



Code Connects: How F5 Ramped up its DevOps Engagement in EMEA



TRANSMISSION.

F5 powers applications from development through their entire lifecycle, across any multi-cloud environment, so its customers—enterprise businesses, service providers, governments, and consumer brands—can deliver differentiated, high-performing, and secure digital experiences.

In May 2019, F5 finalised its acquisition of NGINX, which stands out as the trusted open source leader in web and application server technology, providing cloud-native support for container-based microservices environments and new application services such as API Management for today's API-first applications.

Together, F5 and NGINX bridge the gap from applications to infrastructure, and from developer to operations.

With NGINX as a new business unit, F5 was presented with a different marketing challenge.

The pressure was now on to build more awareness and credibility among a wider DevOps audience, which can be challenging to reach with traditional engagement tactics.

F5 and its agency Transmission worked with LinkedIn on a bespoke approach to targeting DevOps in EMEA, that drove engagement levels more than 4x industry benchmarks and smashed all awareness and lead generation targets.

New targeting approaches and innovative ad formats helped the multi-cloud app services provider smash industry benchmarks, transform CTR and CPL, and build credibility with a critical audience.

The Challenge

- Target the DevOps community in EMEA on LinkedIn
- Build brand awareness and engagement for F5
- Generate quality leads from enterprise-level businesses

Why LinkedIn?

- Proven demand generation channel
- Partnership approach, using rich insights to build bespoke audience targeting
- Established thought leadership platform

The Solution

- Bespoke targeting approach combining skills and job titles
- LinkedIn Sponsored Content and video ads to drive engagement in the feed
- In-depth white papers and eBooks to act as a lead generation engine
- LinkedIn Conversation Ads engaging the DevOps community through its favoured messaging environment

Results

- High-quality leads from enterprise-level businesses with a cost per lead of 80% below benchmark

462%

Engagement rate was 462% above sector benchmark

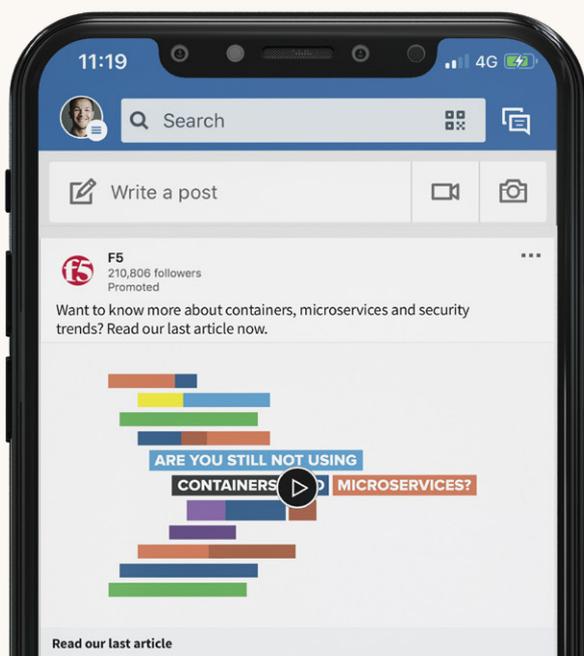
Defining the DevOps audience

DevOps is a philosophy rather than a job description. Its members are connected by a common interest in agile software development, the open source community and automation.

“DevOps isn’t a subset of job titles,” explains Olga Royenko, Senior EMEA Marketing Campaigns Manager at F5. “It’s all about your ideology and your collaboration model.”

To make an impact, F5, Transmission and LinkedIn came up with a solution that both delivered results and authentic engagement with the DevOps community. “We put together a list of skills that existing DevOps specialists within F5 had. We then worked with LinkedIn to analyse the characteristics of people with those skills and built a bespoke DevOps segment for targeting,” says Alex Beddoe, Social Media Director at LinkedIn Agency Partner, Transmission.

However, the team knew that engaging the DevOps community would take more than the right targeting. “We did a lot of due diligence research to try and understand the types of content and activities that would resonate well,” says Beddoe. “We could see they tended not to engage with general B2B marketing, but they would respond to content that was more technical. They were definitely a hands-on audience.”



Relevant content, relevant format, relevant environment

Armed with these insights, F5 and Transmission developed an integrated campaign that combined awareness-building content in the LinkedIn feed with in-depth demand generation assets. In addition, the strategy included specific tactics to reach DevOps audiences in the areas of LinkedIn where they were most engaged.

“F5 runs a community called DevCentral, which is a lively platform for developers to share what they know and help each other out. This helped us analyse the content that was generating the greatest engagement, and we then worked on adapting that to the LinkedIn feed,” explains Royenko. “For example, we created snackable video content around Python and Kubernetes to complement the events and webinars we were promoting to the DevOps audience. We then layered in demand generation activity through gated content.”

LinkedIn data showed that the DevOps audience was most active in the LinkedIn messenger environment, which led F5 and Transmission to launch some of the first activity using LinkedIn Conversation Ads. “We found we could use Conversation Ads effectively for both objectives,” says Royenko. “The personalisation and human tonality meant that we could educate and drive strong engagement. What’s really effective for lead generation is that the audience can choose the content assets most relevant to them.”

Delivering in-depth content expertise in a range of different formats drove spectacular results for F5 in EMEA, transforming awareness of the brand among an audience that is central to its long-term business strategy. “We had click-through rates in double-digit percentages, which is incredible,” says Beddoe. “Our cost per lead was 80% cheaper than the benchmark we had budgeted around, and we generated an engagement rate over 4x the benchmark.”

“Expanding our DevOps engagement created an entirely new set of challenges, so we had to do something different to raise awareness of the F5 brand and build credibility. Our agency, Transmission and LinkedIn went above and beyond to partner with us to better understand the DevOps community, and the joined-up campaign yielded fantastic results that exceeded our targets.”

Olga Royenko
Senior EMEA Marketing Campaigns Manager
F5 Networks

