

The Fundamental Strategies for Video Ads on LinkedIn:

A Guide to High-Performing Creative



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A Note from the Researcher: Why I spent 10 months of my life watching video ads

While my colleagues left the office for team drinks in the pub in 2019, I sat alone in our London office so I could watch ads instead.

At home, I ignored my partner's suggestions to binge Netflix on weekends and I watched ads instead.

I spent 10 months of my life analysing the top and bottom performing content from

38,000 video ads



that ran on LinkedIn –

and watching over 250 of those that performed best on View Through rate (VTR), Engagement Rate, Video Completion Rate, and Click Through Rate (CTR).

I categorised the types of content that featured in these videos, the creative techniques that they used, the formats they chose and what happened in each of them, frame-by-frame. Then, when I was done, I spent months mapping the patterns that emerged:

how different types of video drive different results at different points in the funnel.

I had conversations with marketers, agencies, analysts like Forrester Research and industry organisations like IAB UK. The more of these conversations I had, the clearer it became that this type of data-backed analysis is very much needed right now.

Online video advertising has been available for over a decade, and yet many B2B marketers, in particular, are still suspicious of it – and I started to understand why. Most of the published best practices for online video just don't hold true for B2B. They also hold less and less true for consumer brands the more involved a purchase is and the further down the funnel they move. Being repeatedly told to keep your video length under six seconds doesn't help a brand selling cloud data storage or freight shipping and management services. And it doesn't help when you've got an engaged potential buyer interested in more detail.

If we're to make full use of online video's potential, then we need a discussion that's

based around clear objectives and actual performance – not on gut feel, subjective judgments and received wisdom.

Online video is an inherently creative format, but creativity is always most effective when it's informed by an understanding of how a format really works. This type of insight helps digital marketers generate high-value ideas, give clearer direction to production teams and get the video content that we need to drive results.

That's why I spent all those months creating a practical guide to what high-quality video content actually looks like for different objectives and different stages of the funnel. It's changed how I look at online video. I hope you find it as practical and inspiring as I did.

This is an ongoing discussion and we'd love to hear your thoughts. **Join in at #LinkedInVideoAds.**



Jennifer Bunting

Head of Product Marketing for EMEA & LATAM, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions

Chapter 1

The time is now:

Why B2B marketers should focus on video



The evidence is clear that online video should be part of the B2B marketing mix – at every stage of the funnel.

B2B marketing deals in complex products and purchase cycles, with

6.8 stakeholders



now involved in the average purchase.

Video Ads in the LinkedIn feed earn

30%

more comments per impression than non-video ads

77%

of marketers agree that video drives higher lead volumes¹



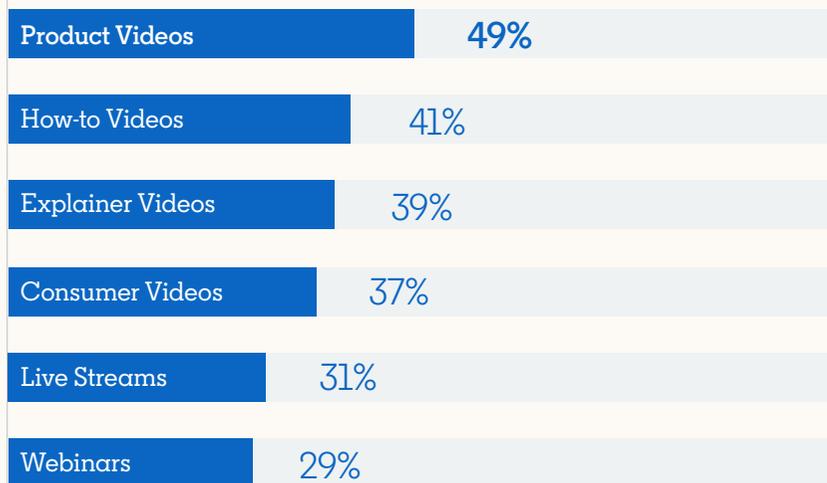
According to the Aberdeen Group, marketers that use video grow revenue

49%

faster than those that don't

This gives video content a more complex and wide-ranging role. It can establish an emotional connection, driving brand awareness and salience. However, it can also inform audiences and communicate detail in a compelling way. It's no surprise therefore, that LinkedIn research shows B2B marketers leveraging a very broad range of video content types:

What kinds of video ads B2B brands are creating²:



The audiences these marketers are targeting are consuming more online video than ever. Findings from the IAB UK and PwC, show video is the only advertising channel that increased ad spend in the first half of 2020, growing at 5.7% year-on-year. According to [MarketScale](#), more video content is uploaded online in 30 days than all three major U.S. TV networks have created in the past 30 years.

For B2B marketers, this represents both an opportunity and a challenge.

The opportunity is that B2B influencers and decision-makers at all levels expect to engage with video and access a range of information through it. The challenge is standing out and grabbing attention in an increasingly competitive environment. No matter what your objective, video content stands the best chance of success if it can intrigue and entertain as well as inform.

“Audiences get bored. We have to push to keep things fresh, ensuring a focus on human stories, and varying our production techniques — everything from how we frame the shots to the use of animation and more.”

Natnalin Thananan

Social Media & Content Marketing Senior Manager
at B2B creative agency Gyro



Chapter 2

Enter the Funnel: Video strategies and metrics for every objective



We often hear marketers asking the question, “what does good video look like?” but this is a question with no single answer.

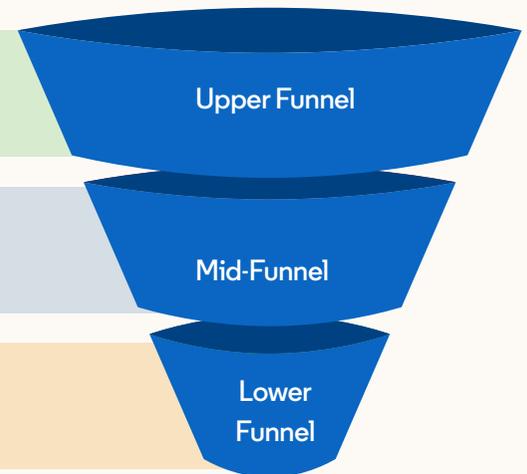
The characteristics of good video depend on your objective. Videos that excel at reach and awareness often have different subjects, styles and runtimes to those that excel at driving engagement and action.

The real questions are:

1 | What does “good” video look like if I want to **drive awareness** and have better reach?

2 | What does “good” video look like if I want to nurture audience mid-funnel and **increase engagement**?

3 | What does “good” video look like if I want to **drive clicks**?



In our research, we deliberately avoided using a single metric to judge video effectiveness because effectiveness means different things at different points in the buyer’s journey. Instead, we analysed the most successful videos in terms of the metrics that matter at each stage of the funnel.

These are the KPIs that you’ll be using to demonstrate the effectiveness of video content and show that it’s on course to deliver Return on Investment (ROI). **It therefore makes sense to optimise around them from the start.**

Matching metrics to objectives:

Upper Funnel

For driving reach and awareness in the upper funnel, we focused on **View Through Rate (VTR)**, which captures the percentage of videos that played for at least the first two seconds on a device.

This isn't the same as Video Completion Rate (VCR), which tells you the percentage watching through to the end. However, it's a more relevant KPI for brand campaigns seeking to build wider awareness and recognition, which don't necessarily need people to engage with detail.

Mid-Funnel

For nurturing audiences and driving consideration mid-funnel, we focused on **Engagement Rate**, which is the percentage of videos that were reacted to, commented on, and shared.

This captures a wide range of actions that have one thing in common: they demonstrate that your audience is paying close attention and finds the content interesting and relevant enough to do something about it.

Lower Funnel

For driving conversions at the bottom of the funnel, we focused on **Click Through Rate (CTR)**, which captures the portion of videos that garnered a converting action that was specified in the accompanying copy. When it comes to measurement, it's important to put CTR in context. Not all clicks are equally valuable and it's important to track what actions they ultimately lead to.

However, conversions don't happen without people taking a conscious, onward action – and therefore, clicks are an important KPI for the bottom of the funnel.

What about Video Completion Rate?

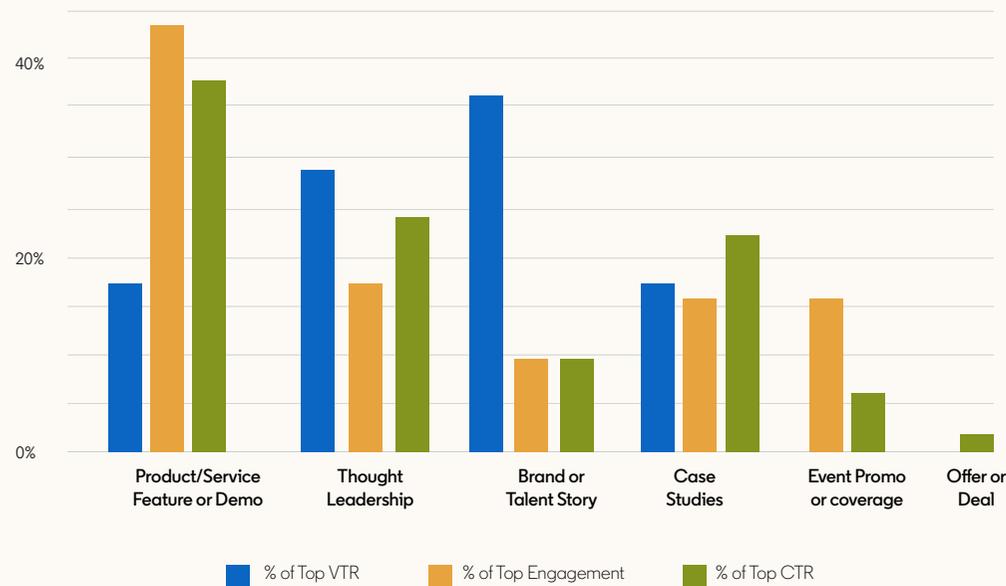
Video Completion Rate is a valuable metric for putting the performance of your video in context. It demonstrates that your content is relevant and provides great insight for retargeting your most engaged audiences. However, as a KPI it can be misleading.

Our data shows that a large percentage of viewers will engage with videos and click through on calls to action before they've finished watching them in full. Equally, your audience doesn't need to watch the whole message to remember the brand that delivered it. A video can do its job long before the end credits.

The content types that perform at each stage of the funnel:

Different types of video content have different roles to play in the buyer journey. Our analysis shows the subject matter that's most effective at delivering against our three KPIs:

Commonality of content type in top performers³



How to choose the right video content for your objective:



Brand and people-focused stories perform best on reach and awareness



Making the product the hero drives strongest results further down the funnel



Thought leadership can play a role at every stage of the buyer journey



Focus case studies and event coverage at bottom of the funnel objectives rather than using them to build awareness

Subject matter is important, but just as important are the ways that you frame and deliver your content. Our data shows the importance of adapting style, length, and format to each stage of the funnel.



The upper funnel

Concise, compelling storytelling drives reach and awareness



Optimum video length:

15 seconds or less



Optimum video types:

Brand stories



Performance on average ranges from:

57% - 85% VTR

Micro stories that compress a compelling story into 15 seconds or less are the strongest of all performers at the top of the funnel. They focus on delivering a clear, focused message, are easy to share and don't take up too much of viewers' time. However, there's a big difference between micro stories that contain a concise idea, and video that's so short it lacks a compelling story. GIFs and short loops are frequently the lowest performers among video content on LinkedIn on measures like CTR.



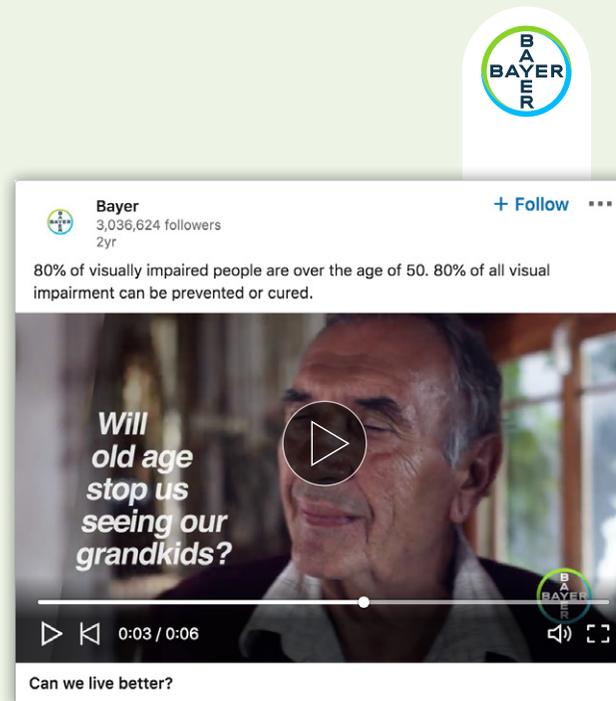


Driving awareness with a **short video**

German pharmaceutical and life sciences firm Bayer gave a masterclass in micro storytelling with its [Can We Live Better?](#) campaign.

It highlighted the potential of science to change people's lives through six-second teaser videos that humanised medical issues, engaged audiences' emotions and generated empathy.

Bayer used the copy accompanying the videos to provide context and highlight the brand's role. These engaging snapshots stirred the soul and received exceptional reach and engagement in turn.



This is a perfect example of precision storytelling: engaging snapshots that stir the soul in seconds and drive audiences to the website.



The mid-funnel

Human interest and visual flair drives engagement



Optimum video length:

45 seconds or less



Optimum video types:

Product demonstrations,
Thought leadership,
Case studies,
Event content



Performance on average ranges from:

1% Engagement Rate

The mid-funnel contains the widest variety of top-performing video content, but there's a consistency to the style of video that engages. **People respond to people.**

Eye contact from another human being fixes their attention. And when compelling ideas are delivered in a snackable runtime, it's easier to take a broad range of actions such as deciding to share or comment.

For more complex product messages, imaginative use of animation and motion graphics provides a different route to generating visual interest and engagement.

“Video is a huge element in building trust. Seeing a real person — a real customer — in a case study really builds trust in your brand.”



Christoffer Larsen
VP of Marketing, TwentyThree

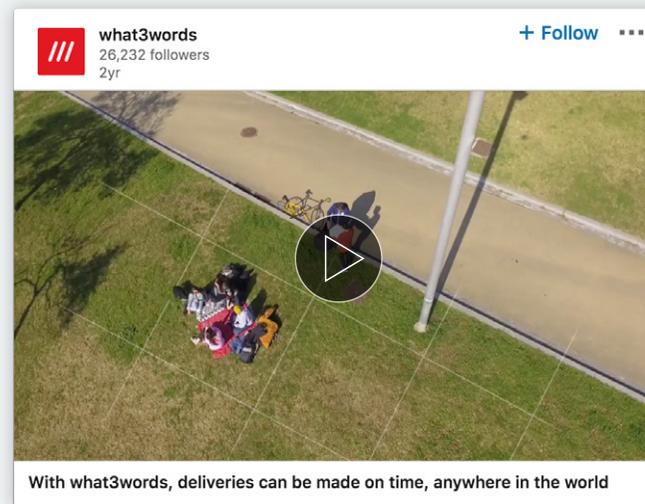
Increasing engagement with **human connection**

[SITA research](#) promoted its study of the impact of lost bags on airline customers' experience through a researcher delivering compelling stats straight to the camera – and asking the audience how they would respond. It framed data in a direct, human way that got people talking.

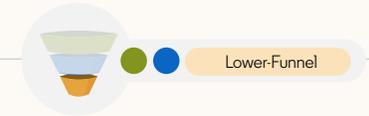
In just 18 seconds [what3words](#) used sweeping camera angles and innovative motion graphics to express the simplicity, purpose and easy functionality of its app.



It's this human connection that gets people talking.



The viewer is able to understand not only what the app does, but how it does it and why to use it.



The lower funnel

Drive clicks by visualising an action and building a sense of urgency



Optimum video length:

2 minutes or less



Optimum video types:

Product demonstrations,
Thought leadership,
Case studies



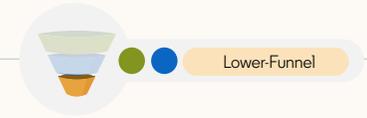
Performance on average ranges from:

0.62% - 0.71% CTR

Driving conversions at the bottom of the funnel comes down to prompting people to take the next step – and video content has a range of techniques at its disposal for doing this. **Intriguing cuts and movement capture people’s attention and persuade them to click to find out more.** Unboxing videos (an under-used but highly effective tactic in B2B) invite them to visualise themselves as a buyer while providing compelling reasons to keep watching. Punchy dialogue and unusual camera angles prime people to take action when confronted with new thought leadership.

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings in our analysis is that videos don’t have to be short to persuade people to click. In fact, longer videos tend to outperform shorter ones at this stage of the funnel. It doesn’t matter if people watch to the end if you’ve already persuaded them to take the action you’re interested in.

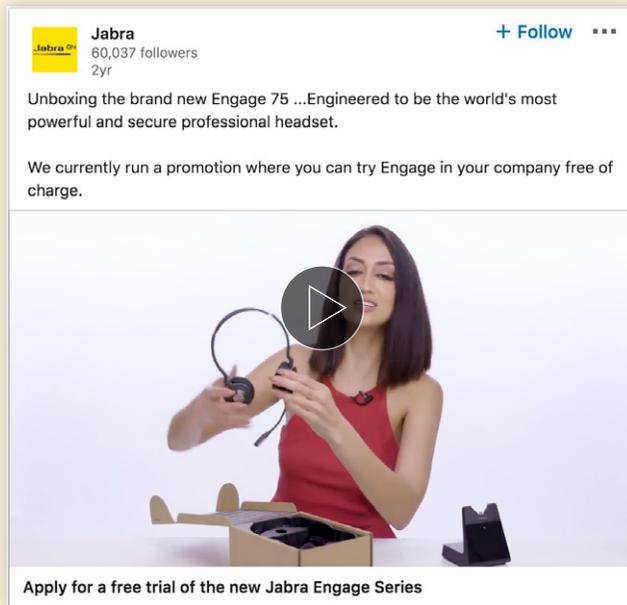




Driving clicks with **mystery**

Jabra used the simple tactic of [unboxing a product and modelling the actions](#) it wanted the customer to take. By associating its product with a positive personal experience, Jabra introduced a subtle, emotional element into bottom-of-the-funnel video.

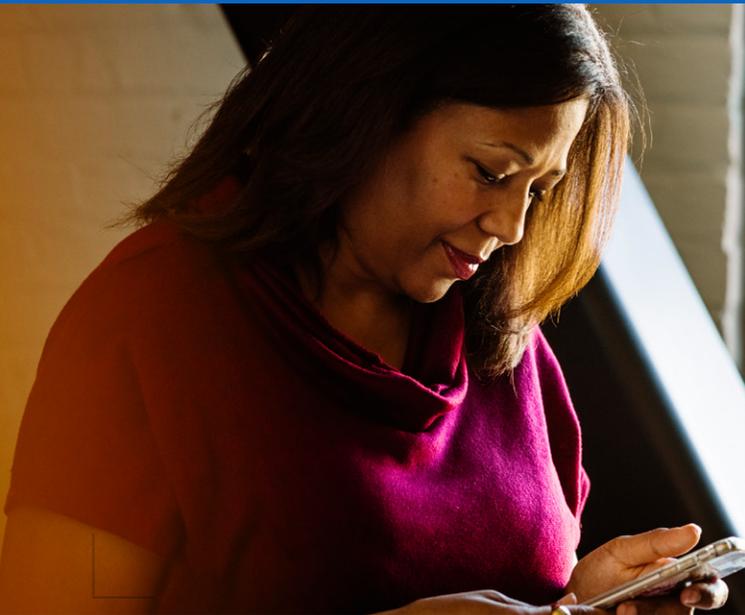
The four-minute videos in Raiffeisen Bank's [Rethink campaign](#) proved just how effective long-form video can be at driving action. The urgent exchanges between intellectuals on subjects like fake news provided reasons to click throughout the duration of the films.



Chapter 3

Behind the Camera: Creative techniques to take your video to the next level

You've matched your video content, format and length to your marketing objective. Now, it's all about the execution. Applying these visual techniques will help your video stand out, capture attention and deliver on its potential.



Balancing information and entertainment

1/3 
of B2B Marketers

in the UK and Ireland⁴ claim that videos which are **informative and helpful** have the most impact.

However, B2B audiences also want to be entertained, with

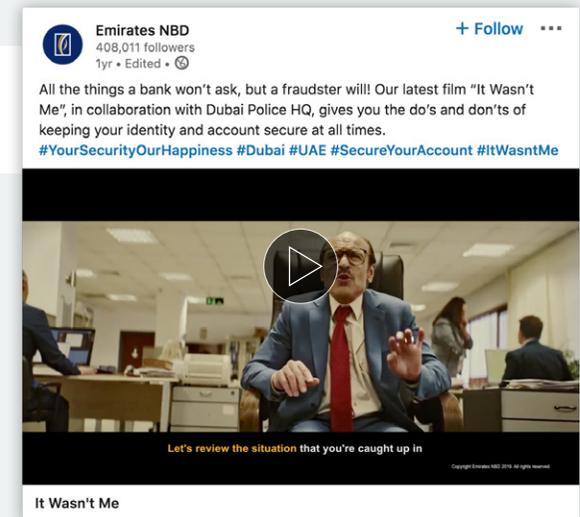
75% 

of LinkedIn members saying they're most likely to watch videos that are **funny**.

Finding the right balance between the two is the key to effectiveness at any stage of the funnel.

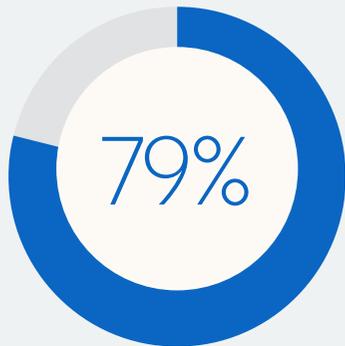


Dubai-based bank, Emirates NBD proved that even a subject as serious as fraud protection advice can be made more engaging with humour. Its [Shaggy's hit, *It Wasn't Me*](#) used a proven earworm to ensure that viewers ended up with thoughts of account security running around their heads all day.



Breaking the sound barrier

On LinkedIn,



of videos are watched with the sound off

– and so it’s no surprise that the most effective video campaigns tell stories visually, without relying on dialogue or voiceover to deliver the message.

Visual storytelling is nothing new, of course. We’ve all grown up watching movies and TV that use visual shorthand to convey meaning. When a character is shot from below it suggests power; shot from above and they seem smaller and more helpless. Films like Steven Spielberg’s *Raiders of the Lost Ark* work just as well with no sound (as the director Steven Soderbergh recently proved by recutting it as a [silent movie](#)).

The advantage of viewers watching with the sound off is that they can’t look away from the screen. This gives you undivided attention to work with if you can master the techniques of visual storytelling:



Use the expressions of performers’ faces to convey a story without words, as in [Essity’s film](#) on the importance of parents talking to children about menstruation.



Enlist a montage to tell a story through **quick cuts and well-chosen sequences**. It worked for *Rocky* and *Dirty Dancing* – and just as well in this [piece of storytelling from GE](#).



Use subtitles, captions, onscreen graphics and accompanying copy to tell the story and add context to your video. When [Acciona used](#) captions to spell out the lyrics for Tears for Fears’ song *Mad World* it added extra poignancy to its message about the need for sustainable investment strategies.



Tight budgets? No problem

In the video landscape of 2021, getting noticed doesn't depend on having a big production budget. With audiences increasingly accustomed to content filmed at home, a clever idea can be executed with a minimum of equipment – sometimes even just a smartphone. And with costs coming down, there's no need to focus on one big video that tries to cover everything. You can produce a series of effective micro-shorts concentrating on different aspects of the customer journey.

Training and organisational consultancy, Schouten & Nelissen, exemplifies the 'less is more' approach in [this series of simply produced short films](#). Wanting to deliver relevant, informative content at the right moments in the customer journey, they created videos that focused on the needs of prospects rather than promoting their own products and services.



Conclusion

The Sequel: Building on video best practice



In this guide, we've shown how to match your video strategy to your marketing objectives and deliver best-in-class performance against relevant KPIs throughout the funnel.

This gives you a great foundation for creating video that's demonstrably effective and delivers value to your business. However, it's just the start.

These guidelines can act as a foundation for continuing to experiment with your video strategy, testing and learning as you go. Keep experimenting with different creative techniques and focus in on what works best for your particular audience. When it comes to metrics, use LinkedIn Conversion Tracking to put your KPIs in context. You'll be able to identify audience segments who engage with or click on your video ads, and pinpoint which videos convert clicks to revenue most effectively. You'll also be able to retarget audiences who've engaged with your video content to nurture them through more stages of the buyer journey.

If you'd like more guidance and support on creating video content to meet your marketing objectives, reach out to your LinkedIn contact – or get in touch with one of our video content partners.

The elevator pitch –
five principles for effective video content:

- 1 Embrace micro storytelling to drive reach and awareness efficiently
- 2 Use relatable characters and eye contact to enhance engagement
- 3 Model conversion actions and build urgency to drive clicks
- 4 Embrace all your video storytelling assets, including the copy accompanying your video
- 5 Don't get distracted by completion rates if your audience is watching enough to take the action you want

LinkedIn Partners

VidMob is a video creation platform, with innovative technology solutions that enable a network of highly trained creators to develop video ads that are insight-driven, personalized, and scalable.



VidMob creators produce the full spectrum of video content across every social/digital channel, format, and language. VidMob's Creative Intelligence tool leverages machine learning and performance data to analyze LinkedIn video ads and uncover learning around the creative elements that are driving performance. Get help with mobile-first creative concepts, asset optimization and creative testing and analysis.

Animoto's drag-and-drop video creator allows any marketer to create compelling video using a combination of brand content they already have on hand and an integrated library of stock photos and videos.



In collaboration with LinkedIn, Animoto has created six easy-to-customize video templates leveraging LinkedIn video best practices. This template-first solution offers marketers a simple way to create the type of high-performing video content that's popular on the LinkedIn platform, including thought leadership, event promotion, product launch announcements, company profiles, and more.

To get in touch or to find out more about our video partners, reach out to

LMSContentPartners@linkedin.com

About LinkedIn

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