

# ACHIEVING SOCIAL SELLING SUCCESS

How leading sales pros use  
LinkedIn for social selling

**LinkedIn** Sales Solutions

## INTRODUCTION

Charisma, a little knowledge and a decent golf swing used to be all B2B salespeople needed 10 years ago to meet — and occasionally exceed — quarterly quota. Working a little harder could get you a club reward and maybe a promotion.

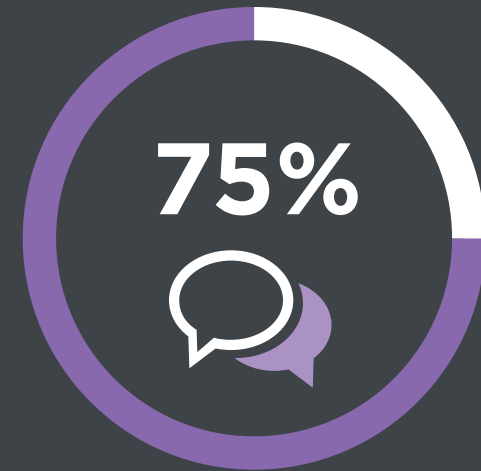
Fast forward to today's buyer. They are too time-starved for golf outings and can search online for information on products and services. They delay engaging with a salesperson, and when they do engage, it's only when they perceive additional value. In response, today's B2B salespeople must continually be establishing credibility and worth.

Successful sales professionals haven't shied away from this transformation. They've jumped on board with new rules of engagement and are applying social selling to connect with prospects. They are using online interaction and connections to target the right prospects, secure a warm introduction, and provide content pitched to the specific problem, role and buying stage.

Social selling is quickly becoming the new bar that separates sales stars from so-so performers.

"Social selling improves win rates because it is far quicker to build a relationship through a warm introduction compared with a cold outreach," said Mike Derezin, Vice President of Sales at LinkedIn. "Buyers are five times more likely to engage if the outreach is through a mutual connection. Social selling also helps account managers grow spend at their accounts because it helps them find additional influencers and decision makers."

### B2B Buyers Embrace Social Media



Of B2B buyers use social media to  
make purchasing decisions

Source: Kathleen Schaub, IDC, "Social Buying Meets Social Selling: How Trusted Networks Improve the Purchase Experience," April 2014

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A group of four business professionals are gathered around a table in an office. A woman in a light blue button-down shirt stands in the center, smiling and looking down at a laptop. To her left, a man in a white shirt and blue tie is also smiling. To her right, a man in a dark suit is leaning over the table, looking at the laptop with a focused expression. On the far right, a woman with glasses is also looking at the laptop. The background is dark and out of focus, with some bokeh light effects. A blue banner with white text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

## UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL SELLING UNIVERSE

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LinkedIn's network of 300 million-plus members is the largest planet in the social selling universe. No other channel has as many B2B professionals representing all types of businesses and industries.

"LinkedIn is the goldmine of the B2B sales world," said Jill Konrath, a B2B sales expert, thought leader and author. "It's the biggest database of business people in the world, and members are highlighting who they are and the best work they've done, so immediately the potential is there to connect to a person. Second, they're all connected to their peers, so you can map out an account. Plus you have the ability to meet them through groups."

### The **4 Pillars** of Social Selling



Successful salespeople use a four-step method to maximize their social selling efforts:

1. Create a professional brand
2. Find the right people
3. Engage with insights
4. Build strong relationships

## The **Social Selling** Index (SSI)

LinkedIn's Social Selling Index is a first-of-its-kind measure of a company's or individual's adoption of the "4 Pillars of Social Selling" on LinkedIn. It's designed to measure adoption of social selling for an individual, a team, or an entire company.\* This measure can be used to assess an individual, or can be aggregated for a team or company measure.

### Social Selling Index



Create a **professional brand**



Find the **right people**



Engage with **insights**



Build strong **relationships**

ABC Co.

**57**

Overall SSI is measured on a 0-100 scale

**19**

**10**

**8**

**20**

Performance on four key activities, each worth 25 points

\*Due to member privacy restrictions, team SSI cannot be provided if team has less than 10 sales professionals.

LinkedIn's Social Selling Index (SSI) shows that, increasingly, salespeople agree with Konrath and are taking action. **From April 2012 to July 2014, the average SSI performance increased 87%** — a demonstration of increased participation in the "4 Pillars of Social Selling."

These professionals know that LinkedIn is the Internet's largest global community of information-seeking B2B buyers who use social media:

- 56% of B2B buyers have used LinkedIn to support their purchase process during the past year. Source: *IDC Research*
- LinkedIn is the No. 1 choice among senior executives who look to connect via social media. Source: *Demand Gen Report*

LinkedIn provides a ready-made platform and set of tools to conduct successful and cost-effective social selling because buyers use the same peer-to-peer connectivity to filter out all but the most valuable of interactions.

"B2B buyers do a ton of research online, and they barricade themselves against salespeople and try to get rid of them as quickly as possible," Konrath said. "The only ones who can get through are the ones who don't sound like everyone else. They've researched their buyer, researched their buyer's industry and can craft useful and relevant messages that stand out. Salespeople really need to wake up and realize that we are in a world where DELETE is the most common reaction."



LinkedIn is an easy and fast way to create an essential network for business development on a global scale.

-Lyulka Dmytro,  
Business Development Manager,  
Opera Software



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## Who is Using **Social Selling**?\*

### Average SSI of Sales Professionals By Industry

Technology, telecommunications and media are leading social selling adoption. Heavily regulated industries are not too far behind, followed by large industries with long histories.

#### Which industries are most likely to use social selling?

Technology-Software **32.6**  
Professional Services **26.1**  
Government/Education/Non-profits **21.3**  
Oil & Energy **23.0**  
Financial Services & Insurance **22.1**  
Healthcare & Pharmaceutical **21.5**  
Manufacturing/Industrial **18.8**  
Aero/Auto/Transport **19.0**  
Retail & Consumer Products **16.6**

\*SSI as of August 2014

### Average SSI of Sales Professionals By Region

North America, Europe and the Middle East are leaders in social selling, but other parts of the world are catching up.

#### Which regions are most likely to use social selling?

North America **24.6**  
Australia, New Zealand **24.0**  
Europe and Middle East **22.5**  
Southeast Asia **19.9**  
Latin America **15.3**  
Other **18.1**





**4 DRIVERS OF IMPROVED**

**SSI PERFORMANCE**



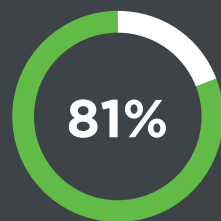
## 4 DRIVERS OF IMPROVED SSI PERFORMANCE

Why should salespeople care about improving their SSI? Here's why: LinkedIn Research shows that SSI leaders have **45%** more **opportunities** per quarter and are **51%** more likely to hit **quotas** than SSI laggards.\*

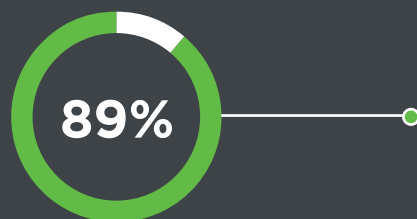
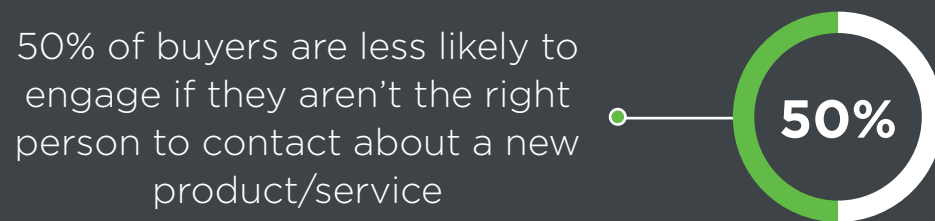
Improving SSI first requires an understanding of the value of each of the "4 Pillars of Social Selling".

1. *Creating a professional brand:* A complete profile defines who you are and adds credibility. The content you share also shapes your brand, so make it a goal to share high-quality information that is helpful and/or insightful and contextually appropriate.
2. *Finding the right people:* Cold outreach is a waste of time and can tarnish your professional brand, as LinkedIn research shows B2B buyers dislike cold calls and emails.
3. *Engaging with insights:* Buyers expect knowledge of potential solutions to their problems or insights that provide a new way to enhance performance.
4. *Building strong relationships:* Gaining insight into buying cycles, business needs and role changes over the longer term helps to maintain client relationships and build iterative sales.

\*Source: LinkedIn Global Survey of 5,000 Sales Professionals, October 2013



81% of buyers are more likely to engage with a strong, professional brand



89% of buyers are less likely to engage if the product/service is not relevant to their company



90% of decision makers never answer a cold call

### Sources:

Harvard Business Review 2012 – Tweet Me, Friend Me, Make Me Buy.

LinkedIn Global Survey of 1,500 B2B Decision-Makers and Influencers, May 2014



# USING LINKEDIN SALES NAVIGATOR TO INCREASE SSI





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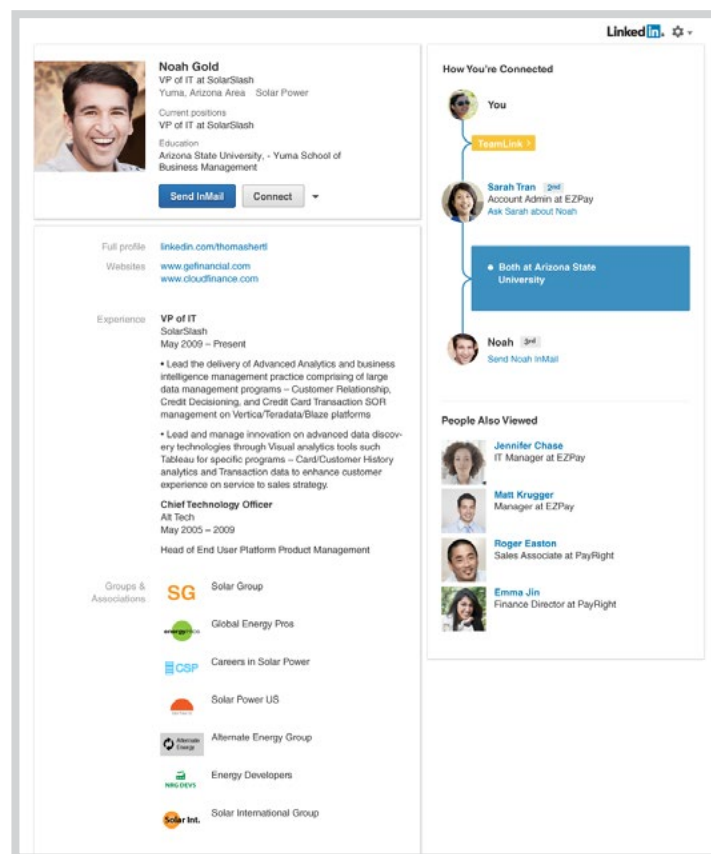
Daniel Lurie, Senior Insight Analyst at LinkedIn, said measures like the SSI are poised to become a standard sales-performance measure as social selling continues to expand.

“As our world is going online, and social becomes a more and more important channel for sales productivity, this type of performance benchmark will become increasingly important to track,” Lurie said.

With an understanding of the “4 Pillars of Social Selling”, you can move to specific ways to improve performance on each of these using Sales Navigator, thus increasing your SSI and improving your benchmark score. Here are details on how:

### 1. Create a professional brand

- Aim for 100% profile completeness;
- Use a tone that matches a customer conversation and describe your story;
- Add rich content, such as SlideShare decks, videos, etc.; and
- Showcase your skills and generate endorsements.



“

Sales Navigator lets me open doors to new contacts that I would not have been able to connect with before.

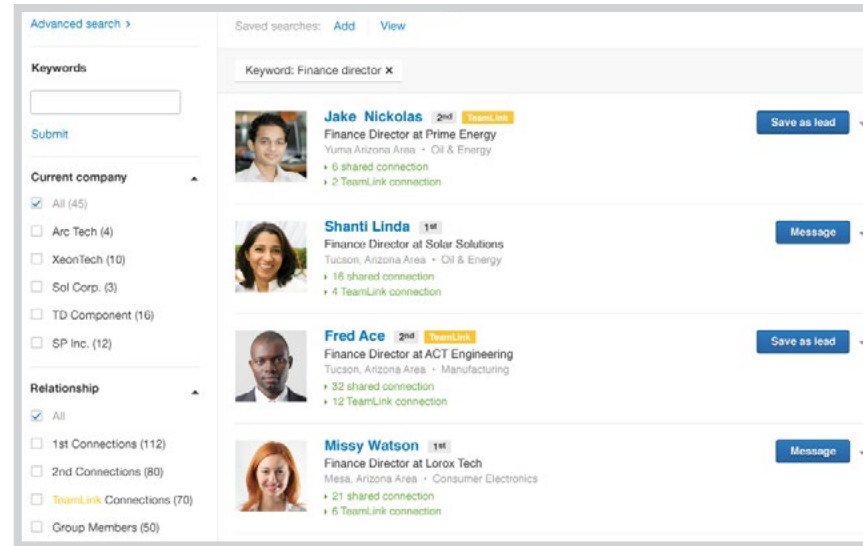
**-David Maybaum,**  
Inside Account Manager,  
Symantec

”

share Tweet

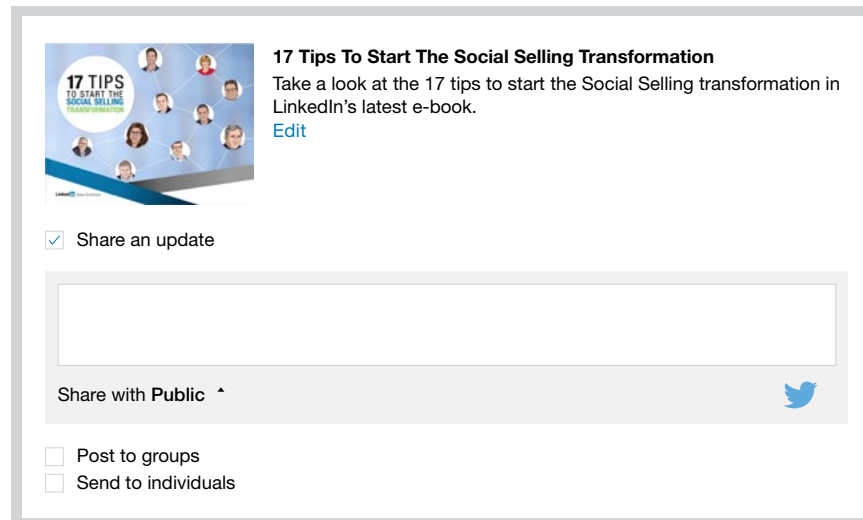
## 2. Find the right people

- Proactively search with Lead Builder to efficiently pinpoint prospects;
- View details of potential prospects in your 1st, 2nd and 3rd degree networks;
- Expand your search using Lead Recommendations to find more prospects; and
- Check who viewed your profile and engage with relevant viewers.











## 3. Engage with insights

- Stay in the know by joining Groups, and follow your prospects and customers, as well as their competitors;
- Post relevant content that can help you become a trusted source for insight;
- Engage with your network by sharing, liking and commenting on posts;
- Reach your prospects with InMails, connection requests and other messages; and
- Save leads and accounts and see real-time updates on the leads you save.



## 4. Build strong relationships

- Connect with your network and with your prospects after introductions;
- Focus on connecting to senior level people at your prospect and customer companies; and
- Connect internally so your colleagues will be able to provide warm introductions.

Lead recommendations	How you're connected	via TeamLink™
	<b>Amanda Richards</b> 2nd TeamLink Director of Management at Xi Technologies Yuma Arizona Area • Oil & Energy 8 shared connection 4 TeamLink connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>
	<b>Charles Boyle</b> 1st Partner at SP Inc. Tucson, Arizona Area • Oil & Energy 3 shared connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>
	<b>Timothy Tran</b> 2nd TeamLink Director at SP Inc. Tucson, Arizona Area • Oil & Energy 1 shared connection 3 TeamLink connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>
	<b>Noah Gold</b> 2nd Connect Link VP of IT Yuma, Arizona Area • Solar Power 3 shared connection 1 TeamLink connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>
	<b>Rose Rand</b> 1st TeamLink Director of Management at SolarSlash Yuma, Arizona Area • Energy 14 shared connection 5 TeamLink connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>
	<b>Jessica Franco</b> 2nd TeamLink IT Manager at SolarSlash Flagstaff, Arizona Area • Solar Power 3 shared connection 1 TeamLink connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>
	<b>Daniel Redford</b> 1st IT Manager at TD Components Yuma, Arizona • Energy 12 shared connection 6 TeamLink connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>
	<b>Oliver Brown</b> 1st TeamLink Director of Management at Xi Technologies Yuma Arizona Area • Oil & Energy 1 shared connection	<a href="#">Save as lead</a>



### What To Send Prospects:

#### Power Tips From a Sales Expert

Jamie Shanks, Managing Partner of Sales for Life, said salespeople need to consider two “moving parts” — context and buying stage — to choose the most effective content to share with prospects on social media.

Content needs to be in context, which means within the sphere of influence of the prospect. Don't just sling over a piece of content that *you* find valuable, Shanks advised. Prospects care about these influencers:

- direct competitors;
- past and present employees;
- vendors; and
- channel partners.

The second important filter is where the prospect is in the buying stage.

“This is where marketing can help the salesperson be organized,” Shanks said. “If you were to picture a buyer's journey being file folders, they would be labeled Why, How and Who.”

**Why:** Prospects are wondering if they have a problem and what the scope of that problem is: Why isn't this working? Why am I looking at this? Why is this an issue? In this stage, blogs, videos and infographics can help the prospect identify and define the problem.

**How:** The prospect has already gone through a priority shift and is pulling from the “how” folder to learn about solutions to the problem. Webinars, eBooks and other information that will help the prospect make good decisions is appropriate.

**Who:** In this stage, the prospect is looking for a solution provider.

Shanks said it is crucial to coordinate the sharing of content to the prospect's stage.

“If you are sending ‘why’ information to someone who is about to make a purchase, they are going to say, *‘Well this doesn't help me. I already know this,’*” Shanks said. “At the same time, if you are sending ‘who’ information to someone who doesn't even know they have a problem, the context is broken.”



A man with short dark hair and a light beard is smiling as he looks at a tablet computer. He is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. In the background, two other people are blurred, suggesting a busy office environment. The overall lighting is bright and warm.

**GO FOR IT! EXCEED QUOTA,**

**MAKE CLUB & GET PROMOTED FASTER**

## GO FOR IT! EXCEED QUOTA, MAKE CLUB & GET PROMOTED FASTER

Not only can social selling help generate more opportunities and increase the likelihood of making quota, but it also can help salespeople stand out and exceed expectations.

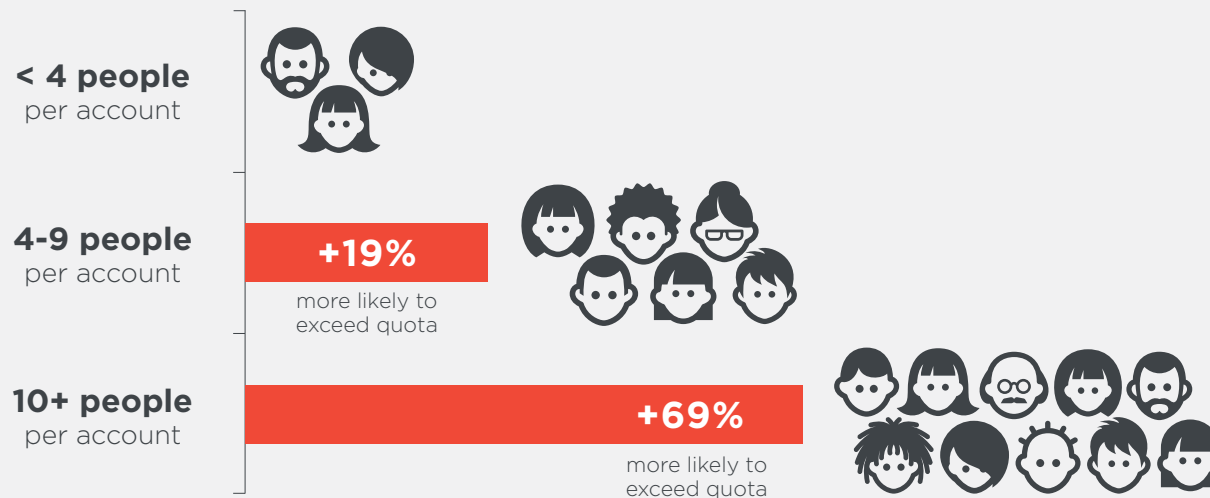
### Exceed Quota: Prospect More

LinkedIn surveyed 5,000 sales professionals globally\* and asked them about performance against quota, and then compared their responses against their sales-prospecting activity on LinkedIn. Sales reps who viewed the profiles of at least 10 people at each of their client accounts were **69% more likely to exceed quota\*** than sales reps who viewed fewer than four people at each account.

### Make Club: 3X More Likely With High SSI

"Club" is a distinction reserved for top performers and who crush their sales quota for the year. LinkedIn analyzed its own sales reps who had a quota that began before Jan. 1, 2013, across all global regions (North America, Europe, Australia and Asia-Pacific) and mapped their SSI. The key finding: **Those with a SSI above 90 were three times more likely to go to Club** than any other sales rep.

Sales reps who viewed the profiles of at least 10 people at each of their accounts were **69% more likely to exceed quota** than sales reps who viewed fewer than 4 people at each account.



## Get Promoted Faster: VP 3.4 Years Ahead of Others

Finally, LinkedIn analysis shows that salespeople who want to get promoted should start using social media to help them sell. LinkedIn analyzed more than 150,000 sales and client-facing professionals who were promoted within a company in the past two years and found that on average, **those with a high SSI score were promoted 17 months faster** than those with a low SSI. Theoretically, if we assume this career trajectory for an individual, then a high SSI individual contributor **could reach VP level 41 months faster** or 3.4 years ahead of someone with a low SSI.\*

### Time to **Promotion** in Months

	High SSI	Low SSI	Difference
Director to VP	<b>33</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>17</b>
Manager to Director	<b>31</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>13</b>
Individual to Manager	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>10</b>

High SSI defined as above 70, low SSI defined as below 30.

## Success Story: Hyland Trims Sales Cycle 60%



*Hyland is creator of OnBase, one of the largest independent enterprise content management (ECM) vendors.*

Many of Hyland's sales reps used databases and conference lists to find new decision makers in their target regions and verticals. But all too often, this information was out-of-date or limited, making it difficult for reps to focus their relationship-building efforts.

The situation only intensified when the sales team was asked to take on even more responsibility for lead generation – and own 60% of their own pipeline.

Because an average OnBase purchase totals about \$200,000, most of Hyland's customers bring multiple decision makers into the purchase process – usually six to eight people per account. That means Hyland reps must be able to identify and build relationships with a number of individuals, including IT and C-level executives.

Faced with these challenges, the team turned to LinkedIn Sales Navigator, which has helped them:

- cut their prospecting time in half;
- more effectively engage decision makers at their accounts; and
- keep up on key changes that may impact the sales.

"We've reduced sales cycles 30 to 60 percent, which has been huge for us when you consider it's usually 12 to 18 months," said Mike Cachat, Industry Account Manager with the Insurance Solutions Group. "If you can condense that to four to seven months, that's a big deal."



A group of business professionals in a modern office setting. Two men are shaking hands in the foreground, while others in the background are clapping and smiling. The office has large windows with a geometric frame.

**CONCLUSION: IMPROVE YOUR SSI  
AND CELEBRATE SUCCESS**

## CONCLUSION: IMPROVE YOUR SSI AND CELEBRATE SUCCESS

LinkedIn's SSI and Sales Navigator provide the foundational resources any salesperson or sales team needs to master social selling. The "4 Pillars of Social Selling" simplify the transformation by providing an ongoing cycle of repeatable steps that anyone can follow.

Social selling shouldn't loom darkly as unknown territory. With LinkedIn's expansive global network and supportive tools, the door is always open for improved performance.



## ABOUT DEMAND GEN REPORT



Demand Gen Report is a targeted e-media publication spotlighting the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and, ultimately, drive growth. A key component of our coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts. For more information, visit [www.demandgenreport.com](http://www.demandgenreport.com).



## ABOUT LINKEDIN SALES SOLUTIONS

### LinkedIn Sales Solutions

LinkedIn Sales Solutions empowers sales professionals to fill their pipelines proactively. Find the right people, know what to say by uncovering key insights, and get warm introductions by extending your LinkedIn network. For more information visit [sales.linkedin.com](http://sales.linkedin.com).

