READ ME IF YOU WANT TO TARGET THE RIGHT PROSPECTS ON LINKEDIN

#2
in a series of 6

LinkedIn

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Why it matters

Any salesperson worth their salt knows that finding the right decision makers is half the battle — you don't want to waste your time selling to someone who doesn't have the authority to say yes. And yet, identifying these key players can also be time-consuming and tedious.

With the depth of data and variety of tools available, there's no excuse not to know your buyer before you reach out to them. Calling upon these resources, the best salespeople tailor their first contact to directly address each prospect's professional objectives and personal interests.

Here are five steps you can use to target the right prospects and build a high-quality sales pipeline.

STEP 1

Identify and filter your targets

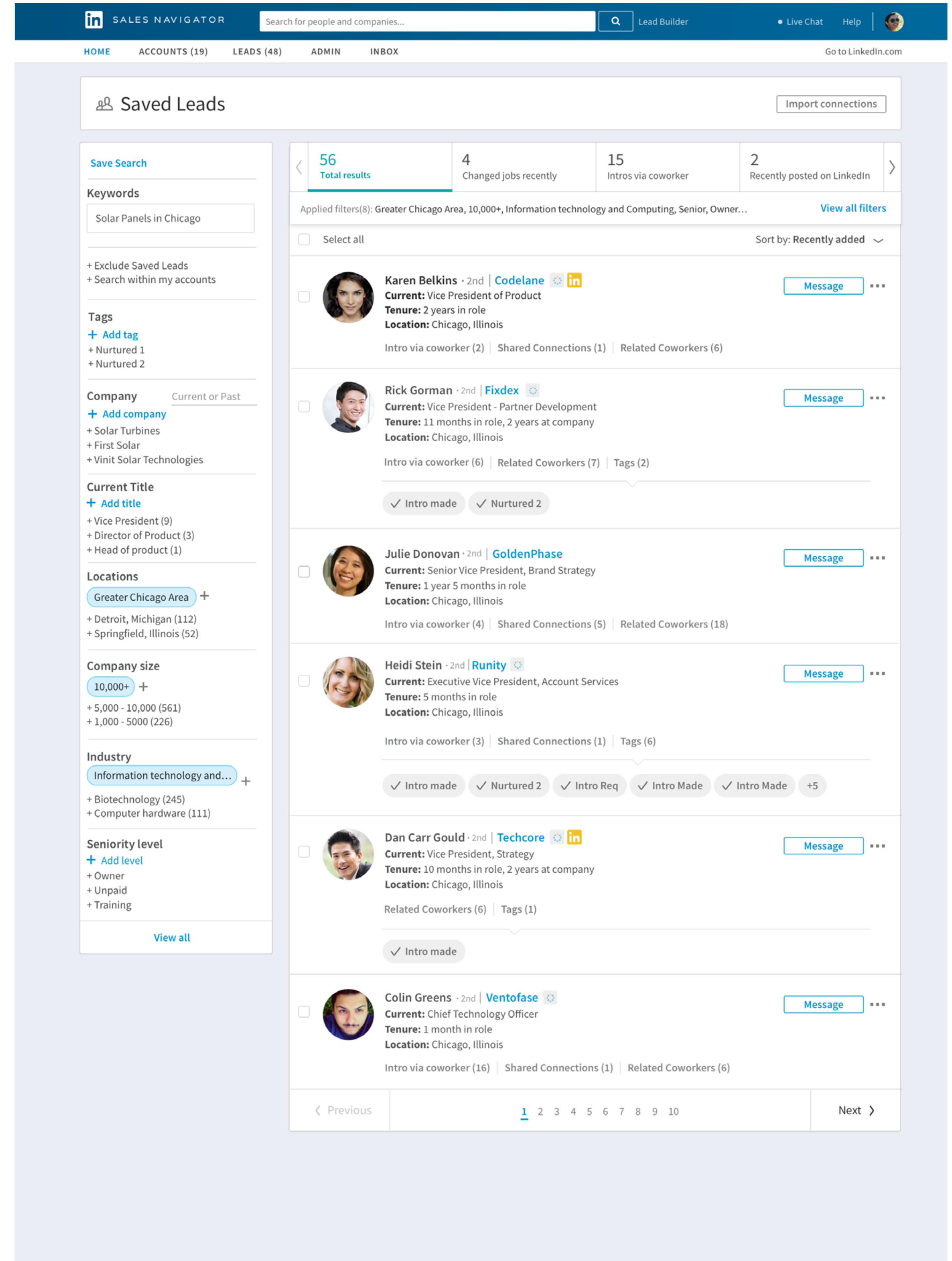
You can use a seemingly limitless number of field and filtering combinations in Sales Navigator or LinkedIn Search to find people on LinkedIn. But that doesn't mean searching needs to be complicated. If you are just getting started, try a few basic variables that are likely to generate qualified sales prospects. Remember, you can always refine your searches later.

For example, if you sell to certain industries, you may want to specify the industry in the **Industry** field. If you sell to local companies (or own a specific geographic region) you may want to specify a region in the **Location** field.

Other filters to keep in mind:

- List a few job descriptors for your sales prospects in the **Keywords** field
- Add seniority level titles in the **Title** field like "CEO," "CMO" or "Director"
- Leverage your **2nd degree connections** to broker a warm introduction

Drilling into specifics will ensure you aren't wasting your time shuffling through irrelevant contacts. It's also worth putting in a little up-front effort to create filters and learn the advanced search features. An established methodology will streamline your prospecting every time you initiate a new search.



STEP 2

Evaluate the prospect's profile

Now that you've uncovered the right prospects, you can focus on specific individuals. From search results in Sales Navigator or LinkedIn Search, open only profiles that fit your target decision-making level and industry/company size. Then, quickly scan the following to get a better sense of the prospect's background.

LANGUAGE
What sorts of phrases does the prospect highlight or repeat in their headline and/or summary? These often give insight into their values and passions. For example, "culture-focused" or "growth mindset" immediately tell you a lot about both business style and personality.

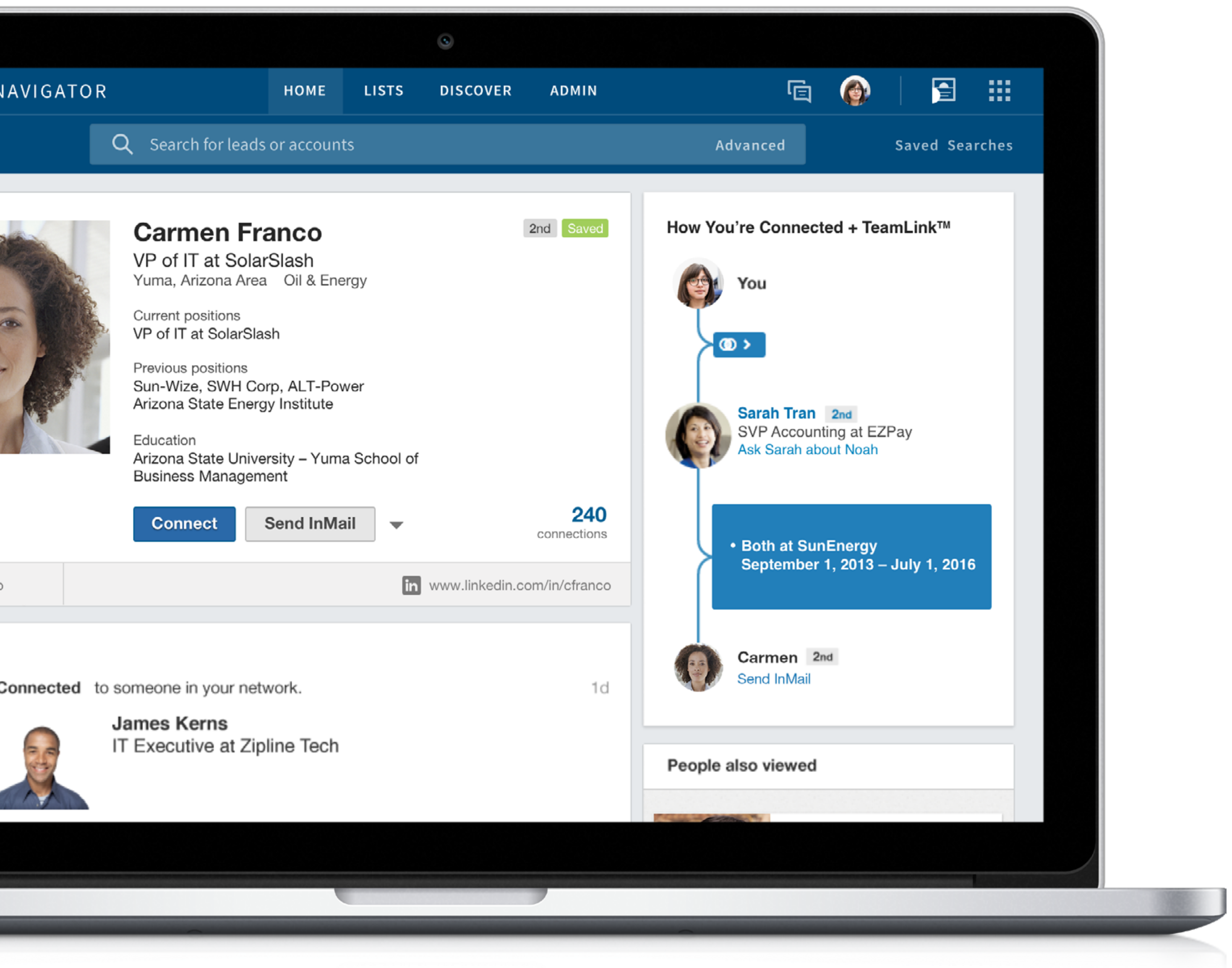
EXPERIENCE
What sorts of companies has the prospect worked for? This can indicate their preferred working style: Prospects with a history in start-ups, for example, will operate differently than those who've matured in large enterprises.

ROLES
Has the prospect always been in the same discipline or have they switched careers in the past? This can reveal a lot about their appetite for risk and growth.

COMMON INTERESTS
Look for commonalities that can help you establish a relationship. You might share obvious connections like having attended the same school or belonging to the same clubs or organizations in college. If not, see what skills are noted and what LinkedIn Groups they belong to.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT
Keep an eye on their level of engagement with LinkedIn. Are they actively posting content? Are they posting comments or engaging in conversations? Higher levels of activity on LinkedIn can be a signal that a prospect is entering the buying cycle.

Once you identify a prospect worth engaging, it's time to plot your approach.



Create a referral

STEP 3

Noting first-degree connections on LinkedIn and using the TeamLink feature in LinkedIn Sales Navigator, reach out to a shared connection or team member to request an introduction to the prospect. A warm introduction from a shared connection is five times more likely than cold-calling to get your prospect engaged.[1] In fact, personal introductions have extremely high success rates – up to 500 percent higher than an unsolicited approach.[2] Clearly explain why you want to be introduced and what value you might offer to the prospect.

If you use LinkedIn's Sales Navigator, the TeamLink feature can help you pinpoint common factors – such as colleges attended, or prior workplaces – between the lead and other people on your sales team.

You can also leverage your 2nd-degree connections and search your contacts' networks with the same filters you apply to your own to find further introduction possibilities.

When you find sales prospects at the 2nd-degree connection level, send a request to your mutual connection for an introduction, transforming cold outreach into a warm introduction. Once that new connection is in your network, you can search *their* network for 2nd-degree connections, and so on.

PRO TIP

Make sure you connect with your co-workers in other departments, the members of your sales team, and people you meet at events. You can also use your existing clients' connections to reverse-engineer introductions.

[1] LinkedIn, "Social Selling Challenge of the Month: Ask for 3 New Introductions"
[2] LinkedIn, "5 Ways Sales Pros Can Fill The Lead Pipeline With Referrals"

Establish commonalities in LinkedIn groups

STEP 4

We all want prospects to check out our LinkedIn profile, and people who post or engage in LinkedIn Group discussions get an average of four times as many profile views.[3]

LinkedIn Groups are a salesperson's secret weapon. If you are an active participant in a prospect's group, you have a baseline for establishing a relationship, have already begun to build trust and can position yourself as a helpful ally.

Three approaches to take with LinkedIn Groups:

1. Join five to ten Groups everyone else in your industry is joining.
2. Go deeper within specific verticals. You can do this by joining Groups your clients are involved in.
3. Understand the persona of your buyer to zero in on Groups of interest.

When it comes to the third approach, step into the shoes of your buyers and think about which Groups it makes sense for them to be active in. If you were a buyer in the market for your product, where would you seek insight during your buying journey?

Joining Groups also gives you access to a larger audience of searchable contacts, i.e., your fellow Group members. You can conduct advanced sales prospecting searches within groups using targeted keywords, company functions, seniority and additional filters.

PRO TIP
Make it part of your daily routine to participate in LinkedIn Groups. Once you select two or three relevant Groups, introduce yourself, jump in, and show up consistently. Block off 15 minutes every day to check in and add to discussions.

[3] LinkedIn, "Sales Prospecting Tips: How to Strike Gold in Linkedin Groups"

STEP 5

Capitalize on inbound interest

The beauty of social selling is that it provides a two-way path, so to speak, to connect with prospects. In other words, inbound opportunities can be just as valuable as your outreach efforts.

Amp up your social presence

Your first step is to make your LinkedIn profile a worthwhile destination. It starts with a complete, compelling profile that demonstrates how you help prospects achieve their goals. To provide the ultimate value, your profile should be a valuable resource for the people you're trying to engage. Imagine a qualified sales prospect thinking, "I'm glad I found this salesperson's profile." That's what you're shooting for.

You can achieve this by establishing credibility with your audience through stories, content, and ideas that deliver value. Just be sure to balance a buyer focus with your personality so your profile is distinct from every other sales professional out there.

See "Who's Viewed Your Profile"

Prospects who visit your LinkedIn profile are extending an invitation to engage with you—don't leave them hanging. Click the "Who's Viewed Your Profile" link on your LinkedIn profile to see who has been checking you out. Then use the opportunity to send a personalized connection request.

Take this a step further by keeping tabs on who views or comments on your posts. These may lead you to potential buyers.

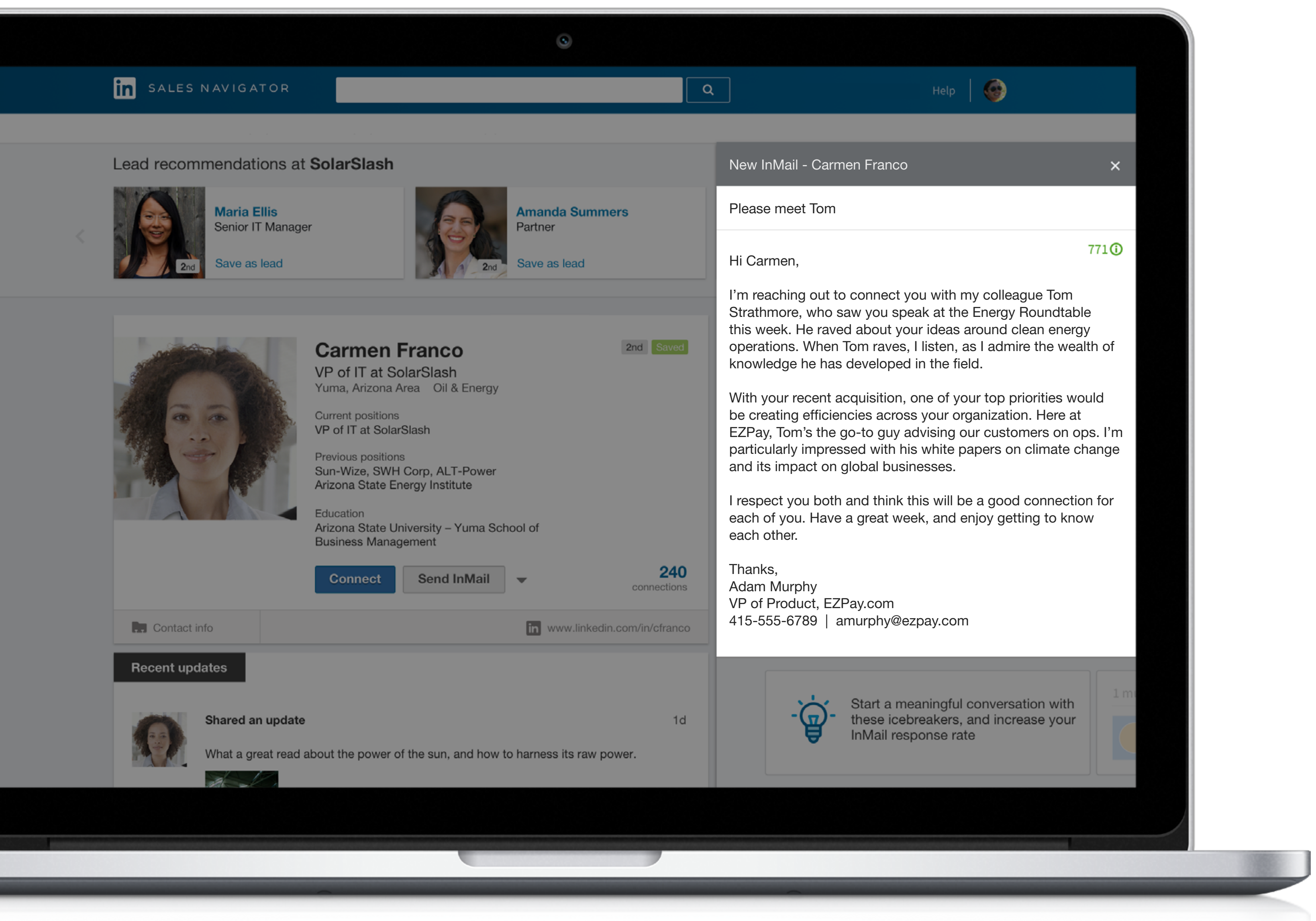
Use LinkedIn activity as a prospecting time trigger

Think about it: If your prospect is active on LinkedIn at this very moment, they probably have time to take a call from you. Or perhaps respond to a quick message.

When you follow a fellow LinkedIn member, you'll see their real-time activity (i.e., new connections, shares, likes, Group contributions, etc.) directly in your LinkedIn feed. Try following up within a few minutes of these updates. If it's relevant, you can also use the recent activity as a conversation starter.

PRO TIP

Personal branding is a critical component of the modern seller's skillset. Make a concentrated effort to continually improve yours to establish a magnet for inbound prospects.



Breaking it down

Requesting an introduction is the same as asking for a favor. In this example, Adam gets straight to the point about what it is that his colleague Tom has in common with Carmen, the lead. But more importantly, he also states what value he wants to extend to Carmen, offering something relevant rather than simply saying he wants to sell to her company. This gives Adam the context to broker the introduction in a way that will gain Carmen's interest — both on a personal and a professional front.

Adam also takes a warm but professional tone. He keeps his sentences short (saving Carmen's time) and writes the same way that he might speak to his colleague in an internal meeting. Warm introductions are five times more likely than cold calls to connect you with a decision-maker.[4] The tone you use when requesting an introduction will typically filter down to how your shared connection introduces you — so start off on a friendly, helpful note.

[4] LinkedIn, "Top Content of the Week: Sales Tips to Warm Introductions"

About us

LinkedIn Sales Navigator makes it simple to establish and grow relationships with prospects and customers by helping you tap into the power of LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network of 500 million members. Designed for sales professionals, LinkedIn Sales Navigator combines LinkedIn's network data, relevant news sources, and your accounts, leads, and preferences to produce customized recommendations and insights.

With LinkedIn Sales Navigator, you can focus on the right people and companies, stay up-to-date on what's happening with your accounts, and build trust with your prospects and customers.

Looking to get LinkedIn Sales Navigator for your team? Request a free demo.

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