

## Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development & JobsOhio fuel investment attraction with LinkedIn

### Economic development starts with awareness

Economic development is fueled by the willingness of businesses to take a chance in a new market. Before they make that decision, they need some level of surety. To position themselves and their localities as low-risk, high-reward prospects for expanding or relocating businesses, municipalities and economic development organizations need to market themselves to the right audience.

Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development and JobsOhio are two organizations that understand the power of marketing as a driver of economic development. Both have turned to LinkedIn to identify key decision makers capable of bringing new business to their region—and, through a combination of lead gen and targeted marketing strategies, have delivered strong value propositions to spur economic development.

### Identify entities with a vested interest

Fostering economic development means understanding who has the power to answer your call for engagement. Who's willing to take a chance on your city or region? Who has the power to make the decisions that lead to an inflow of cash and commerce? Identifying key decision makers means meeting them where they're at in the evaluative process and providing solutions.

Success comes down to your ability to foster a conversation—to shift focus and perception to economic opportunities specific to stakeholders.



“[Economic development] decisions are pretty laser-focused at the leadership level. It can be very difficult to reach those folks through traditional methods and by traditional means”

**Nicole Scharlach**  
Digital Marketing Director, JobsOhio



## Connect with key decision-makers

- Economic decision makers are elusive. LinkedIn is one of the few avenues where development organizations can make real inroads. “Our stakeholders are on LinkedIn and they’re helping to push out our story to their connections and to their networks. That’s valuable!” says Ashley Young, Digital Strategy Manager, Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development. “Economic development is about building those relationships and LinkedIn is the most strategic digital platform for doing that.”
- Decisions may come from the top, but they’re influenced at every level. LinkedIn helps economic development organizations not only connect with key decision makers, but also stimulate interest across all levels of the organization. “We make sure that we’re reaching multiple folks within the organization, to help foster the conversation internally, within their own walls,” says Scharlach.

## Define the potential for economic development

- What specific opportunities does your market offer to a business owner? What incentive do executives have to consider your region over another? How can you foster success for not only the business, but its stakeholders and employees? Economic development is about identifying and communicating key differentiators specific to each company, organization, or executive you’re engaging.
- With awareness comes incentive and from incentive comes the realization of opportunity: economic development.



“Our main marketing objective with our international campaign is to increase awareness about opportunities to do business in Saskatchewan. Whether through video testimonials or content on our website, we want investors in our priority sectors to be able to learn more about Saskatchewan and for them to see us as a future partner.”

**Ashley Young**

Digital Strategy Manager, Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development (TED)





**Saskatchewan**

Location: Regina, SK | No. of Employees: 51-200 | Industry: International Trade & Development



“LinkedIn reporting allows us to better understand the industries and the companies that are showing interest in Saskatchewan. Not a lot of digital platforms have the same level of targeting abilities.”

**Ashley Young**

Digital Strategy Manager, Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development (TED)



## Challenge

- The Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development advances economic growth to generate wealth and opportunity in the province. The ministry coordinates a cross-government approach to attract investment and grow export markets. Saskatchewan is Canada’s leading agricultural exporter, its second-largest oil producer, and the world’s top producer of potash.
- The ministry partnered with Phoenix Group to help boost its outreach through its LinkedIn Page, Saskatchewan Trade & Invest, and to better target economic development interests in key markets. “We launched our LinkedIn channel in 2016. We were one of the first Canadian jurisdictions to use LinkedIn for economic development and investment attraction,” says Ashley Young, Digital Strategy Manager, Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development.
- Saskatchewan Trade & Invest is largely focused on communicating with business decision-makers—individuals with the power to explore new opportunities in the province. “We’re targeting key decision makers and C-Suite executives, and business development managers. Our audience is investors in priority sectors—agriculture, manufacturing, energy and mining—and we’re targeting specific geographic locations around the world,” says Young.



## Solution

- Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development and Phoenix Group utilized LinkedIn's robust data and targeting tools to pare down the audience to fit specific economic development criteria. "The platform has so much data that allows us to be very specific in our targeting and selecting users in specific locations, industries, and job seniority levels," says Young. "We know exactly who we're speaking to, that niche audience, and it's a direct line." This data led to the need for a specific appeal to investors: Why set up your business in Saskatchewan?
- "We're a small province in Canada, but one of our biggest resources is our expertise," says Young. "In addition to our top exports, we're a technological leader in crop science, vaccine and plant protein research, agriculture equipment, and clean energy. We need to tell this story and raise awareness, to put us on the map a little bit more in the eyes of potential investors and companies."
- The ministry initiated a storytelling campaign to attract economic decision-makers, using testimonials from successful companies doing business with or residing in Saskatchewan. "People aren't aware of all of the opportunities we have here in Saskatchewan—hence the success stories," says Jennelle Sanders, Media Director, Phoenix Group. "Video is really key to driving that message home through these testimonial campaigns."



## Results

- Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development's testimonial campaigns were designed to inspire a shift in perception and create new awareness about the province in association with economic opportunity. "There's a longer customer journey for these types of investments. We're not talking about a \$100 spend; we're talking millions of dollars at a time," says Sanders. "It's important for us to be top-of-mind for them, regardless of where they are in that journey, knowing the cycle could take 10 years to come to fruition."
- In introducing out-of-market businesses to the many geo-specific value propositions of the province, Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development and Phoenix Group were able to spark economic development interests. Strong engagement across the testimonial campaign shows growing attention from companies and investors outside the province, affirming Saskatchewan as a viable destination for business development.

# 300%

increase in engagement on video testimonial ads.

# 140%

increase in engagement year-over-year, with 466% increased engagement in one of the organization's largest target markets.





Location: Columbus, Ohio | No. of Employees: 51-200 | Industry: Non-profit Organization Management



“When I think about our overall digital marketing strategy, LinkedIn is probably the most important channel for gaining the attention of a C-level executive. I can’t do it on any other channel as efficiently as I’m able to on LinkedIn.”

**Nicole Scharlach**  
Digital Marketing Director, JobsOhio



## Challenge

- JobsOhio is a private nonprofit economic development organization that works in partnership with state and local entities to help businesses relocate, expand and prosper in Ohio. The organization markets to business owners and decision makers thinking about expansion or relocation, introducing them to attractive opportunities specific to Ohio’s job market and economic climate.
- JobsOhio targets high-level decision makers, and turned to LinkedIn to refine its audience while delivering a more meaningful messaging. “Our audience is primarily the C-suite executive; though we do broaden our targeting to VP and even director level-roles within the organization—particularly if they’re part of a real estate or finance department,” says Nicole Scharlach, Digital Marketing Director, JobsOhio.
- More than getting its message in front of key decision makers, JobsOhio sought to make a multi-level appeal to them. The message? Not only is Ohio a great place for your business to grow and prosper, it’s also a place where you, your employees, and your company will flourish. “We’re saying, ‘Imagine yourself living here, in Ohio.’” says Scharlach.



## Solution

- To create powerful sales funnels, JobsOhio paired its economic development focus with LinkedIn's lead gen tools. "We're casting a wide net of messaging around Ohio," says Scharlach. "We're introducing content related to why Ohio is an exciting place to live, so these folks are not only thinking about the business impact, but also imagining themselves or their employees living in the state of Ohio."
- The layered messaging approach by JobsOhio illustrates a dynamic value proposition about the state's economic climate. It appeals to business owners and decision-makers who are considering external success factors, such as quality of life and community. "First, we engage them with lifestyle messaging. Then, we're sending them to very specific data-driven landing pages where they can stack and rank where we sit against some of the other economic development organizations across the country."
- The organization has also tapped into the direct messaging potential of Conversation Ads to get its message of prosperity across. "It's a meaningful and contextual way for us to get our message in the mix," says Scharlach. "We can assume that when they've received that particular ad product, they've already seen our programmatic ads, so they're warming up to the idea around the Ohio messaging. Then, we're coming in with this more specific response that seems to resonate more with these folks."

## Results

- JobsOhio is the first state to run Conversation Ads as part of its economic development campaign, and the organization has found great success in connecting with decision makers on a personal level. "It's enabled us to have what appears to be more of a one-to-one conversation—something we can't do from a landing page or a banner ad, or even on Facebook or some of the other channels we're active in," says Scharlach. "It's been an interesting way to enable our business development teams."
- These conversations come on the back of JobsOhio's engaging lifestyle messaging, creating a one-two punch to spur economic development interests. "We're thinking more holistically about the user journey," says Scharlach. "It's not only the hard sell that you have to get across to this audience; it's about lifestyle messaging—the emotional connection that goes beyond the business transactional connection."