Unleashing LinkedIn’s Targeting Capabilities
Part I: Introduction

Part II: How LinkedIn Targeting Works
   Theme 1: Experience
   Theme 2: Company
   Theme 3: Education
   Theme 4: Interests
   Theme 5: Identity

Part III: More Customized Options with Matched Audiences

Part IV: Tips to Optimize Your Targeting Strategy

Part V: Conclusion
Introduction

Targeting is a foundational element of running a successful LinkedIn advertising campaign -- Getting your targeting right leads to higher engagement, and ultimately, higher conversion rates.

By advertising on LinkedIn, you are getting your message in front of the right person when they are most engaged. You can reach a professional network nearly 500 million members strong with accurate first-party data, at scale.

In this guide, you’ll learn how targeting on LinkedIn works and the different ways LinkedIn allows you to market to those who matter most to your business. You’ll also learn targeting tips and best practices that you can immediately apply to your campaigns.

Let’s find your targeting sweet spot on LinkedIn.

Raymond Hwang
Product Marketing
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions

Steve Kearns
Content Marketing
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions

“With LinkedIn, we can get specific with whom we’re targeting – by account, title, industry, level, geography – all in one platform. I haven’t seen any other platform that granular.”

Lin Ling
Growth Marketer, Spigit
How LinkedIn Targeting Works

LinkedIn targeting is differentiated because members are incentivized to keep their profiles accurate and up-to-date for networking, personal branding, and job opportunities. With LinkedIn, you can reach a quality audience composed of influencers, decision makers, and executives.

When members complete their LinkedIn profile, they provide information on their job experiences, company, skills, and more.

Danie

- **Location**: Seattle, Washington USA
- **School**: Boston University
  - **Field of Study**: Communication
  - **Degree**: Bachelor of Science
  - **Graduation - Age**: 2011, 25-34
- **Company**: Simply Measured
  - **Size**: 51-200 employees
  - **Industry**: Internet
- **Job Title**: Senior Marketing Manager
  - **Function - Seniority**: Marketing, Senior IC
- **Groups**: CMA, LEWIS, Social Tools
- **Skills**: SEO, Social Media, Digital Marketing, Blogging

This means you can target members using profile-based demographic information, re-target visitors from your website, or upload lists of contacts or companies for your account-based marketing efforts. On LinkedIn, you can reach members using the following demographic targeting facets:
In the following sections, we’ll walk you through what each of these facets mean, how you can use them, and tips for pairing facets together to create highly effective targeting combinations.

To get started, log into Campaign Manager, LinkedIn’s ad platform for creating and managing your ads. After you’ve built your Sponsored Content, Sponsored InMail, or Text Ads creative, your next step will be to define your target audience. Campaign Manager allows you to segment your audiences in several ways and combine different targeting facets to reach people that are most relevant for your content goals and your business.

In this section, learn about the different options within the Campaign Manager’s audience selection screen.

1. Estimating the size of your audience
2. Using different targeting facets to reach your audience
3. Using audience expansion to reach similar audiences
4. Saving your audience as a template for other campaigns
5. Creating Matched Audience targeting segments
1. Estimating the size of your audience
The Estimated Audience Count displays the total number of LinkedIn members that fit your targeting criteria. In order to launch your campaign, you must target at least 1,000 members or 300 if you are using Matched Audiences. If your audience size is too small, you will be notified with an Audience Too Narrow message which prevents you from saving your targeting and moving to the next step. However, to have optimal scale for your campaign, aim for an audience size of 50k or more.

Tip: When in doubt, start broad and then narrow down your audience after seeing what performs best. By using LinkedIn’s demographic reporting, you can discover anonymized information on who is clicking and converting on your ads based on titles, functions, company industries, etc. (find out more on page 25).

“LinkedIn gave us the kind of hyper-targeting capabilities we needed to get in front of well-qualified prospects.”

Lendora Johnson
Marketing Account Manager,
College of William & Mary’s Raymond A. Mason School of Business
2. Using different targeting facets to reach your audience

Let’s dive deeper into the targeting facets you can use for your LinkedIn ad campaigns.

Location

To get started, first define the location of the members you’d like to reach. Location is the only mandatory field. This facet is based on both the location a member has included in their profile as well as their IP address. Once you’ve chosen your specific geographic location, we recommend you add no more than two of the targeting facets below. This will improve the scale and reach of your campaign.

Tip: When you choose multiple options within a targeting facet, for example, the seniority categories of Senior and Director, Campaign Manager will target members in either of those categories. When you choose options between targeting facets, for example a seniority of Senior and a job function of Finance, Campaign Manager will target only members who fall into both categories.

Theme 1: Experience

Job Function

Job Functions are based on standardized groupings of the job titles entered by LinkedIn members. For example, a doctor would fall under the Medical function along with members with similar occupations such as nurses, veterinarians, surgeons, and dentists.

Tip: Combine the Job Function facet with the Seniority facet to reach decision makers with a specific expertise. For example, if you’re looking to reach decision-makers in the IT function, try targeting the Information Technology, Engineering, and Operations functions and pairing that with a seniority targeting of Senior, Manager, Director, VP, CXO, and Owner.
Job Title
When members update their LinkedIn profile with a new role, these job titles are grouped by LinkedIn’s algorithms and organized into standardized titles you can use for your campaign targeting. For example, though most engineers fall under the *Engineering* job function, you may want to target software engineers and petroleum drilling engineers differently given they have a different set of skills.

**Tips:** Avoid limiting your reach by targeting only a few titles. When you begin entering a title in the tool, Campaign Manager will auto-suggest other relevant job titles that you may want to add. Including all relevant titles will ensure your campaign has adequate reach.

In some cases, you can also broaden the scale of your campaign by targeting both current and past holders of a given job title. These members may have changed roles but still have a relevant skillset and may be interested in your offer. Do this by selecting *Current* and *Past* in the Target by dropdown.
Tip: Consider targeting senior individual contributors (ICs). Increasingly, ICs have a large say in buying decisions. If you’d like to reach senior ICs with lots of experience, target them by choosing Senior and combine that with the Years of Experience facet.

Job Seniority

Job Seniority describes the rank and influence of a member’s current role in their organization. This facet is determined by a member’s job title. For some campaigns, targeting by seniority can be an effective way to reach those with influence over a buying decision. For example, a senior product marketing manager has a seniority of Manager, an associate consultant has a seniority of Entry, and a doctor or physician would be classified as Senior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Has full or near full ownership of an organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Has substantial partial ownership of an organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CXO</td>
<td>Has direct reports and leadership responsibilities for the entire business function within an organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Executive management that has direct reports and leadership responsibilities for one business function or unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Multi-functional management that has direct reports and leadership responsibilities for multiple groups of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Positions that have direct reports and leadership responsibilities for a single group of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Individual contributor positions that do not have direct reports but have leadership responsibility, advanced knowledge, and do not require immediate guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry</td>
<td>Individual contributors that do not have direct reports, no leadership responsibility, no advanced expertise and contribute without immediate guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Students, interns and trainee positions that need immediate guidance to individually contribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid</td>
<td>Includes volunteer positions and positions that do not refer to a job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years of Experience

*Years of Experience (YOE)* allows you to reach a target audience based on the years of professional experience they’ve accumulated over their career. LinkedIn calculates YOE by adding together the duration of each individual job experience a member has listed. However, we exclude any gaps in experience and also do not double count overlapping positions.

**Tip:** Consider pairing *Years of Experience* with a seniority level of *Senior* and above to reach experienced professionals with influence over the buying decision or prospects for an Executive MBA program. Other helpful combinations with *Years of Experience* include:

- YOE + Degrees = educated professionals who may be considering advanced degrees
- YOE + Functions = seasoned functional leaders
- YOE + Skills = skilled experts

Theme 2: Company

**Company Name**

*Company Name* is the organization a member lists as his or her employer. These are based on LinkedIn Company Pages, which are maintained by company employees. Whether your campaign goal is awareness or retention, company name targeting allows you to focus your campaign on high-value accounts and reach decision makers across an organization.

**Tip:** You can target up to 100 different companies using the *Company Name* facet. For those who’d like to target an even larger list of companies, Matched Audiences allows you to upload a list of up to 300,000 companies. Find out more on page 20.
**Company Industry**

*Company Industry* is a company's primary industry of operation. An organization may operate in many industries, however only the primary industry of operation as listed on their LinkedIn Company Page will be recognized. Industry targeting allows you to narrow in on members who work in a particular sector. This is particularly effective if your offer is broadly applicable across an entire industry, for example, a piece of software geared towards the financial sector.

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**Tip:** Before utilizing *Industry* targeting, look at the LinkedIn Company Pages from a few companies that fit your criteria to see which industry they fall under. Consider including all relevant industries in your targeting.

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**Company Size**

*Company Size* allows you to reach members based on the size of the organization at which they work as listed on their Company Page. Company size comes from the total number of employees who work for an organization, not just the number of LinkedIn members who identify as working for a given company. Company size allows you to effectively identify small and medium-sized businesses (1-200 employees) as well as enterprise organizations (500+ employees).

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**Tip:** *Company Size* is one of the facets where excluding criteria works particularly well. For example, a startup that's making accounting software designed specifically with small businesses in mind could exclude 501-1000, 1001-5000, 5001-10,000 and 10,001+ from their targeting. This ensures members who are on LinkedIn and work for an organization that has yet to create a company page are captured.
Theme 3: Education

Schools
You can target based on the school, college, university or other learning institution where a member completed a course. For example, an alumni association can use schools targeting to reach alumni who may be interested in joining their association or donating.

While schools targeting allows you to reach the right alumni or students at scale, targeting by school may also decrease your audience size since it isn’t a required field when creating a Linkedin profile. Check your Estimated Audience Count to determine if you’ll reach enough members.

Tip: Make sure you add all subsidiary schools when trying to reach an entire college or university. For example, when advertising to Harvard students, be sure to add Harvard University, Harvard Business School, Harvard Law, Harvard Medical, etc. as they have separate school pages.

Degrees
Degrees are recognized ranks granted by a college, university, or other learning institution. Degrees are grouped by LinkedIn algorithms and organized in standardized degrees you can use for your campaign targeting. Choosing to target by this facet can sometimes limit your audience size as the degrees field is not always populated by members.

Tip: Education-based organizations can use degrees targeting to reach members who might be interested in furthering their studies through additional courses or programs. For example, if you’re advertising an enrollment offer for an advanced degree program, you could exclude those who already have a master’s degree. Layering degrees targeting with Job Function (ie. Finance, Accounting, IT) is a common way to reach audiences who would be most interested in a specific type of educational degree.
Fields of Study

Field of Study is the major or area of study within a member’s degree. For example, those with a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) may have a major in either Accounting or International Business. For some campaigns, field of study can be used as a proxy for skills or expertise in a given field, especially for recent graduates.

![Image of LinkedIn fields of study tool]

What fields of study do you want to target?

- Include: Communication and Media Studies
- Select specific:
  - Company name:
    - Communication, General
    - Electrical, Electronic and Communications Engineering
    - Mass Communication/Media Studies
  - Job seniority:
    - Communication Sciences and Disorders, General
    - Speech Communication and Rhetoric
    - Organizational Communication, General
  - Member group:
    - Digital Communication and Media/Multimedia
    - Technical and Scientific Communication

Job title: [Icon]
Job function: [Icon]
Degrees: [Icon]
Member skills: [Icon]
Years of experience: [Icon]
Theme 4: Professional Interests

Skills
Skills are highly relevant keywords found within a member’s profile and skills section that indicate expertise in a particular area. Skills include those explicitly added by members in their skills section and also keywords and phrases mentioned throughout their profile and summary. LinkedIn also uses look-alike modeling to infer skills from a member’s job title and job description. Skills targeting is an alternative way to reach professionals with a specialized expertise when job title targeting may not be as effective.

For example, if you’re looking to reach members with a project management software offer, job titles may not be as effective given several roles require project management. However, skills targeting allows you to target specific competencies that may span a broad range of job titles.

Tip: When using skills targeting, consider pairing this with the Function or Seniority Facet. This helps to focus the reach of your offer on a more relevant audience.

Groups
Groups on LinkedIn are places where members who share interests or professional associations can gather, discover new information, and ask questions. These groups oftentimes suggest interest or expertise in a given area.

For example, for those looking to reach Finance professionals, interesting groups may include the Finance Club (840,000+ professionals), Banking Careers (500,000+ professionals), or Finance Plus: Private Equity, Venture Capital and M&A News (440,000+ professionals).

Tip: Use the search function on the LinkedIn homepage to find relevant groups. The larger and more active groups will typically appear at the top of the list.
LinkedIn’s professional targeting facets make it easy to reach a high quality audience and can lead to much stronger results for your campaigns. However, LinkedIn also offers personal targeting facets such as *Age* and *Gender*.

**Age**

Age is an estimation of how old a member is likely to be based on their first graduation date. Not everyone on LinkedIn includes a graduation year on their profile and therefore including age may substantially reduce your audience size. *Years of Experience* can be used as a proxy for age in most cases.

Tip: Age targeting is more effective with exclusions. For example, if you want to reach people 34 years old or younger, instead of selecting the 18-34 options, exclude 35-54 and 55+.

**Gender**

*Gender* is a determination of whether a member is female or male and inferred based on a member’s name. Similar to age, using gender targeting will also reduce your audience size by potentially 50% or more. As LinkedIn does not require members to disclose their gender, we recommend utilizing professional targeting facets wherever appropriate.
3. Using Audience Expansion to reach similar audiences

Audience Expansion delivers your content to members who are similar to your target audience in their demographics and interests. This increases the scale and reach of your campaign by delivering your ad to additional members who may be interested in your content. Audience Expansion will never expand any criteria you set using Location, Language, Gender, or Age.

Tips: If you exclude any criteria, Audience Expansion will honor these exclusions. To avoid reaching a certain type of member while using Audience Expansion, be sure to exclude their targeting criteria. For example if you do not want to target the Unpaid seniority level, exclude Unpaid and Audience Expansion will ensure that no expanded audience members fit that criteria.

Audience Expansion may not be right for your campaign if your buyer persona is extremely specific. However, if that’s not the case, Audience Expansion is a great way to reach similar audiences and still achieve strong results.

4. Saving your audience as a template for other campaigns

Defining your audience takes time, especially for people who manage several campaigns across accounts. Speed up this process by saving your audience as a template and then re-using your audience for another campaign later on. You can apply that template to future campaigns across any of your accounts.
Piecing it all together

Let's now apply what you've learned to a real-world example. How would you use targeting on LinkedIn to reach a buyer persona represented by our savvy tech marketer, Marie?

Marie is a marketer in the technology industry at a small to mid sized company with marketing-related skills such as demand generation, SEO, social media, and project management.

There are several ways to reach members like Marie using LinkedIn’s targeting options - the key is to be creative and adopt an “always testing” mindset. We recommend running a few campaigns with various targeting facet combinations to reach your audience. Again, we recommend starting broad and seeing what works for you. To reach Marie, consider some of the sample campaign targeting below.

Campaign 1: Targeting by Job Function and Seniority

**Job Function:** Marketing, Media & Communications

**Seniority:** Senior, Manager, Director, VP, CXO, Partner, Owner
**Campaign 2: Targeting by Company Industry and Company Size**

**Company Industry:** Computer Software, Internet, Information Technology and Services, Computer Hardware, Marketing and Advertising

**Company Size:** Exclude: 201-500, 501-1000, 1001-5000, 5001-10,000, 10,000+  

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### What industries do you want to target?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Include</th>
<th>Start typing an industry...</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>See full list</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Computer Software**
- **Internet**
- **Information Technology and Services**
- **Computer Hardware**
- **Marketing and Advertising**

**Suggestions:**
- Management Consulting
- Mining & Metals
- Publishing
- Market Research
- Public Relations & Communications
- Design
- Writing & Editing
- Online Media
- Media Production
- Graphic Design

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### What company sizes do you want to target?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclude</th>
<th>Myself Only</th>
<th>1-10 employees</th>
<th>11-50 employees</th>
<th>51-200 employees</th>
<th>201-500 employees</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

- **501-1000 employees**
- **1001-5000 employees**
- **5001-10,000 employees**
- **10,001+ employees**
Campaign 3: Targeting by Job Function and Skills

**Job Function:** Marketing, Media & Communications

**Skills:** Digital Marketing, Lead Generation, Demand Generation, Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Online Marketing, Web Marketing Strategy, Email Marketing, Social Media, SEM, SEO, Marketing Automation, Integrated Marketing, Google Analytics

Campaign 4: Targeting by Groups

**Groups:** Marketing Pros - Largest Marketers Group; Digital Inbound Social Media Content Search Email SEO Jobs; Tech Jobs: Telecoms, Developer, IoT, Cloud, Digital Marketing; B2B Technology Marketing Community
More Customized Options with Matched Audiences

In addition to rich demographic targeting, Matched Audiences helps you engage key accounts, prospects, and customers that matter most to your business with: Website Retargeting, Contact Targeting, and Account Targeting.

You can now use LinkedIn to retarget your website visitors, market to your known contacts from your databases and marketing automation platforms, and reach decision makers at target companies for your account-based marketing programs.

1. Website Retargeting
Re-engage your website visitors
Target your website visitors with LinkedIn ad campaigns by adding the LinkedIn insight tag to your web pages, such as your homepage or contact us page. With Website Retargeting, you can create audiences based on the pages they visit on your website and recapture your visitors’ interest with content relevant to the pages they viewed.

Tip: Website Retargeting uses the same insight tag as LinkedIn Conversion Tracking. So if you already have an insight tag on your website, you can quickly get up and running.

Learn how to get started with Website Retargeting.
2. Account Targeting:
Reach decision makers at your target accounts

With Account Targeting, you can run account-based marketing (ABM) campaigns by matching your target companies against the 8+ million Company Pages on LinkedIn. Combined with LinkedIn’s demographic targeting, Account Targeting allows you to guide decision makers along their buying journey and ultimately drive sales and qualified leads.

**Tip:** When using Account Targeting, you can include filters for Company Industry or Company Size in order to segment your account list.

Learn how to get started with Account Targeting.

"LinkedIn, with its massive professional network, was unique, as it offered an ABM program targeting IT and support functions, our core buyer personas."

**Bhavisha Oza**
Director of Digital Marketing, Genesys
3. Contact Targeting:
Integrate or import your contact lists

*Contact Targeting* allows you to build a customized audience by connecting your contact management platform or securely uploading a list of email addresses. At this time, LinkedIn supports data integrations with Marketo, Eloqua, and Liveramp, however new partners will be added in the near-future. Alternatively, you can upload a CSV file with a list of email addresses directly into Campaign Manager.

![Use a matched audience](image)

**Tip:** With *Contact Targeting*, you can deliver ads to a list of leads based on their stage in your sales funnel. You can also exclude a list of current customers from your prospecting campaigns.

Learn how to get started with *Contact Targeting*. 
Tips to optimize your targeting strategy

Now that you’ve learned about the different ways you can target your ads in Campaign Manager, you’ll want to know how you can optimize your targeting strategy to ensure you’re getting the most out of your campaigns. Here are four important LinkedIn targeting do’s and don’ts to get you started:

DON’T: Lump all of your buyer personas into one campaign.
You’ll likely see poor campaign performance if you use just one campaign to target professionals in different countries, from different continents, and in unrelated industries and functions. If your target audiences are all lumped together, you’ll have trouble personalizing your content for each stakeholder group.

DO: Make sure your buyer personas are clear and well-defined.
Break out key personas into separate campaigns and group together the criteria that makes sense, including related industries, geographies and job functions. This will help you deliver the right messaging to a specific subset of LinkedIn members.

DON’T: Hyper-target your campaigns.
It’s tempting to use every targeting feature possible. However, limited scale will hurt your campaigns.

DO: Add only two or fewer additional targeting facets in addition to the Location facet.
We recommend the following audience sizes for LinkedIn’s advertising products. Keep in mind, there’s no one size fits all recommendation which is why testing is crucial.

- Sponsored Content: 300,000+ members
- Text Ads: between 60,000 and 400,000 members
- Sponsored InMail: 100,000 or fewer members
A/B Testing Your Targeting

Once you’ve set a campaign live and you begin to see results, optimize your targeting to ensure you’re reaching your audience most effectively. By testing two similar campaigns with one small variation in your targeting criteria, you can see which combination is more effective. To perform an A/B test on your targeting, create a campaign, duplicate it, and then slightly alter your targeting parameters.

Tip: Change only a few criteria at a time to isolate what part of your test impacted your campaign’s performance. Try testing skills versus job titles, industry versus function, etc. Keep refining over time, and you’ll find the audience that responds best to your content.
Use demographics reporting to analyze your audience.

Available in your account dashboard, demographics reporting enables you to optimize the targeting of your campaigns with information on who’s responding to your offer.

After you have accumulated enough campaign data, demographic reporting provides detailed insights about the professionals who have clicked on your LinkedIn ads broken down by job title, job seniority, company industry, job function, company size, and location. This will enable you to see how your content is performing with different subsets of your audience.
Conclusion

By utilizing LinkedIn’s rich demographic data as well as your own data with Matched Audiences, you’re better equipped to connect with those who matter most to your business.

Like all digital marketing, finding your sweet spot on LinkedIn takes experimentation. You’ll need to test and optimize over time to find success.

Now that you’ve learned the fundamentals of targeting on LinkedIn, you’re ready to start creating and optimizing your marketing campaigns. Go to the LinkedIn Campaign Manager to get started.
For the first time in the history of media, you can reach the world’s professionals all in one place. More than 467M people worldwide gather on LinkedIn to stay connected and informed, advance their careers, and work smarter. Together they comprise the largest global community of business professionals. These are the decision-makers, influencers, and the leaders of today and tomorrow—precisely the people you want to target.

For more information, visit marketing.linkedin.com.