinkedIn? And we gleaned some amazing insights into how brands can connect with their audience on LinkedIn through content.

After interviewing thousands of members globally in partnership with TNS, our research team found that members use LinkedIn with a decidedly professional mindset. Whereas on personal networks, members are focused on being entertained, members on professional networks like LinkedIn are laser-focused on their professional success. They bring an aspirational attitude to the platform, whether they're looking for a new career or trying to become more successful in the career they're in right now. In sum, LinkedIn members view their time on our platform as an investment.

What does this mean for brands? To start, it means that members on LinkedIn are 26 percent more receptive to company updates than they would be on personal networks. This is because they recognize that companies can influence their professional success—not merely through job opportunities, but by delivering useful content and information that members can leverage to build their skills, personal brands, and expertise.



"One of the differences between LinkedIn and other social networks is that people actively use the LinkedIn platform to consume business content. LinkedIn also offers reliable, accurate targeting by professional profile characteristics like job title or vertical. Marketers can do very well if they create segments or buyer personas along those lines and create content aimed at the specific needs of those audiences."

**Chris Bolman**, Director, Integrated Marketing, Percolate





# Speak to the Professional Mindset (Continued)

| What are the top 5 reasons people use social networks? |  |
|--|--|
| Personal Networks                                      | Professional Networks (i.e.: LinkedIn) |
| Socialize  | 1 Maintain professional identity       |
| Stay in touch  | 2 Make useful contacts                 |
| Be entertained   | 3 Search for opportunities             |
| Kill time  | 4 Stay in touch                        |
| Share Content  | 5 Stay up-to-date for their careers    |
| "Spend Time"   | "Invest Time"                          |

| What are the top 3 content types people expect? |   |
|---|---|
| Personal Networks                               | Professional Networks (i.e.: LinkedIn)                    |
| Info on friends                                 | 1 Career info   |
| Info on personal interests                      | 2 Updates on brands — 26% <div>higher than personal</div> |
| Entertainment updates                           | 3 Current affairs   |
| "Spend Time"                                    | "Invest Time"   |

Source: The Mindset Divide: Revealing the Emotional Differences Between Personal and Profesional Networks



# A 6-Step Strategy for Creating Content for LinkedIn's Most Engaged Members

While the themes of great content vary by audience, industry, and marketer objective, there are some general guidelines you can follow when crafting content to appeal to the LinkedIn professional mindset. Remember, to build a trusted relationship with your audience, make your mantra "Always be helping" instead of "Always be closing." Following are some tips we developed after interviewing thousands of the most active content consumers and sharers on LinkedIn.

## 6 Questions to Ask Yourself When Publishing Content to LinkedIn

- 1 Does it present new knowledge or assist in decision-making?
- 2 Will it spark conversation?
- 3 Would sharing it benefit their professional network?
- 4 Would sharing it enhance their professional brand?
- 5 Does it feed their desire for professional accomplishment?
- 6 Is it formatted for mobile / tablet consumption?

**Source:** LinkedIn Professional Content Consumption Report 2014



"People often use personal social networks for down time; they're more of a lean-back experience. On LinkedIn, members are in a lean-forward mindset where they are looking to get things done, learn, and build relationships with their connections in a professional context. They are highly engaged. This is a great opportunity for marketers to publish thought-provoking content and act more like journalists with succinct, powerful headlines and compelling arguments and ideas around specific topics tailored to the different types of professionals on LinkedIn."

**Simon Mansell**, General Manager, Sprinklr





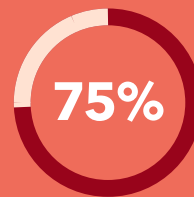
# Simple DO's and DON'Ts for Crafting Compelling LinkedIn Content

## DO:

- Be helpful by providing answers to your audience's most pressing questions and challenges.
- Pick one topic that you can own.
- Find your authentic voice that's authoritative but friendly and trustworthy.
- Connect content to a commercial insight or benefit.
- Challenge an audience assumption or show them something they wouldn't expect.
- Think like a journalist: publish content that is highly "snackable" (easy to consume) and shareable (informative, entertaining, helpful, and surprising in its story and revelations).
- Enrich and amplify your content by enlisting influencers, trusted industry experts, or your executives to contribute.

## DON'T:

- Deliver a sales pitch. Content should build relationships with buyers using trustworthy insights.
- Be overly broad in your content themes. Buyers will recognize you as an expert in only one or two areas.
- Use complex, flowery, or "salesy" language.
- Publish product—or company-focused content for top-of-funnel audiences.
- Write without taking a position through forceful headlines and compelling arguments.
- Create content that people can't easily consume on phones or tablets. Remember, 75 percent of Sponsored Content engagement happens on mobile.
- Go it alone! Enlist experts within your company to contribute their ideas and help write your content. Encourage your employees to mention, share, post, or link back to the content you create.



of Sponsored Content engagement happens on mobile devices. Make sure your content looks great on small screens.

## Map Your Content to Members' Goals on LinkedIn

Once you understand the themes and questions that your audience expects from your content, consider how you will package your insights. What content formats appeal to LinkedIn audiences? Luckily, we surveyed more than 2,000 of the most highly active content consumers and sharers on LinkedIn to find out what kind of content they engage with. These formats will help you deliver on members' expectations that content should enhance their knowledge, build their professional personas, and strengthen their networks.

### Popular Content Types for Gaining Knowledge:<sup>1</sup>

#### New Research



#### Breaking Industry News



#### Case Studies



### Popular Content Types for Helping Decision Making:

#### Career Advice



#### Brief, Concise in Length



#### Produced by Business Leader



1: LinkedIn Professional Content Consumption Report 2014

Q1: "What kind of content in your LI stream are you more likely to click on?"

- asked to LI members who had consistently clicked on content in the past

Q2: "What kind of content in your LI stream are you more likely to share?"

- asked to LI members who had consistently shared content in the past



"As a marketing team, start by understanding your audience. Real-time audience analytics can tell you exactly who is engaging with your brand, what they're reading, which topics they're more interested in, how they're engaging with your competitors. You can also look at search trends to look at what they need and what they're sharing. Finally, create audience segments against the people most relevant to your brand and sales team. And use these insights to drive your content strategy."



**Alicianne Rand**, VP of Marketing, NewsCred





# Turn Your Ideas Into “Big Rock” Content

## What is “Big Rock” content? Simply put, it is content that...

1. Delivers value to your audience.
2. Includes eBooks, webinars, research reports, instructive guides, and other “meaty” content assets.
3. Serves as evergreen content you can re-purpose.
4. You release about once per quarter.

The point is, you need not overextend yourself by producing a huge, unique piece of content every week or month. Instead, focus on one major content drop per quarter and carve it into smaller pieces that you publish throughout the period. Have a whitepaper that’s underperforming? Turn it into a highly visual, compelling Big Rock eBook.

For example, at LinkedIn, we published our 58-page ***Sophisticated Marketer’s Guide to LinkedIn***, a thought leadership handbook that answers questions marketers have about social, content marketing, and LinkedIn. We carved this eBook—our Big Rock—into several small pieces of content that we published in many different formats: infographics, webinars, ***SlideShare presentations***, blog posts, and more.

Big Rock content is terrific for both thought leadership and lead generation. That said, we usually use Big Rock content to capture leads because people are often willing to share their contact information in exchange for rich, valuable content. Plus, the assets we carve off from the Big Rock serve as great branding vehicles and build awareness and affinity with audiences still in the early stages of their buyer’s journey. In other words, they make it possible to engage prospects before they may be ready to raise their hands and give us their contact details.

Still not sure it’s worth your time and effort to develop a meaty content asset? Perhaps this will change your mind: Altogether, our *Sophisticated Marketer’s Guide* eBook yielded enough content and campaigns to drive over 18,000 percent ROI at LinkedIn during the quarter following publication.



“Inspiration comes from different places. Set aside time to study content trends among customers, journalists, analysts, and competitors. It could be the catalyst for your next great marketing idea.”

**Chris Bolman**, Director, Integrated Marketing,  
Percolate



## How to Carve a “Big Rock” Into Smaller, Valuable Content Assets

Once you have your Big Rock, you can slice it up into smaller pieces that spark additional interest. **Post those pieces** to your LinkedIn Company Page by including them in one of your company updates.



Interested in getting a full lesson in how to craft effective Big Rock content? Download our free eBook ***Creating Your First Big Rock: A Step by Step Guide for Marquee Content.***



## Use Tools That Make it Easier to Create or Source Your Content

Content doesn't have to be difficult. If you're looking to scale your content efforts, try working with one of LinkedIn's **Certified Content Partners**. These companies help marketers create, curate, or license professional content using powerful platforms, tools, and editorial resources. They'll help you save time and effort and improve the quality of content you publish on LinkedIn.

*the Atlantic*

ATLANTICMEDIA  
STRATEGIES

Bloomberg

CBS Interactive

Contently

FH ContentWorks

GROUP  
SJR

IDG  
INTERNATIONAL DATA GROUP

KING  
CONTENT

NewsCred

Percolate



## Customer Success Story: Queen's School of Business

Promoting insightful business content drives leads, awareness, and enthusiasm for top M.B.A. program

# QUEEN'S SCHOOL of BUSINESS

As one of the world's premier business schools, Queen's School of Business uses business insights to demonstrate the type of discussion and thought leadership that happens in their classrooms—taking a more content-driven approach to driving leads and awareness for their business programs. “Instead of simply promoting a list of bullet points about our program, we wanted to showcase the conversations that happen in our classrooms,” says Neil Bearse, Director of Marketing for Queen's School of Business. “And bringing insights content to places where more people can see it and share it is part of that same goal.”

### Challenge

- Raise awareness of QSB Insight, the school's thought leadership platform.
- Increase attendance at Executive Education faculty webinars.
- Gain leads for the school's Executive M.B.A. program.

### Solution

- Promote content from QSB Insight, as well as upcoming webinars, using LinkedIn Sponsored Content.
- Drive attendance for information sessions on degree programs via LinkedIn Sponsored InMail campaign.



# Customer Success Story: Queen's School of Business

Promoting insightful business content drives leads, awareness, and enthusiasm for top M.B.A. program

## Results



**300%** increase in traffic to QSB Insight.



**60%** increase in webinar attendance.



**450** leads for Executive M.B.A. program.

## How they did it

- **Targeted the right audiences:** Leveraged the accurate, up-to-date data in the LinkedIn professional profile to identify ideal prospects, including segments like member seniority, education level, geography, and company size.
- **Focused on building relationships:** Posted helpful, easy-to-consume thought leadership content that addressed the professional needs and interests of their target audience, using preferred formats like webinars, videos, and blog posts.
- **Enlisted expert support:** Worked with a LinkedIn account team to identify campaign optimization opportunities.



**Queen's School of Business** · Sponsored

Join us on July 23rd to learn more about a career-changing program for senior leaders. The 60-minute presentation will include a sample lecture by Dr. Elspeth Murray and Q&A with program alumni. A copy of the recording will be emailed to all who register.



**Queen's Executive Program - Online Information Session**

[business.queensu.ca](https://business.queensu.ca) · The Queen's Executive Program is Canada's most popular executive program. The 3-week curriculum provides an extensive overview of general management concepts, frameworks, tools and techniques.

✦ Follow Queen's School of Business · Like (25) · Comment (3) · Share · 11mth ago



"LinkedIn is the perfect accelerator for great content, which helps us become more influential and change the way people think—while generating excitement about our programs both internally and externally,"

**Neil Bearse**, Director of Marketing,  
Queen's School of Business



A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a white button-down shirt and grey trousers, stands on a rooftop pool deck. She is looking down at a tablet device she is holding. The background shows a swimming pool, a city skyline, and a construction site with a yellow crane.

## Step Three:

Turn your content into compelling Sponsored Content



# Illuminate Your Brand With a Smart Company Page or Showcase Page

More than three million companies leverage **Company Pages** to build relationships by sharing relevant information, encouraging vibrant discussions, and publishing useful insights that help our members become more productive and successful. And your brand content should be a big part of that strategy.

Your Company Page is the ideal central hub for your content. It's often one of the first pages that LinkedIn members visit when checking out a company, making it the perfect place to feature thought leadership content, including links to your latest and greatest whitepapers, eBooks, and how-to content.

To complement the content your organization authors, point people to other relevant content by curating articles such as industry news, trends and content from LinkedIn Influencers. The idea is to show that your perspective isn't trapped within the four walls of your company and that your ultimate goal is to educate anyone interested in the topic. In other words, it's a way to demonstrate that you're not company- or product-focused, but instead are truly motivated to help others.

With Showcase Pages, you can now extend your thought leadership content by creating dedicated pages for your company's more prominent brands, businesses, and initiatives. These pages allow you to segment content for distinct

audiences based on their various interests in different aspects of your business. It's a fantastic way to directly engage the right people in the right context with thought leadership content. Combine a Company Page and Showcase Page and you get a one-two punch of broad content and more specific thought leadership content.



**Company Page:**  
Build a following  
for your business.



**Showcase Page:**  
Highlight a brand,  
product, or initiative.

Need help building your own Company or Showcase Page?  
[Visit our resource center.](#)

## Pick the Right Tool for the Job: Meet LinkedIn's Certified Ads Partners

**Before you sponsor your LinkedIn content, consider what tools you will use. Take our [product tour](#) to explore how to get started with Sponsored Content.**

If you're an administrator of your LinkedIn Company Page, there are three ways to launch a Sponsored Content campaign with self-serve tools:

- Sponsor content directly from your LinkedIn Company Page or Showcase Page.
- Try LinkedIn's new-and-improved native [campaign manager](#) for easy campaign creation and management.
- Work with a [LinkedIn Certified Ads Partner](#) if you need to scale your Sponsored Content spend and access advanced campaign management dashboards.

Let's explore LinkedIn's partners a little more. If you plan to run Sponsored Content campaigns at scale, test and optimize lots of content or updates, or advertise across major social channels, then these Certified Ads Partners could be right for you. Their sophisticated campaign management tools and expert managed services will help you optimize the launch,

tracking, and management of your Sponsored Content.

In a test, LinkedIn marketers who let partners manage their Sponsored Content campaigns saw **30 percent higher** engagement with their content on average. And in the last quarter of 2014, campaigns running through these partners' tools performed **63 percent better** than the LinkedIn average.





## Pick the Right Tool for the Job: Meet LinkedIn's Certified Ads Partners (Continued)

**LinkedIn Certified Ads Partners offer powerful campaign management dashboards designed to help you save time and improve performance:**

- Bulk editing your campaign's content, targeting, budgets or bidding
- Rules-based workflow automation
- A/B testing for Direct Sponsored Content
- Access to all major social channels
- Day-parting
- Expert managed service
- And more!




better Sponsored Content performance when advertisers worked with a LinkedIn Certified Ads Partner on their campaigns.


# Visualize Your Content

It's probably no surprise that people find **visual** content more engaging. Research from LinkedIn shows that including rich media in your company updates can nearly double the engagement with your posts. Here are some tips for adding a visual spark to your LinkedIn content.

1. **Include thumbnail images in your content.** If you post a link to a landing page, LinkedIn will auto-generate a thumbnail image. If you don't like it, you can upload your own.
2. **Uploading rich media like infographics or other image files?** When you sponsor the content, you can link that piece of rich media to your landing page and use it to drive traffic. When members click the image, they will instantly arrive at your site.
3. **Use crisp (i.e., not blurry) images with bright colors.** Images of people also tend to drive clicks. Need tools to help you source imagery? Explore our **Certified Content Partners**, whose tools can give your team helpful content development resources.
4. **Have SlideShare presentations or videos from YouTube or Vimeo?** Post them in Sponsored Content and members can play them directly in the feed.
5. **Post a variety of content formats, from image files to SlideShare presentations to infographics.** Visit the LinkedIn [Help Center](#) for a full list of supported file types in Sponsored Content.

**Nissan Motor Company** • Sponsored

When we look for inspiration, the sky's the limit. That's why a group of our top designers met the US Navy's elite flight demonstration team – better known as the Blue Angels – at their hangar in Pensacola, Florida. As the pilots took the Nissan GT-R for a test drive, our team studied the fighter... more



✦ Follow Nissan Motor Company • Like (464) • Comment (92) • Share • 26d ago

Nissan attached a compelling image to show what inspires their products



"On LinkedIn, a picture can attract your attention much more quickly than a text update. Our research shows that brands have anywhere from 2.8 to 8 seconds to capture members' attention on social media. This means that your brand needs to use visuals to pull your audience in and get them to click on your content. To improve engagement, avoid stock imagery. Instead, use authentic images and videos personalized to the information you're communicating."

**Jessica Goglio,**  
Head of Creative Lab, Sprinklr



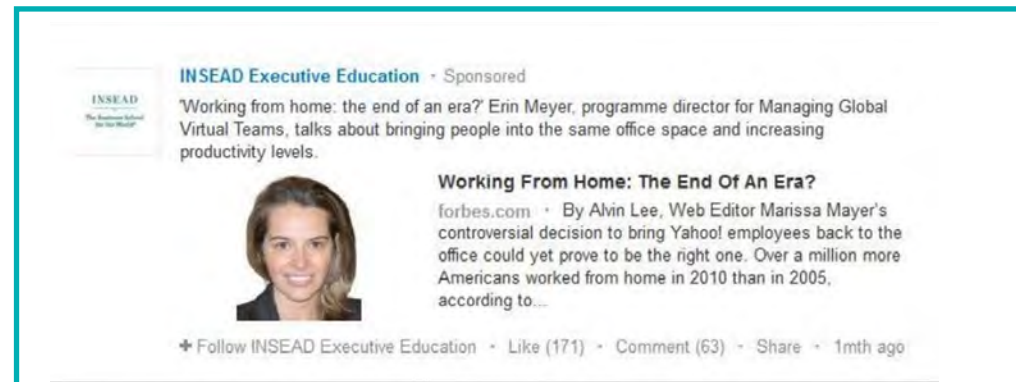


# Think Like a Journalist

Great content marketers think (and write) like journalists. They pick an issue their audience cares about deeply and become experts in it, seeking to own that issue. Next, they take a stand on that issue with provocative arguments and insights that make their audience see that issue in a new light.

When it comes to Sponsored Content, thinking like a journalist starts with writing a captivating post to draw members to your content. Remember, you have only a couple of seconds to capture your audience's attention—make those seconds count.

1. Write brief, compelling headlines that capture members' attention.
2. Keep your summary to 150 characters or fewer.
3. Use numbered lists, surprising stats or figures, or stake out a strong position on an issue with a bold statement.
4. Name-drop by referring to business luminaries and recognized executives where relevant. For example, share a LinkedIn Influencer post from your CEO or contributions from a well-known partner or customer.
5. Call out your audience in your post by referencing who they are: their position, title, or other marker.
6. Address members directly by using the word "you."
7. Explain what's in it for them if they click: How will engaging with your content help your audience? Don't leave people guessing.



INSEAD Executive Education • Sponsored

"Working from home: the end of an era?" Erin Meyer, programme director for Managing Global Virtual Teams, talks about bringing people into the same office space and increasing productivity levels.

**Working From Home: The End Of An Era?**

forbes.com • By Alvin Lee, Web Editor Marissa Mayer's controversial decision to bring Yahoo! employees back to the office could yet prove to be the right one. Over a million more Americans worked from home in 2010 than in 2005, according to...

✦ Follow INSEAD Executive Education • Like (171) • Comment (63) • Share • 1mth ago

INSEAD asked a thought-provoking question about a hot topic



"The golden rule is treat others how you would want them to treat you, and the social rule is to use each platform as it's intended. LinkedIn is a professional network, so talk about trends and best practices for your industry. Use smart copy to engage members—a captivating headline and beautiful imagery that draws them in. What works will vary by industry and company, which is why it's important to test different content mixes, posting frequency, etc."

**Emily Houghton**, Story Planner,  
Brand Networks



# Put Relevant Content in Front of Your Customers Based on Their LinkedIn Profile Characteristics

LinkedIn lets you reach your ideal customer persona based on accurate and publicly available profile information. Using fields like seniority, job function, title, industry, geography, education, company name, LinkedIn Group membership and more, you can place your content in the feed of the people who are most likely to find it relevant and interesting.

## Here are three tips for effective targeting on LinkedIn:

1. Don't hyper-target: Stick with two or three targeting criteria, but no more. While you could get more granular, doing so could limit your reach. In North America, your target audience should be no fewer than 300,000 members.
2. Start with a broad target and refine over time based on which kinds of members appear to be engaging with your content the most.
3. Ask yourself if the audience you're targeting is truly a good fit for the content you're publishing. If not, consider targeting new audiences or refining your content to match the needs of the audience you are trying to engage most.

| Sponsored Content audience targeting options |   |
|--|---|
| Company                                      | Company Size  |
|  | Industry  |
|  | Company Name  |
| Person                                       | Seniority   |
|  | Job Function  |
|  | Title   |
| Other  | Gender, Age, Groups, Education (i.e., School, Degree) |
|  | Field of Study  |
|  | Geo-Location  |
|  | Skills  |



## Give Your Campaign a Sturdy Foundation

How you structure your campaigns is just as important as the content that powers them. Get better performance by following these simple tactics:

1. Ideally, each campaign should have two posts as a minimum. LinkedIn's ad platform automatically optimizes your campaigns to show top-performing posts.
2. Determine top performers in each wave and keep those posts running throughout subsequent waves.
3. Let campaigns run for at least three weeks. Allowing your campaigns time to gain clicks and engagements can help your content appear in members' feeds more often.
4. Nights and weekends are when people catch up on content, especially on mobile, so try keeping your campaigns running during these times.
5. Schedule intelligently: Launch content in three or four sets of posts—one set each week. Every week, turn off the lowest-performing posts in the prior week's set. By the end of the month, you'll be left with one group of live posts that were all top-performers in their set.
6. Set a daily budget of no less than \$200. This approach will help deliver a larger sample size of impressions, clicks, and social actions, so you can make more informed optimizations.



"When we posted with a more consistent content cadence, the blog subscriptions generated from our own Sponsored Content campaigns grew 30 percent. These subscribers are more loyal, meaning they are more likely to renew their services with our company."

**Alicianne Rand**, VP of Marketing, NewsCred



"Include three to five posts in each campaign, even if they are just different variations of each other. Doing so will allow LinkedIn's algorithm and frequency caps to optimize toward the best piece of content for your target audience."

**Morgan Kelly**, Director of Partnerships, 4C Insights



## How Long Should Your Posts Run?

- Launch content “waves” of four posts and switch off as performance peaks.
- Determine top performers within each wave and then run them together.





# Bid to Win

Sponsored Content works on a second-price auction basis. This means to get your ads seen in members' feeds, you bid for placement in a marketplace. True to its name, our auction model means that if you place the winning bid, you only pay as much as the second-highest bidder. The following recommendations can help you place a winning bid:

1. Driving leads or content downloads? Bid on a cost-per-click (CPC) basis to start so you're only paying when someone takes an action with your content.
2. Focused on thought leadership and branding? If so, you probably care about content views, so start with cost-per-thousand-impressions (CPM), especially if you're promoting rich media like an infographic, video, or SlideShare.
3. Start strong out of the gate by bidding at the high end of the recommended range: Remember, in a second-price auction, as the winner, you only pay as much as the second-place bidder.
4. Campaign pacing too quickly? If you're paying on a CPM basis, try switching to CPC to moderate your spend rate.
5. Bids aren't the only way to win at auction. LinkedIn **automatically rewards marketers** who regularly post content that earns lots of clicks, likes, comments, and shares. Turn off low-performing posts and move budget into higher-performing ones to make more efficient use of your bids.



Want to learn more about auction and bidding for Sponsored Content?  
**[Watch our video!](#)**



"If you're underpacing and you need more impressions, increasing your bids and daily budget can help boost your impressions. Similarly, if you're spending too quickly and need to draw out your campaign, experiment with a slightly lower bid."

**Sahil Jain**, CEO and Co-founder, AdStage



"Don't set an end date on your campaigns. Instead, simply set a total campaign budget. This ensures that you can maximize the impression reach of your campaigns while staying within your spend targets."

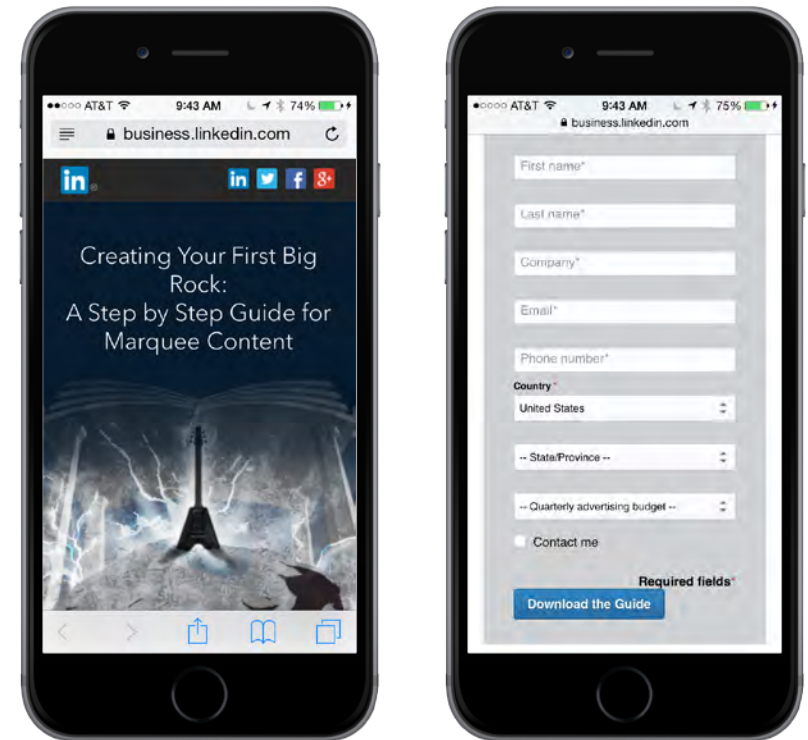
**Jennifer Wormington**, LinkedIn Product Manager, 4C Insights



# Make Your Landing Pages Mobile-Ready

Once a LinkedIn member clicks on your Sponsored Content to visit your website, delight them with an experience that will convert them to a customer or build your brand as a thought leader and trusted expert. Remember, 75 percent of Sponsored Content engagement usually comes from mobile, so a site that is mobile-ready will help you keep members engaged. A few more tips to keep in mind:

- If you're driving leads through a form-fill where members can download content, include more on your page than just a lead form. Landing pages should seamlessly flow from the Sponsored Content, explaining why the content is valuable enough to give up personal info. To that end, your page should feature a prominent call to action to download the full asset.
- Keep your forms short. This can increase conversion rates—no one likes filling out a lengthy form, especially on mobile!
- Make sure your landing pages are using responsive design—otherwise you are likely going to miss the opportunity to convert members visiting your site from mobile devices. Need more info on designing for mobile? [We've got you covered.](#)



"Optimize your Sponsored Content for mobile: have a clean, short and provocative headline, a clear call to action, and a captivating image."

**Chris Bolman**, Director, Integrated Marketing,  
Percolate





## Customer Success Story: HubSpot

HubSpot drives high-quality leads with Sponsored Content in the professional feed

# HUBSPOT



### Challenge

HubSpot, a pioneer of inbound marketing, wanted to engage marketing professionals in small-to medium-sized businesses by targeting them with industry-leading eBooks, webinars, and how-to guides, with the ultimate goal of generating traffic and leads.

### Solution

By launching a LinkedIn Sponsored Content campaign, HubSpot...

- Expanded their targeted reach among the most relevant audiences for each piece of content.
- Promoted their top-performing offers in a professional context across desktop and mobile.
- Strengthened their lead generation program and captured contact information.
- Gained instant feedback on which content drove the most engagement.



# Customer Success Story: HubSpot

HubSpot drives high-quality leads with Sponsored Content in the professional feed

## Results

LinkedIn Sponsored Content has been one of the most successful lead generation campaigns for HubSpot, as the quality of leads is much higher than other paid media platforms. HubSpot drove 400 percent more leads within their target audience than lead generation efforts on other platforms—making Sponsored Content one of HubSpot's largest paid lead generators during the campaign period.

## How they did it

- Published content that helped their target audience of marketers become great at what they do: free marketing eBooks, templates, and other educational or planning tools.
- Maintained a consistent cadence by releasing new content multiple times per week.
- Sponsored their best content: Used LinkedIn analytics to measure which posts perform best, and then put promotional budget behind that content.



HubSpot • Sponsored

Did you know that you can design professional-looking infographics right in PowerPoint? No designer or fancy software required! Grab some templates and get started:



**Free Template: How to Easily Create Five Fabulous Infographics in...**

[offers.hubspot.com](https://offers.hubspot.com) • Learn how to design amazing infographics with nothing but powerpoint with our free template: How to Create 5 Fabulous Infographics in...

✓ Following • Like (573) • Comment (20) • Share • 2mth ago



A man wearing a light blue vertically striped button-down shirt is seated at a desk, typing on a black computer keyboard. His hands are positioned over the keyboard, and his fingers are visible pressing keys. To the right, a portion of a black computer monitor is visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing an office environment with shelves. An orange semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image, containing white text.

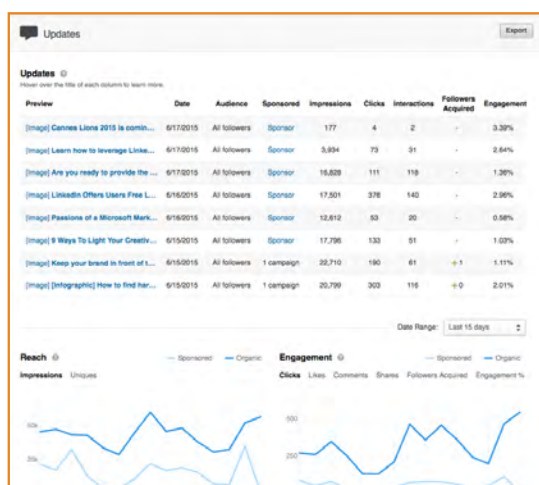
## Step Four:

Test, learn, and optimize

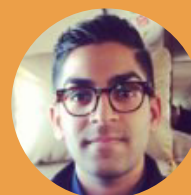
# Your Campaigns are Continuous Experiments—“Always Be Optimizing”

Getting off to the right start is important, but campaign success is the result of ongoing testing, learning, and improvement. Look for what’s working—or not working—in your Sponsored Content and make changes to your campaigns once or twice a week accordingly.

1. **Add URL tracking codes to measure post-click actions like site visits or conversions:** Use Google Analytics, Adobe Omniture, or other URL tracking services to measure traffic and lead capture from your campaigns. Get in the habit of tagging all URLs for LinkedIn posts; even if they are just organic posts, you may decide to sponsor this content later.
2. **Use LinkedIn Analytics to measure your top-performing organic content—then sponsor that:** Amplify the reach of your best organic content by adding it to a paid campaign.



You can access your company content analytics by clicking “Analytics” near the top of your LinkedIn Company Page, or by using the “Tools” dropdown on your Showcase Page. If you’re working with a LinkedIn Certified Ads Partner, you will also have access to analytics through that partner’s Sponsored Content campaign tool.



“Use your Company Page analytics to measure which organic content is performing best, and sponsor your best content. Test multiple pieces of creative to get insights into what’s working with your audiences. Run at least two or four updates simultaneously in a campaign to ensure there’s always fresh content for your audiences to see.”

**Sahil Jain**, CEO and Co-founder, AdStage



“Stay flexible with your audience and content strategy and amplify the content that is performing well. Just because you had originally intended a short flight for a certain piece of content doesn’t mean you can’t extend its duration or back it with more budget than originally planned if the data shows impactful results.”

**Jeff Fishbain**, Director, Media Services, Brand Networks





## Your Campaigns are Continuous Experiments–“Always Be Optimizing” (Continued)

3. **Take advantage of Direct Sponsored Content** to test out many variations of creative and audience targeting. An expansion of Sponsored Content, Direct Sponsored Content lets you post multiple versions of your content to your audience's news feed without having them appear on your Company Page.
4. **Shift budget** away from low-performing content or irrelevant audiences and toward content or target segments that are delivering the highest engagement rates.

### Improve Performance with Direct Sponsored Content



#### **Personalize**

your message to target each audience



#### **Test**

variations of your content



#### **Control**

what gets published on your Company Page



“Direct Sponsored Content is more laser-focused than Sponsored Content and is great for lead generation. By crafting several versions of a message, personalizing for multiple audiences, and testing different creative with one audience, you can engage specific personas and develop the close professional relationship necessary to turn a site visitor into a prospect.”

*Sahil Jain, CEO and Co-founder, AdStage*



Want to learn more about Direct Sponsored Content?  
**[Visit our blog.](#)**

# Create a Bid Strategy that Reflects Your Lead-Acquisition Costs and Customer Lifetime Value

## Set a budget and bid that make sense for your business:

Campaign pacing too slowly or too quickly? Try experimenting with your bid amounts, daily budget, and bid type. For example, reducing your daily budget can help you slow your rate of spend. On the other hand, switching your bid type or simply raising your bid amount can help you use up your budget faster.

If your goal is lead gen, then your bid should also reflect the value of a lead to your business, as well as the rate at which clicks on your content result in new leads for your business. Need more help optimizing your demand gen plan? Our Company Page Partner HubSpot has written outstanding posts about [setting lead gen goals](#), calculating your [cost of customer acquisition](#), and determining the [lifetime value](#) of a customer.



"We recommend bidding at the high end of the suggested range in LinkedIn's system since you only pay the second-place bid. Also, start targeting broadly to extend your reach, and optimize or narrow down that audience over time based on who is engaging most with your content."

**Evan Thomas**, Campaign Manager,  
Unified Social



"We have seen stronger scale and CTR when we bid on cost-per-click. Especially for smaller audiences under 100,000 or 200,000 users, CPC is particularly effective to increase your pacing and performance. At the same time, if we see an audience that is responding very well to a CPC campaign, we might launch a duplicate campaign to the same audience on a CPM basis just to maximize our reach."

**Jeff Fishbain**, Director, Media Services,  
Brand Networks







Conclusion

### Time to Put These Insights to Work!

If you're a marketer already using or considering LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, it's a no-brainer to include Sponsored Content in the mix. Any solid integrated marketing plan incorporates both owned content and paid media because it's a proven way to extend reach. Sponsored Content fits perfectly into that equation, offering an effective advertising vehicle that gets seen directly in the feeds of the LinkedIn members you choose to target. What's more, Sponsored Content typically earns 3x-5x the engagement of standard display ads on LinkedIn.

Throughout this guide, we've also shared the insights of our **Certified Marketing Partners**. By taking advantage of their vast experience helping marketers with their campaigns, you can get the most from your Sponsored Content. Whether you rely on their strategic guidance to develop your campaigns or use their sophisticated technology to manage and optimize the performance of your campaigns, our partners can help amplify the ROI of your Sponsored Content.

Ready to get started with Sponsored Content? Visit [LinkedIn](#) to learn how to launch your first campaign, or contact your LinkedIn representative today.



Sponsored Content typically earns 3x-5x the engagement of standard display ads on LinkedIn.



## Meet Our Partner Contributors



**4C**

 **AdStage**

*the Atlantic*

ATLANTICMEDIA  
**STRATEGIES**

**Bloomberg**

**brand**networks

 **CBS** Interactive

**Contently**

**FH ContentWorks**

***Freshwire***

GROUP  
**SJR**

 **IDG**  
INTERNATIONAL DATA GROUP

 **KING**  
CONTENT

 **NewsCred**

 **Percolate**

 **salesforce**

 **sprinklr**

**UNIFIED**

## Additional Resources

Explore our free resources for more help with content marketing on LinkedIn

- [\*\*Get Started with LinkedIn Sponsored Content\*\*](#)
- The Top Performing Sponsored Content of 2014
- [\*\*Shine a Spotlight on Success:\*\*](#) How Six Companies Are Winning With Sponsored Content
- [\*\*The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Driving Quality Leads with Content:\*\*](#) How to Fill Your Pipeline Using LinkedIn Sponsored Content
- [\*\*Gallery of Great Sponsored Content\*\*](#)
- [\*\*The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to Thought Leadership\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Official Sponsored Content User Guide\*\*](#)
- [\*\*15 Tips for Compelling Company Content on LinkedIn\*\*](#)
- [\*\*The 2014 Professional Content Consumption Report\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Webinar\*\*](#) replay: Content Marketing Best Practices
- [\*\*Webinar\*\*](#) replay: What You Need to Succeed with Marketing on LinkedIn
- [\*\*Webinar\*\*](#) replay: How to Achieve Face-Melting Content Marketing ROI
- [\*\*Webinar\*\*](#) replay: Representing Your Brand on LinkedIn
- [\*\*The Demand Generation Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn Marketing Solutions\*\*](#)
- [\*\*The Brand Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn Marketing Solutions\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Creating Your First Big Rock: A Step by Step Guide for Marquee Content\*\*](#)





Today, LinkedIn has more than 433 million professionals in its network. That's more than two-thirds of the 600 million professionals on the planet, representing the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent, and educated people.

For more information, visit [marketing.linkedin.com](https://marketing.linkedin.com)