LinkedIn Sales Solutions

6 Steps to Accelerate Your Sales in 2015

Introduction

Collectively, today's B2B decision makers own the majority of the buying journey. Buyers show strong preferences for online education, and brands cater to these preferences by providing helpful content and interaction opportunities on websites, blogs, and social media channels.

Sales organizations have responded to the new B2B buying paradigm by using social selling to become resources for buyers as they move forward in the decision making process.

With twice as many B2B buyers using LinkedIn to research purchasing decisions than any other social network, LinkedIn has become a key social selling tool. Our research has found that the leading sellers using LinkedIn to reach out to prospects earn 45% more opportunities per quarter and are 51% more likely to make quota.

This 6-Step Social Selling Success Kit will help members of the sales organization understand how they can build a rock solid model in six steps that will lead to social selling success in the coming year.

In this eBook, we highlight:

- How to Set Up a Social Selling Foundation
- 4 Pillars of Social Selling
- Measurement and Optimization

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6 Steps to Accelerating Your Sales in 2015

Sales Reps

STEP 1

Set Up Your Foundation

Your LinkedIn profile is not your resume, it's your online reputation. Instead of writing your LinkedIn presence like a resume you would send to a recruiter, use it to demonstrate the value you bring to your clients.

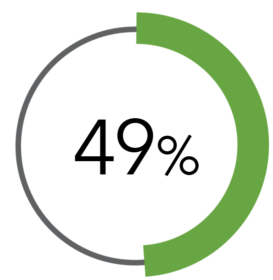
Get started by completing the following LinkedIn profile essentials:

- **Profile Picture:** Add a photo to your profile. Our research shows that a friendly and professional profile picture helps social sellers achieve a 40% higher InMail response rate.
- **Headline:** Write a descriptive headline which includes relevant topics and keywords. Stay focused on your areas of expertise and the benefits you can bring to potential customers. Keep in mind that you have 120 characters.
- **Custom URL:** Customize your URL to make it easier for prospects to find you and to reinforce your personal brand.
- **Summary:** Use your summary to tell a compelling story that will capture the attention of your ideal buyer. Keep it short, engaging, and focused on successes you have achieved, both with customers, and personally in your professional roles.
- **Experience:** Add the key positions you have held throughout your career. Briefly explain your responsibilities and results you helped the organization– or customers achieve within each.

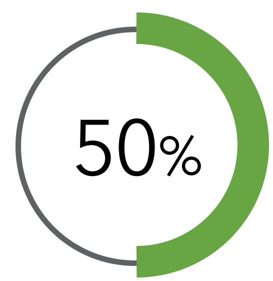
While this is a good start, continue to reach for "all-star" profile status by joining groups, adding skills, asking for recommendations, and adding projects or documents.

Quick Tip:
Turn off notifications when making major changes to your profile to avoid overwhelming your network with updates.

49% of buyers research vendors through their LinkedIn profile



50% will avoid sales professionals with incomplete profiles



STEP 1

Set Up Your Foundation

Build Your Network

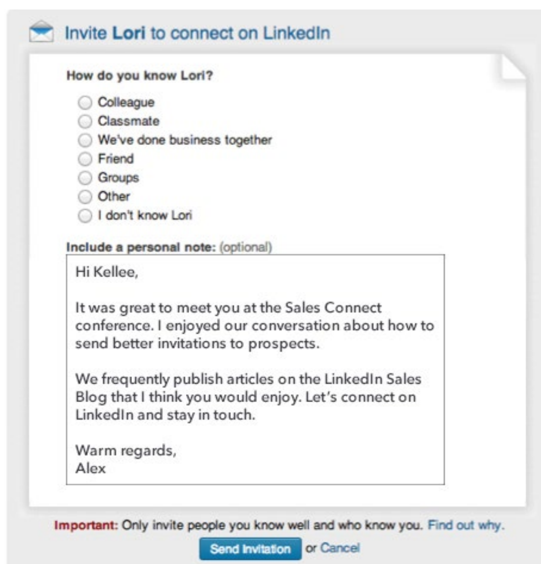
Once your profile communicates the value you bring to buyers, it's time to start building your professional network. It's no secret that a large engaged network can help you connect with more prospects. In fact, **44% of social buyers** use shared connections on LinkedIn to find potential vendors.

Put together the foundation of your LinkedIn network by asking your co-workers and members of your personal network to connect on LinkedIn. Your co-workers can help you establish creditability through recommendations, and your personal connections may be a link to high-value prospects. When deciding whether to add a personal connection, consider if they are relevant to your industry and if they can add value to your network.

For new connection opportunities, visit the **Add Connections** page and link your email account to LinkedIn. You will be able to see the personal connections, prospects, and clients who have LinkedIn profiles.

This will also give you the ability to send an invitation to the ones you want to add to your network.

To increase the number of people who accept your connection request, **personalize your invitation** by referencing a shared interest or LinkedIn Group you have in common, or by mentioning how you met. Think of your invitation as a way to advance your relationship with each networking contact.



To find more connections, you can also:

- Send invites to clients and prospects by entering their **email address** in to LinkedIn
- Click on **People You May Know** to see LinkedIn members you might want to connect with based off common connections or similar profile information (such as educational background, company or industry)
- View LinkedIn's **Who's View Your Profile** tool to see a selection of LinkedIn members who have viewed your profile in the last 90 days

Quick Tip:
Encourage others to connect with you by adding your LinkedIn profile URL to your email signature.

STEP 2

Create a Professional Brand

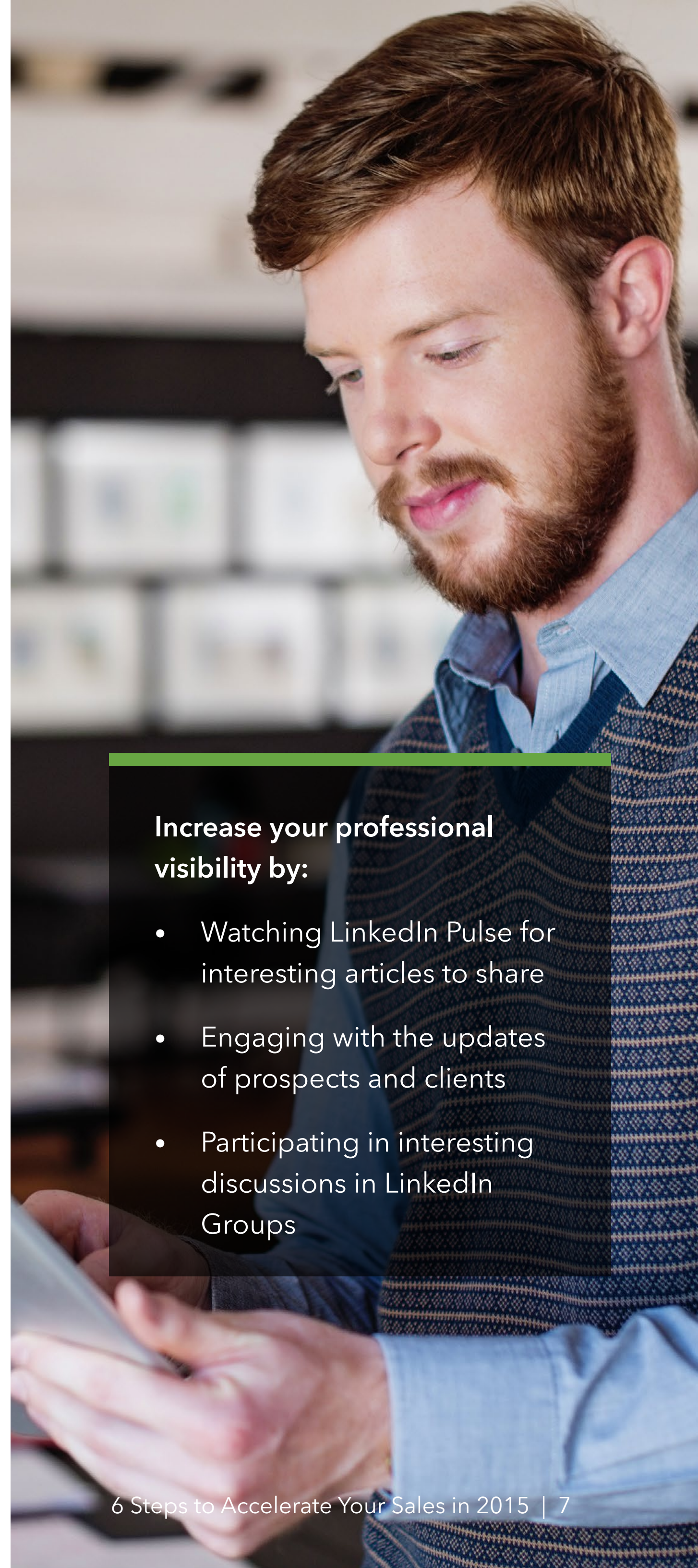
Now that you've started building your LinkedIn network, it's time to showcase the value you can provide to prospects and customers. This is important because **three-fourths of B2B buyers** now use social media to research purchasing decisions, with **twice as many** using LinkedIn as any other social network.

Here is how to maximize your exposure on LinkedIn and better showcase your story on your profile:

- **Help prospects make buying decisions by Adding Links and Uploading Files in your Experience section.** You can feature case studies, white papers, rich media (such as the video your marketing department created based on a recent customer success), and top-notch, educational blog posts.
- **Ask current and past clients for Recommendations.** A good recommendation describes how you worked together and gives specific examples of how a client benefited from working with you. Make sure you write a personal message in addition to the official recommendation request.

Enhance the visibility of your LinkedIn profile by interacting with content that keeps you informed about industry trends. This helps you stay top-of-mind with prospects because every time you link, comment, or share on LinkedIn, your profile appears in the LinkedIn feed of your network.

To post content that will appear in the LinkedIn Feed of your contacts, go to your **Home** page and post the URL in the **"Share an update"** field. Make sure to write a sentence or two about why your contacts should read it. This not only helps your prospects determine if the article will help them with their buying decisions, it demonstrates your knowledge of the field.



Increase your professional visibility by:

- Watching LinkedIn Pulse for interesting articles to share
- Engaging with the updates of prospects and clients
- Participating in interesting discussions in LinkedIn Groups

STEP 3
Find the Right People

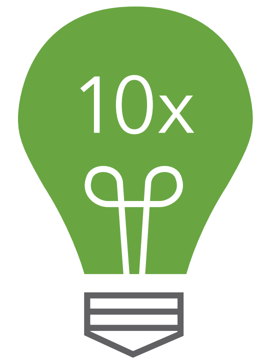
Use the **Advanced People Search** tool on LinkedIn to find professionals within your target market.

You can identify these professionals in four main ways:

- **By Relationship**–Identify LinkedIn members who are connected to you directly (1st degree connections), members who are connected to you through a common connection (2nd degree connections), members who share a common LinkedIn Group with you, and everyone else.
- **By Industry**–Since these are fairly generic classifications, see what industry classification your clients put on their profiles.
- **By Company**–You can search by keyword, but company names will also be indexed if they have created a Company Page.
- **By Location**–LinkedIn has defined geographic locations that can be indexed for easy search filtering.

Consider monitoring your connections for "trigger events" to help you identify new sales prospects who are currently in the market for your product or service.

Examples of trigger events may include changes at your prospects' company, product launches, or when a connection gets a promotion or new job. These are all specific times that prospects are more open to hearing from sales professionals.



Look for recent additions to your target companies. Newly hired decision makers are up to 10 times more likely to make a purchase than established ones.

STEP 4

Engage Prospects with Insights

Nearly **64% of B2B buyers** report that they appreciate hearing from a sales person who provides knowledge or insight about their business. Take advantage of this to get your foot in the door with new prospects, and to develop relationships with existing LinkedIn connections.

When you look for content to share with your prospects, focus on providing insights that will help them make more informed decisions about the challenges they face in their industry.

The content you share should include:

Relevant Industry News

Help your prospects stay up-to-date on their industry by sharing reports and relevant statistics.

Leverage industry data and news on LinkedIn by:

- Sharing links to interesting industry reports in your Status Updates
- Including data and statistics when commenting on prospects' Status Updates or in LinkedIn Group discussions

One place to find articles to share is on **LinkedIn Pulse**, which features recent and top articles posted on the LinkedIn publishing platform. You can see articles posted by your network, as well as posts in categories ranging from Sales Strategies to Leadership & Management.

Watch the **LinkedIn Sales Solutions** blog for other ideas of how to engage your prospects with insights.

Timely Content

Find opportunities on LinkedIn to reach out to your prospects with timely insights. Watch your LinkedIn Feed to see when your connections changes jobs, announce company news, or post Status Updates that indicate they have started researching buyers.

STEP 5

Build Strong Relationships

There are two key aspects to building a relationship with prospects:

- Staying up-to-date with important contacts and companies.
- Providing a pleasant experience that helps your network meet their professional goals.

Top social sellers use the following tactics to strengthen relationships with their prospects:

- Engaging in discussions in LinkedIn Groups and offering to be a resource for the person asking the question.
- Sharing resources that help prospects solve a pain point or gain the information they need to make an informed decision.
- Helping prospects by sharing their Updates or posts they've published.
- Introducing two connections who can mutually benefit from meeting each other.

By using these proactive tactics, you may not have to wait for trigger events. Your activity will encourage your prospect to keep your services top-of-mind during their decision making process.

Before you interact with a prospect, view their LinkedIn profile and ask these questions:

- How do they talk about their job and responsibilities?
- What kind of content do they share or publish?
- What kind of groups do they belong to?
- What discussions do they engage in?

STEP 6
Measure and Optimize Your Social Selling on LinkedIn

Top social sellers on LinkedIn can increase their sales opportunities by **up to 45%** and are **more likely** to hit their quotas than other sales professionals. Our research has shown that the top social sellers on LinkedIn focus on four key activities:

1. **Creating a Professional Brand** by establishing a professional presence on LinkedIn
2. **Finding the Right People** by prospecting with LinkedIn's search and research capabilities
3. **Engaging with Insights** by sharing valuable information to initiate or maintain relationships with clients and prospects
4. **Building Strong Relationships** by expanding your network to reach prospects and people who can refer you to prospects

If you work at a companies of over 100 employees, you can request your official Social Selling Index (SSI) score from LinkedIn. Otherwise track your progress on each of those key activities as you start social selling on LinkedIn.

Here are some additional concrete metrics that will help you see how your actions lead to a better, more engaged network:

- **Who's Viewed Your Profile**, which reveals:
  - **Profile views**–The number of people who have viewed your LinkedIn profile in the last 90 days.
  - **Search results**–The number of people who found your LinkedIn profile via search (LinkedIn and Google) in the last 90 days.

> *"Have a more focused sales strategy—who am I selling what to whom—with the right measurements to know if we're on track."*
>
> *—Michael Morgan, Intergen*

- The number of Connections you have. To find this number go to "Connections" > "Settings". Not only will this show your total contacts, but it is also where you can export your LinkedIn Connections. Do this on a weekly basis and consider syncing or importing to your CRM tools.

STEP 6

Measure and Optimize Your Social Selling on LinkedIn

In addition to the metrics on the previous page, track how you use LinkedIn to see the relationship between your social selling efforts and results.

Pay attention to:

- How many new connections are you making daily/weekly?
- How much content are you sharing daily/weekly?
- How much prospecting time does it take to generate a new sales prospect?
- How many introductions and referrals are you getting on LinkedIn?

Once you start tracking how you use LinkedIn, experiment to see what works best to engage prospects in your industry.

Make sure that you commit to an experiment long enough to see results. For example, if "Who has viewed your profile?" is one of the metrics you use, commit to an action for at least a week to see the percentage change in profile views from the previous week.

Questions you can investigate include:

- How does the amount of content you share correspond to the number of people viewing your profile?
- How many referrals turn into new connections and leads?
- What are the most effective ways of reaching out to new prospects? Or to existing connections?

Quick Tip:
If you are doing the right social selling activities on LinkedIn, you should be generating more prospects with less time.

Track how many prospects you are generating each week and how much time you spend prospecting.

6 Steps to Accelerating Your Sales in 2015

Sales Leaders

STEP 1
Set Up Your Foundation

The rise of social selling has changed the role of sales leaders. High performing social selling teams share resources and contacts, and reward sales team for achieving organizational sales quotas.

When sales teams work together, they magnify their effort. Individual sales reps:

- Have access to a wider network
- Benefit from the increased visibility of the brand
- Collectively create more resources to share with their prospects

As a sales leader, your challenge is to guide and motivate your team as they become social sellers. A key step is to model best practices. Your team will look to your social presence as a guide, so ensure you have an All-Star profile.

To create a Best-in-Class Profile, ask yourself these questions:

- Does your profile read more like a case for your product and service than a resume?
- Is your profile optimized and specific to the industry you serve?
- Do you use keywords specific to your industry within your profile so potential prospects and partners can find you through search?

Continue to be the model of social selling by providing access to your personal network, as well as doing the activities you expect your teams to perform.

Quick Tip:
Find Sales Leaders on LinkedIn that inspire you. Use their profile as an example of how to build a best-in-class profile and expand your visibility.

STEP 1
Set Up Your Foundation

Sell Social Selling to the Team

Since social selling will change how your sales team prospects and builds relationships, you'll need to think of how to get your sales team on board with social selling. You'll have much better results if sales reps dive in enthusiastically, than if you have to push them at every step.

The first step is to identify all the potential pain points that might prevent sales teams from throwing themselves into social selling on LinkedIn.

Ask these questions to identify roadblocks that can hinder social selling adoption by your sales reps:

- What pressures are sales reps under already?
- Are their prospects active on social?
- Will your sales reps face a technology barrier or social media learning curve?

Think about how you can "sell" social selling to your sales team so that they are excited to begin. The key it to present it as an activity that will help them get better results.

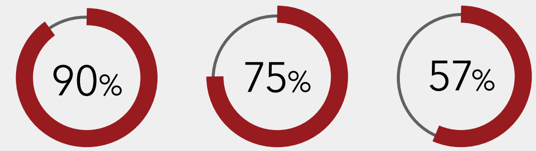
Here are some questions your sales reps will have:

- How will social selling help us achieve our quotas?
- How will social selling benefit the entire sales team?
- How should we get started with social selling on LinkedIn?
- What support will we receive as we start social selling?

By communicating the value of social selling to your team and helping them get started, you will get more buy-in than if you just tell them to use LinkedIn.

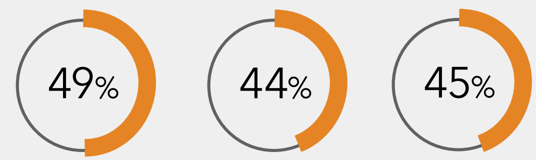
Social Selling Value Proposition

Why Social Selling?



- 90% of decision makers never answer a cold call.
- 75% of B2B buyers use social media in their decision process.
- B2B buyers are typically 57% of the way though their buying decision before they reach out to sales reps.

Why LinkedIn?



- 49% of buyers research vendors through their LinkedIn profiles.
- 44% of buyers find potential vendors through shared LinkedIn connections.
- Top social sellers have 45% more opportunities per quarter and are 51% more likely to make quota than sales reps who do not effectively leverage LinkedIn.

STEP 2

Create a Professional Brand

Our research reveals that 92% of B2B buyers will engage with sellers who are **known industry thought leaders**. Help your sales reps develop their professional brand by providing marketing resources such as case studies or white papers that they can upload to their profile, as well as encouraging them to ask their clients for recommendations.

Quick Tip:
Ask your marketing team to work with sales reps to co-create though leadership content such as interviews, articles, SlideShare presentations and white papers.

Thought leaders open doors for the entire sales team. They form connections with senior decision makers, create resources that the entire team can send to prospects, and attract prospects who are searching for information.

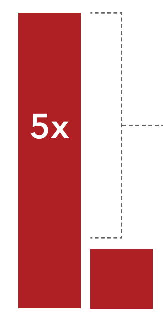
Help your sales team develop their thought leadership by encouraging them to:

- Comment in LinkedIn Group discussions
- Share important industry news on their LinkedIn profile
- Ask clients for recommendations

Your sales team can also develop their thought leadership by posting expert content on their LinkedIn profile. Some options include:

- Publishing long-form content on the LinkedIn publishing platform
- Uploading articles as PDFs
- Linking to relevant articles or rich media such as SlideShare presentations, articles, and blog posts

As a sales leader, it's also important to lead by example and become one of the main experts at your company. Make sure that you are creating expert content yourself, and frequently sharing relevant industry content.



B2B buyers are **5x** more likely to engage with sellers who are known industry thought leaders.

STEP 3

Find the Right People

Our research found that sales reps focused on new business who exceed quota make **148% more connection requests** each month than other sales reps. But it's not enough to urge your sales reps to make new connections, they need to be connecting with high-potential prospects.

Help your sales professionals find the right people on LinkedIn by answering the following questions:

- What industries should your sales reps focus on?
- What regions are most important? (If your company has a geographic focus.)
- What types and sizes of companies are prime targets?
- What job titles should sales reps focus on?

Make sure you communicate to sales reps how important it is to continuously expand their network. The larger their network, the more prospect profiles a sales rep will be able to see.

Another effective prospecting strategy is to urge your sales reps to participate in LinkedIn Groups that are relevant to your industry. Sales reps are **70% more likely** to get an appointment from a cold connection request if they cite a common LinkedIn Group.

LinkedIn Groups give sales reps the ability to:

- View the names and profiles of other members, regardless of level of connection
- Build connections with prospects when they ask questions
- Send InMails to fellow Group members who have allowed that function

Quick Tip:
Make sure your entire sales team is connected to each other on LinkedIn. This will expand the number of profiles that each sales rep can see when they search for prospects.

STEP 4

Engage Prospects with Insights

Customer centric insights open doors in social selling. Sellers who reach out to prospects with relevant insights about their business are **nearly five times** more likely to get a response than sellers who reach out cold. In addition, research shows that **six out of ten B2B buyers** chose the vendor who provided the best mix of content for each stage of their purchasing process.

As a sales leader, your role is to strengthen the connection between the sales reps and your company's marketing team so that your sales reps have the resources they need to engage their prospects with relevant insights.

To identify the resources your sales reps need to build relationships with prospects, ask sales reps:

- What questions do buyers continuously ask you?
- What types of content gets the best results when you reach out to prospects?
- What industry insights do you share with your prospects?

Then, work with your marketing team to identify:

- What kind of content can we create to answer commonly-asked buyer questions?
- How can we make it easier for sales reps to reach out with industry insights?
- How can we extract and use the expertise of our internal experts?

As a sales thought leader, you also have the opportunity position *yourself* as a resource. Providing your perspective on branded content can provide just as much value as the content itself.

STEP 5

Build Strong Relationships

Our research shows that sales reps who exceed their quota engage on LinkedIn with their prospects **39% more** than other sales professionals. This means that they're liking, commenting, and sharing the content that their prospects post and share on LinkedIn.

It's easy for sales reps to put those activities on the backburner. So make sure that you continually encourage sales reps to engage with their network by:

- **Engaging in discussions in LinkedIn Groups** and offering to be a resource for the person asking the question
- **Sharing resources** to help prospects solve a pain point or gain the information to make an informed decision
- **Introducing** two connections who can mutually benefit from meeting each other

You should also encourage your sales reps to use LinkedIn to find opportunities to reach out to prospects and clients. By looking at their LinkedIn feed on their home page, sales reps can see when their connections:

- Change jobs or have work anniversaries
- Post status updates and articles on LinkedIn
- Comment on status updates
- Engage in discussions in LinkedIn Groups
- Make new connections

By encouraging your sales reps to proactively reach out through LinkedIn, you'll help them build relationships and stay top-of-mind with their prospects.

Sales reps who exceed their quota engage on LinkedIn with their prospects **39% more** than other sales professionals.

> *"Post great articles, research more accounts for warm referrals, ask for referrals everyday. Help others in your network."*
>
> *—Casey Van Even, Discovia*

STEP 6

Measure and Optimize Your Team's Social Selling on LinkedIn

As your sales reps dive into social selling, you'll want to track their results to ensure that they're using LinkedIn effectively. A few key questions to ask are:

Are your sales reps becoming more efficient?

- Are sales reps gaining access to prospects earlier in the buying cycle?
- How much time are they spending to gain leads?
- What is their close rate?

What is the adoption rate of social selling by your sales team?

- Are individual sales reps performing the social selling activities that leadership recommends?
- What roadblocks are they encountering?
- What are their ideas for improvement?

As your team dives into using LinkedIn, you'll also want to pay attention to the resources that you provide to sales reps. Make sure you measure:

- How often are you distributing thought leadership content?
- How is it being consumed by your audience?
- How are you alerting sales reps to insights and other resources they can send to prospects?

Are you rewarding the right performance metrics?

If your sales team continues to be evaluated on the same benchmarks as before, they may initially resist social selling initiatives that take time away from their normal sales activities.

Think about how you can use reward metrics that help your team align with the four Pillars of social selling:

1. Track profile completeness to determine how well sales reps are **Creating a Professional Brand**
2. Track senior level connections at key accounts to see how well sales reps are **Finding the Right People**
3. Track engagement metric to see how well sales reps are **Engaging with Insights**
4. Track the number of connection requests sent and received to see how well sales reps are **Building Strong Relationships**

STEP 6

Measure and Optimize Your Team's Social Selling on LinkedIn

Social selling is powerful. While only a tiny fraction of buyers still answer cold calls, **over 90%** will respond to sales professionals who are viewed as experts in their industry. Sales leaders have also found that when their teams dive into **using LinkedIn for social selling**, 80% of sales reps report improved productivity and 72% of sales teams reach their quota.

Yet statistics will only go so far in motivating your sales reps to become social sellers. Your sales team needs to see you "walk the talk" before they really get excited about social selling.

Ask these questions to evaluate yourself as a social selling leader:

- How are you leading by example on LinkedIn?
- What thought leadership activities are you doing?
- Are other professionals in your industry recognizing your thought leadership?

The best way to encourage your sales reps to take social selling on LinkedIn seriously is to see you model best practices. Figure out what works to reach prospects in your industry, and tell your sales team how to mimic your successes.

Make sure to also tell your team about the social selling tactics that didn't work. Sharing your "failures" can help your team avoid the same mistakes, and also encourages the sales reps to experiment with how they reach out to prospects on LinkedIn.

Your sales team needs to see you "walk the talk" before they really get excited about social selling. Lead by example and be able to address their pain points.

6 Steps to Accelerating Your Sales in 2015

Marketers

STEP 1

Set Up Your Foundation

Marketers play an important role in social selling. Nearly **two-thirds of B2B buyers** report that their buying decision was significantly influenced by the expert content provided by the winning vendor. In addition, today buyers are **57% of the way through their buying decision** before they reach out to a sales person.

As the buying cycle has changed, so has the role of the marketing team. Marketers today not only have to generate awareness and identify leads, they need to support the sales team with expert content that matches each stage of the buying cycle.

Here are three things to focus as a marketer to build your foundation for successful social selling:

1. **Understanding your organization's sales methodology**

   One of the best ways to ensure you meet the expectations of the sales team is to proactively reach out to learn their social selling objectives. Ask sales leaders and sales reps what they are looking to accomplish with social selling and the methods they use to reach out to prospects. By making sure that you're on the same page, you'll make sure that there's clear alignment between your marketing initiatives and the goals of the sales team.

2. **Identifying when to transition leads from marketing to sales**

   With **75% of buyers** using social media to research solutions, it's less clear when marketing should hand leads off to sales. When leads are passed along too early, prospects might not feel that their needs are being met, and sales reps might get restless because leads are not ready to buy. Consider working with your organization's sales leaders to put together a Service level Agreement that specifies when marketing passes leads on to sales, how qualified leads will be followed up on, and when sales should pass leads back to marketing for further nurturing.

3. **Developing Social Selling Best Practices for your organization**

   Help the sales team at your organization as they dive into social selling by sharing what you know about marketing on LinkedIn. As you put together a content strategy for your organization's LinkedIn Company Page, consider also writing a Social Selling Playbook for your team.

STEP 1

Set Up Your Foundation

Optimize Your Inbound Marketing for LinkedIn

As part of the marketing team, you likely are already using inbound marketing to attract and qualify leads. The great news is that the resources you are developing for inbound marketing will also help sales reps with their social selling on LinkedIn.

Align your KPIs with Sales

Start off by making sure that both sales and marketing have the same objectives. This is a common social selling stumbling block since less than one third of sales and marketing teams have common KPIs.

Connect with your sales team and sales leaders to discuss:

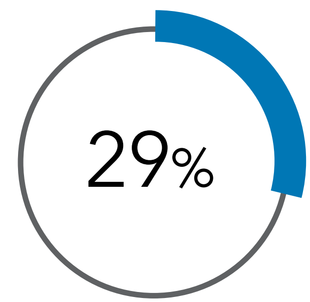
- What questions do buyers have as they move forward in the decision making process?
- What content is most impactful at each stage of the buying process?
- How can you work with sales reps and leaders to develop expert content?

Once sales and marketing are on the same page, you'll need to help your sales team understand how to amplify your marketing messages to the right people and do outreach for your company.

When you create content, think about:

What "trigger events" should alert sales reps that it's time to send a particular piece of content?

- What buyer questions does each piece of content answer?
- What marketing or thought leadership content can sales reps send to prospects to initiate conversations?
- How should sales reps leverage each piece of content to amplify their own thought leadership?



Only 29% of sales and marketing teams have common KPIs. To get better social selling results, make sure you are on the same page as your sales team.

STEP 2

Create a Professional Brand

As a marketer, an important part of your work will be shaping your organization's brand on their LinkedIn **Company Page**. LinkedIn members frequently visit and follow Company Pages to learn more about the organizations of sellers who contact them.

In fact, **74% of B2B buyers** will abandon a search if the company doesn't have a strong social presence.

Here's how to amplify your organization's professional brand:

- Turn your organization's Company Page into a resource that buyers will reference when they are looking to learn more about your industry. Publish studies, link to expert content, and share case studies.
- Create a consistent brand experience by coordinating the branding on your LinkedIn Company Page to match or look similar to the branding on other social sites, your website and inbound marketing collateral.
- Whenever you make an update, give your sales team samples and ideas for how they can share.

As you craft a strong brand for your company, make sure that you also pay attention to your own personal brand on LinkedIn. Many prospects and leads will check out your profile to learn more about you when you engage with them online.

Learn more about how to create a profile that supports your organization's social selling efforts in the **Social Selling Success Kit for Sales Reps**.

STEP 3
Find the Right People

While sales reps will reach out to individual prospects, as a marketer, you should focus on attracting your ideal buyer to your company.

Here are two ways you can help your sales reps find the right people on LinkedIn:

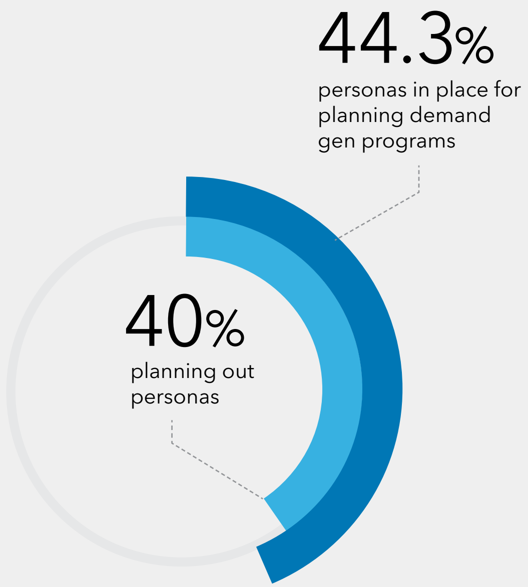
- **Develop Buyer Personas**

  Help your organization's sales reps better understand their prospects by creating buyer personas for their ideal buyers. The **Advanced People Search** tool on LinkedIn can help you view the profiles of prospects in your key industries. You can also refer to LinkedIn Groups to identify the concerns of buyers at different stages of the buying cycle.

  As you develop Buyer Personas, you'll likely learn about how each group interacts on LinkedIn. Pass that information on to your sales reps so they know the best way to reach out to each prospect.

- **Explore LinkedIn Groups**

  LinkedIn Groups help sales reps show off their knowledge and connect with their prospects. Help your sales reps find out how to connect with their prospects on LinkedIn by scoping out your competitors to see where their marketers and sales team representatives interacting on LinkedIn. Most likely, the communities they are engaged with will also contain your prospects.



According to the Annuitas B2B Demand Gen Survey, only **44.3% of companies had personas in place for planning demand gen programs**. Yet, almost **40% were planning out personas**—a clear indication that a majority organizations have personas as a consideration in planning but are not focusing on buyer-centric programs.

STEP 4

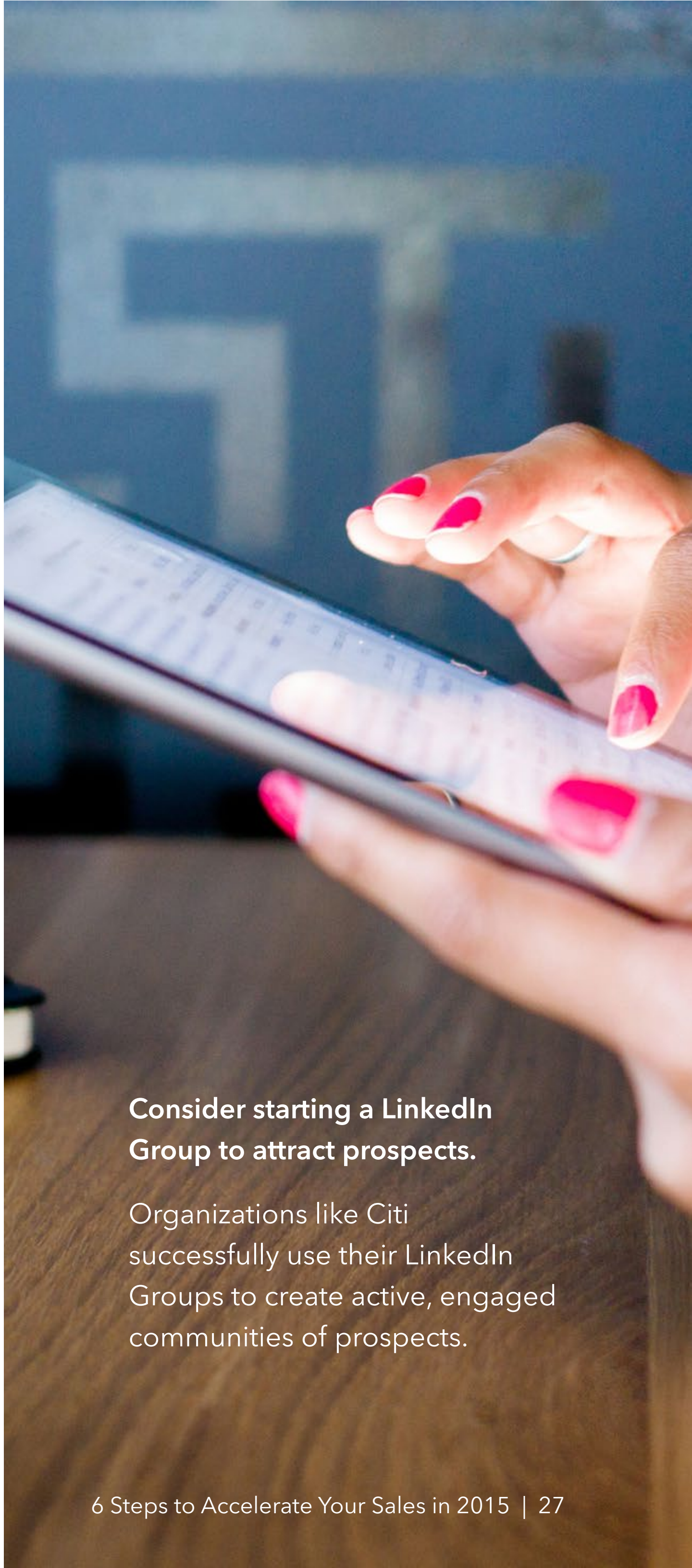
Engage Prospects with Personalized Content

Personalized, relevant content is the key to catching the attention of B2B buyers today. Most buyers can easily ignore generic marketing messages, but **64% of B2B buyers** like being contacted with relevant information for their business.

Here are some ways to directly target prospects through LinkedIn:

- Use **InMail Campaigns** or **Sponsored Updates**) to send industry insights to your prospects. These efforts can be aimed directly at professionals who best fit your buyer personas.
- Add Calls to Action on your LinkedIn profile and organization's Company Page to drive visiting LinkedIn members to destination URLs. Avoid the marketing messages and focus instead on resources such as webinars, gated whitepapers, and reports.
- Post eBooks, whitepapers, webinars and series of posts on your organization's Company Page to help prospects build their professional skills or solve a business challenge. Make sure your educational content outnumbers any news releases and demos.
- Provide insightful feedback to questions in LinkedIn Groups or respond to comments on your LinkedIn Feed. When you show expertise to your target market, you insert your company in your buyer's information-finding process.

You will likely want to spend a lot of time creating useful resources to share on LinkedIn. Nearly **two-thirds of buyers** report that the winning vendor's content had an impact on their purchasing opinion.



Consider starting a LinkedIn Group to attract prospects.

Organizations like Citi successfully use their LinkedIn Groups to create active, engaged communities of prospects.

STEP 5

Quickly Build Quality Relationships

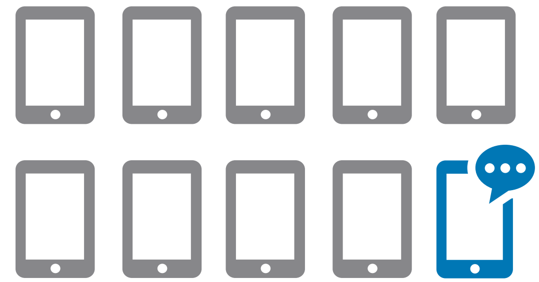
As a marketer, it's your responsibility to provide the first impression for your company. Sales reps and sales leaders need to have the skills to build strong relationships over time, but it's up to you to grab the attention of a prospect and start the relationship.

Here are a few ways to initiate quality relationships with prospects through LinkedIn:

1. Visit the profiles of prospects when they request information from you. When a prospect sees that you have viewed their profile, they will feel like you have taken the time to understand their situation before responding.
2. Reach out through LinkedIn InMails to send prospects additional insights related to the actions they have taken on your website.
3. Strike up conversations with prospects based on their discussions in LinkedIn Groups.

Help your sales team develop their relationships with prospects by sharing your marketing expertise. Some possibilities include:

- Creating templates for InMail messages that sales reps can use to reach out to prospects. Research has shown that **50% of prospects** purchase from the first seller to connect with them, so the faster your sales team can respond, the more successful they will be.
- Sharing how each lead has found the company and what content they have read so that sales reps can send the right insights when they connect on LinkedIn.



With 90% of decision makers never answering a cold call, it's more important than ever to build quality relationships with prospects.

- Alerting your sales reps whenever you post relevant industry or thought leadership content on the Company Page.
- Making it easy for sales reps to share the content you create on their profile by drafting social messages that they can post.

STEP 6

Measure and Optimize Your LinkedIn Efforts

As a marketer working with a social selling team, you will likely have to juggle two different ways of measuring how you engage on LinkedIn.

Sales leaders will want to ensure that your LinkedIn marketing efforts are helping them achieve their objectives. Some metrics they may ask include:

- How many leads from LinkedIn were passed along to sales?
- What is the close rate of leads that were nurtured on LinkedIn?
- How do your marketing materials enabling sales reps to increase how often they reach out to prospects?

In addition to how much you help sales, you will likely also want to track how effective your efforts are at engaging prospects.

As you look to identify the value of your efforts on LinkedIn, search for statistics like:

1. Content Engagement rate on posts (Likes, shares and clicks/impressions)
    - This will help identify content consumed by your audience
2. Community growth, both personal profile and Company Page
    - Increased community means larger network for common connections
3. Open rate and response rate on InMails
    - This will inform you if your InMail strategy and messaging is effective
4. Weekly discussions and comments per group
    - You can find these stats by clicking the "I" icon near the members count and clicking the "groups statistics" link and help you determine if the group is active enough for you to post content.

"There is a disconnect between what marketing is looking to accomplish and what they are measuring...

Those in enterprise demand generation need to better align their goals and objectives with their metrics and KPIs."

—Annuitas B2B Demand Gen Survey

STEP 6

Measure and Optimize Your Efforts

Different messaging appeals to different buyers. Sales reps are often so busy that they don't have time to really test different ways of reaching out to buyers. That's one way that you can add significant value to your organization as a marketer.

When you use LinkedIn, make sure you experiment with many different ways to engaging prospects. Your sales reps and sales leaders will greatly appreciate it if you can tell them what social selling tactics will be most effective at reaching their ideal buyer.

For example, if your company has just published an industry report, you will likely already be tracking:

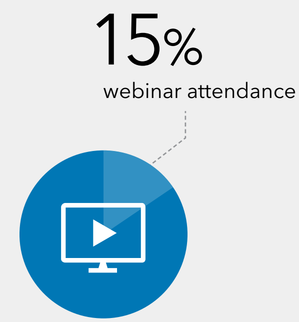
- How many people clicked on the link to the report
- How many downloaded the report

Take your experiment to the next level by using trackable links. You can get an clearer picture of what entices your organization's ideal buyers to engage with your content.

By using trackable links, you can:

- Create several different messages about the report to see which message gets the best response
- See which LinkedIn features (Sponsored Updates, LinkedIn Groups, or InMails) are most effective at reaching prospects
- Track which sales reps have the most engaged network

The more you can help your sales reps and sales leaders engage more effectively with their network on LinkedIn, the more your organization will recognize the value of your efforts and give you more resources to work with.



For Instance, you sponsored an update on your LinkedIn Company Page about an upcoming webinar. You saw X number of clicks on that post that directed your audience to the webinar sign-up page. Yet, when you got to the day of the webinar, your final attendee numbers were only 15% of your LinkedIn update's total clicks.

This may show that your webinar landing page did not provide enough engaging content or value to get users to sign up. Yet your social messaging on the LinkedIn Sponsored Update was enticing enough to get people to click.

Conclusion

It's an ever-changing landscape for sales and marketing professionals. Adapt to new digital sales tools and the evolving buying expectations of prospects has become more important than ever.

As the amount of information available to prospects increases, the power in the buying relationship continues to shift from vendors to the buyers. To stay involved in the buyer's journey, organizations will need to effectively leverage LinkedIn to build relationships with prospects.

Whether you're a sales rep, sales leader or marketer, this Social Selling Success Kit will help you develop a solid social selling foundation based on how the most successful organizations use LinkedIn. It will help you build the professional brand you need, show you how to find the right people to build your network and give you proven advice on how to engage with prospects and build the quality relationships that lead to sales.

For more information on social selling best practices, follow the ***LinkedIn Sales Solution Blog****.*

Resources

Resource and support documents/eBooks

- Social Selling Success Webinar
- How to Guide to Social Selling
- 21st Century Buying Experience
- Annuitas B2B Enterprise Demand Generation Survey