

A background image showing the silhouettes of a large group of graduates in caps and gowns, standing on a hill and throwing their caps into the air against a sunset sky. The text is overlaid on this image.

# QUALITY LEADS *to* SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES

Using social media to improve lead quality and success

# How Can Higher Education Improve ROI?

The state of higher education today continues to hound marketers responsible for driving enrollment. Escalating tuition costs, a challenging job market that doesn't guarantee employment, and the draw of entrepreneurial start-ups have many prospective students questioning the return on investment of a bachelor's or graduate degree.

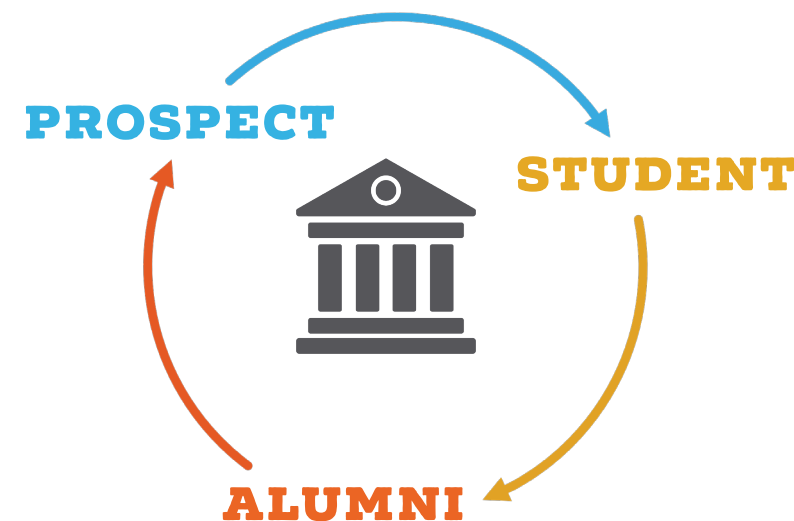
As a result, colleges and universities are under tremendous pressure to prove not only their worth as institutions but also the value of a degree all together, especially at the graduate level.

That's why LinkedIn and CarringtonCrisp partnered to conduct research on the value of a graduate degree and learn how business schools can use social media to drive quality applicants and improve alumni career outcomes.

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## Delivering on Quality Is the Answer

A successful enrollment management strategy shouldn't end on the first day of class. Today, you need a plan that encompasses the entire student journey from prospective candidate to successful student and finally to satisfied alumnus whose success creates more success for your institution. Social media is becoming one of the most effective channels to identify high-quality candidates who are more likely to graduate and prosper as alumni. What's more, social media platforms – such as LinkedIn – offer a potent way to engage with quality students and alumni today and throughout every transition in their careers.



# Research Objectives

To help higher education professionals create a roadmap to quality candidates and successful graduates, LinkedIn conducted an online survey of nearly 10,000 of its members in addition to partnering with the international market research and consulting firm CarringtonCrisp to survey 325 admissions and career services professionals from accredited business schools worldwide.

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## We wanted to answer the following questions:

- Is the graduate business degree still relevant?
- What characteristics do successful graduates share, and how can universities identify and attract similar prospective students?
- How is social media used by business school admissions and career services professionals?
- How can business schools leverage LinkedIn to improve the quality of its applicants and support the success of its alumni?



## Methodology

In June 2016, LinkedIn conducted an online survey of 9,898 members across 12 countries, including 1,620 in the U.S. and 1,087 in Canada. Respondents were either master's degree or MBA graduates or former graduate or MBA students who left their program before earning their degree.

CarringtonCrisp, an international market research and consulting firm specializing in higher education, conducted an additional survey of 325 business school admissions and career services staff, including 90 in the U.S. and 25 in Canada. More than 80% of the respondent schools are AACSB or EQUIS accredited.

This report focuses on data from U.S. and Canadian respondents.



# Key Findings

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## 1 Business schools are social.

Social media usage is extremely high among surveyed business schools, with 71% of admissions professionals and 98% of career services professionals using some form of social media to do their job.

## 2 Business schools rate LinkedIn first for quality candidates.

88% of surveyed admissions professionals rated LinkedIn first in locating top student candidates, followed by Facebook (35%) and Twitter (24%).

## 3 The master's degree is still valuable.

Nearly 9 out of 10, or 89%, of graduates surveyed said their degree had a positive impact on their career. What's more, 73% of graduates are very or extremely satisfied with the impact their degree has had on their career.

## 4 High grit professionals are more satisfied.

Graduates who scored high on the grit scale – a measurement of resilience and perseverance – were nearly 40% more likely to be satisfied with their master's degree than their counterparts who scored low.

## 5 Tangible goals lead to greater success.

Graduates who were driven by more tangible motivations for earning a degree, such as salary or career advancement, were more likely to report feeling satisfied with the impact of their degree on their career.

### LINKEDIN ASKED:

What is the single most valuable benefit from your MBA /Master's degree?

“The network of fellow graduates has been helpful in finding positions in my industry.”

“The degree opened doors that would not have been as available without the advanced work.”

“It enabled and encouraged me to change careers from a position where I was stagnant to a job I love.”

**PART 1**

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# Social Media's Impact On Admissions and Career Services

Getting social with higher quality candidates

# Welcome to the New (Social) Normal

Admissions and career services professionals alike are turning to social media to gain greater insights into prospective students while opening up new opportunities for conversations and engagement.

In the CarringtonCrisp study, **more than 70% of U.S. and Canadian respondents reported using social media within the admissions department.** This tracks with business schools outside North America, with 72% usage both in Europe and worldwide. LinkedIn and Facebook tied for the social network used most often, at 85%.

**By comparison, a whopping 98% of career services professionals in North American business schools are leveraging social media to achieve their goals.** LinkedIn is used by 93% of these respondents, making it by far the social network of choice for career services. Across the Atlantic, 92% of responding European schools used social media compared to 95% worldwide.

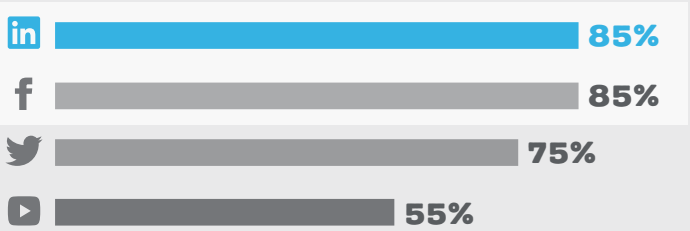
What does this mean for business schools? With such high usage at both the beginning and end of the student journey, there is a significant opportunity for schools to use social media to break down silos between departments. Social platforms like LinkedIn can be a valuable touchpoint to provide a more seamless experience for prospects, students, and alumni.



## What Are the Top Platforms?

**Facebook and LinkedIn are favored equally among admissions teams using social media.**

Social networks used by admissions teams:



LinkedIn is by far the social network of choice for career services.

Social networks used by career services staff:



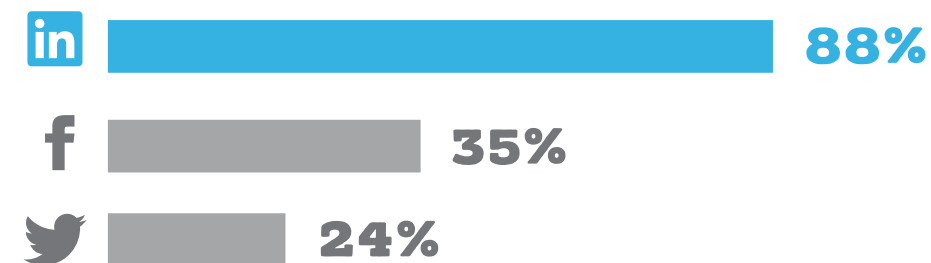
# Admissions Professionals Use LinkedIn to Find the Best Candidates

A major benefit of attending business school is the peer group that students and alumni become a part of. This is why quality candidates becomes so important. Quality candidates lead to a better classroom experience, higher graduation rates, and more successful alumni. In turn, accomplished alumni support their alma mater through career placement and new student referrals, creating a virtuous lifecycle that proves quality does matter.

**When asked which social network had the best candidates, 88% of admissions respondents selected LinkedIn.** Only 35% selected Facebook and just 24% chose Twitter.

Interestingly, survey respondents are looking beyond test scores and focusing on cultural fit in defining what makes a quality business school candidate. Only 40% considered a better candidate as having a higher GMAT or GRE test score. More were focused on a well-rounded resume and a track record of class participation.

## The best candidates are found on which networks?



## What does a better candidate look like?



- Strong fit with school culture
- CV has strong attributes outside of studies and work
- likely to actively contribute in class

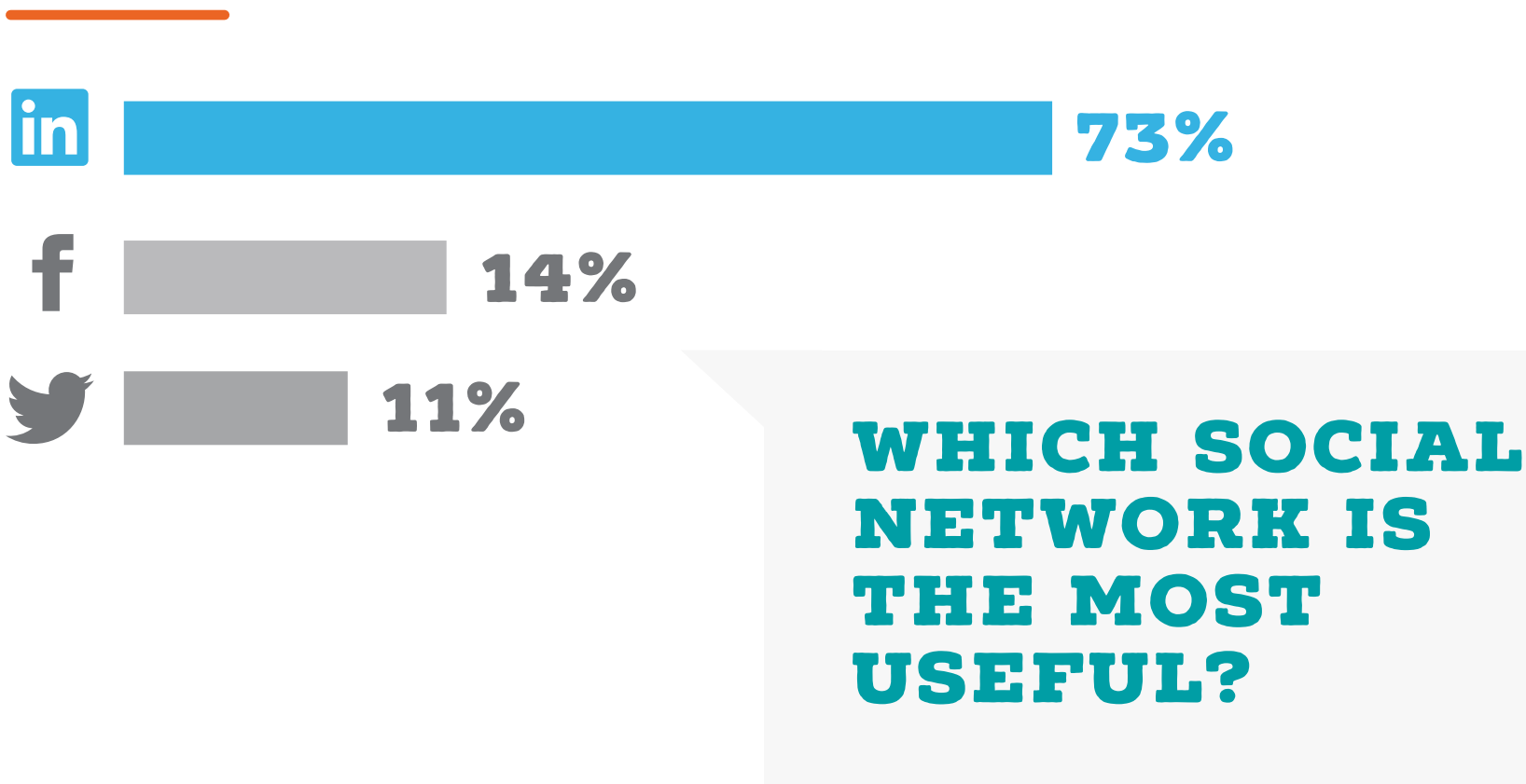
## 5 Tips for Driving Quality LinkedIn Leads

- 1** Share current industry news, career advice, and faculty/alumni profiles in addition to degree program information.
- 2** Choose a topic or theme that showcases your university's thought leadership, and develop a content marketing plan around it.
- 3** Utilize Sponsored Content to place your targeted content directly in the LinkedIn feed, where members are most engaged.
- 4** Leverage Sponsored InMail to deliver targeted, personalized messages and content right to quality candidates.
- 5** Target your audience based on their professional characteristics – such as job function, seniority, or industry – rather than age and gender.

Visit [lnkd.in/highered](https://lnkd.in/highered) for more best practices

# Career Services Build Their Networks on LinkedIn

Not surprisingly, LinkedIn was the network of choice for career services. An overwhelming majority of career services respondents – 73% – stated that LinkedIn is the most useful. As outcomes become more important in demonstrating the ROI of the degree, business schools can differentiate themselves from competitors by building relationships with students on social early on. Start advising students on how to use LinkedIn on day one, rather than waiting for their final year. See our tips to the right on how you can do that.



## 5 Ways Career Services Can Use Social to Drive Quality Career Outcomes

- 1 Teach LinkedIn and social media networking skills
- 2 Provide training on building a strong personal brand on LinkedIn
- 3 Advise students on how to approach alumni working in specific industries or companies they want to work in
- 4 Encourage students to publish content on LinkedIn to demonstrate specific knowledge, achievements, and thought leadership
- 5 Research desired industries or employers

Check out our student publishing guide at [lnkd.in/student-publishing](http://lnkd.in/student-publishing)

# Putting Social Media to Work

Nearly two out of three respondents in the CarringtonCrisp study stated they engage with candidates through social media. With such a high level of involvement, not participating in social media may mean you are at risk of being left out of the conversation with your best candidates and highest performing students and alumni.

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## How Admissions Uses Social Media

For admissions professionals, social networks solve two key needs: 1) connecting with their prospective students and 2) supplementing essential information that may not be easily found in application materials. Social networks are particularly valuable with international graduate school applicants.

### Connecting with Applicants

**90%**

say they engage potential applicants in conversations with their team

**55%**

say they connect applicants with alumni or current students

**55%**

say they inform candidates about the application process

### Supplementing Admissions Information

**60%**

say social media adds another dimension to admissions

**40%**

say they assess whether a candidate is a good fit for their program



**2 OUT OF 3**

admissions respondents said that candidates engage with them through social media

# How Career Services Uses Social Media

Social media is put to even greater use by career services departments. According to those surveyed, the top uses for social networks include supporting mentoring of students by alumni, creating a strong profile for job search, and researching companies for potential placements for students and recent graduates.

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## Alumni Mentoring

**79%**

say social media helps connect current students with alumni

**63%**

say social media helps them find and connect with alumni to discuss supporting current students

## Student & Alumni Services

**84%**

say social media supports a job search through a strong social profile

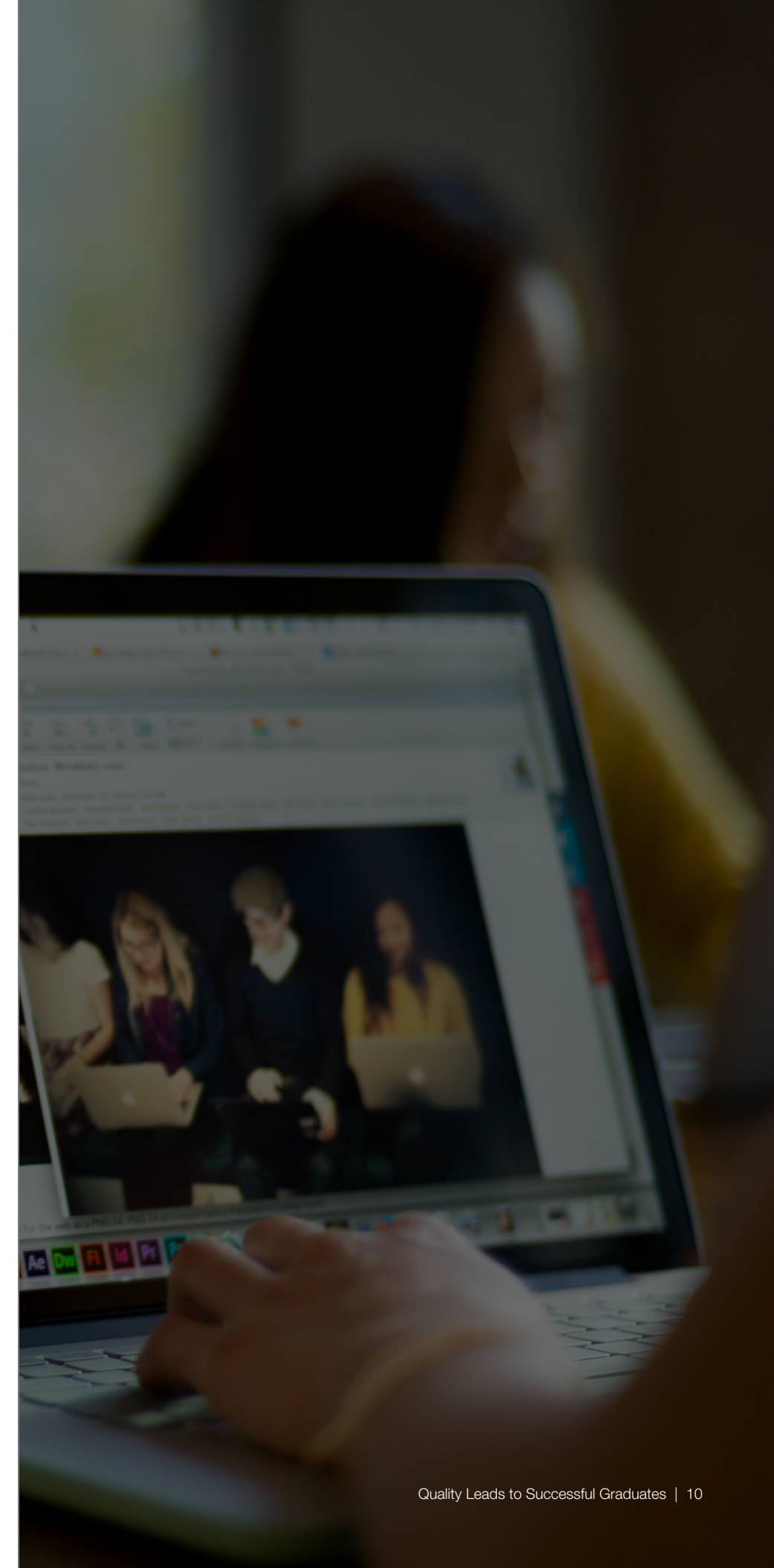
**65%**

say social media provides alumni with information about campus career services

## Career Research

**67%**

say they use social media to research companies in a given sector



# Getting Smart About Social

Prospective students and admissions professionals alike can do more to leverage social media. While 70% of surveyed admissions professionals believe high quality candidates have a single, strong social media profile, only 26% say applicants include a link in their application to their social media profile. This gap highlights an opportunity for admissions and marketing teams to include social media profiles more in the application process.

Yet with the potential increase in social media activity, many schools are still in need of articulating usage policies such as what staff can post and how admissions should use social media information to make enrollment decisions. In particular, U.S. and Canadian business schools were the least likely to have any formal guidelines for the use of social media compared to their international counterparts. More than half, or 53%, have not discussed the needs for a social media policy for their staff, and just 5% have a formal guideline addressing non-discriminatory practices concerning social media for recruitment purposes.

As social media becomes more important in the application process, universities will need to establish guidelines for usage. There are two important issues that will need direction: what staff can post on social media and how social should be used to evaluate applications.

## 5 Opportunities for Improvement

- 1** Use social media to break down silos between departments and provide a seamless student experience.
- 2** Request LinkedIn profiles in the application process and request permission to use LinkedIn as a communications channel and a tool for admissions.
- 3** Develop best practices and guidelines for communicating with prospects and applicants on social media.
- 4** Institute formal guidelines on how admissions can use social to evaluate applicants to avoid discrimination.
- 5** Encourage leaders in your department or school to become social influencers. Find out more at [lnkd.in/EDUexecplaybook](https://lnkd.in/EDUexecplaybook).

## **PART 2**

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# Analyzing Successful Graduates to Drive Quality Candidates

What high performing graduates can tell us about marketing to  
high quality candidates

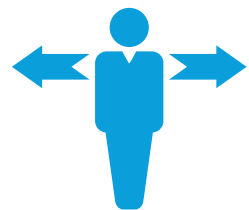
# Defining a Successful Graduate

Graduate schools are under increasing pressure to demonstrate successful career outcomes for their graduates and a return on investment for the graduate degree.

If you could identify the characteristics that contribute to successful graduates, would it be possible to use that information to inform your marketing and admissions efforts to encourage better career outcomes?

LinkedIn surveyed nearly 10,000 of its members to identify common characteristics of successful graduates in order to apply that knowledge in attracting prospective candidates with a greater likelihood to succeed.

First, LinkedIn determined a baseline of success based in part on results from GMAC's [2015 Prospective Student Survey](#). According to GMAC, prospective graduate students can be segmented into three groups: Career Switchers, Career Enhancers, and Aspiring Entrepreneurs. For the purpose of our study, if a LinkedIn survey respondent accomplished any one of these career goals, that was considered a successful outcome.



## The Career Switcher

This candidate is seeking to transition into a new job function or industry, and views a graduate degree as the tool to make this happen.



## The Career Enhancer

This prospective student is pursuing a promotion in his current company or wants to obtain a better position within another company.



## The Aspiring Entrepreneur

In this case, the candidate wants to start a new company or join a start-up company and sees graduate school as a pathway to achieve this goal.

## Measuring Degree Satisfaction

Return on investment can mean different things to different people – depending on industry, region, or academic discipline. Ultimately, the clearest measure of ROI from the degree is

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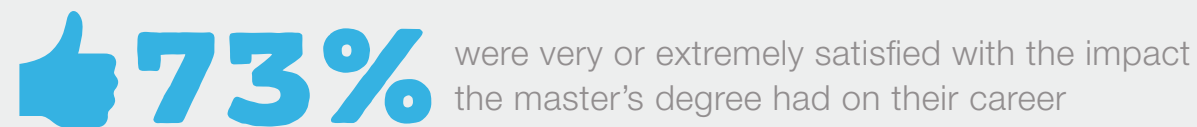
**“are you satisfied with the impact of your degree on your career?”**

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For the LinkedIn portion of this research, the combination of both tangible degree outcomes and subjective satisfaction with the degree provided a solid measure of the value of a master's degree.

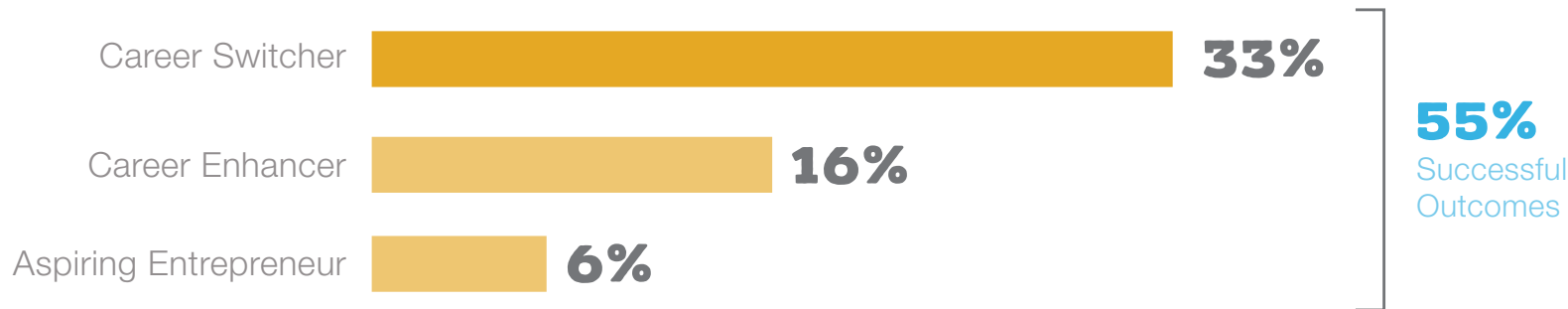
# The Master's Degree is Still Valuable

What survey results revealed is that by and large, respondents were satisfied with the value of their master's degree. When asked how satisfied they were with the impact it had on their career, 89% responded that they felt their degree had a positive impact. To add to that, 73% of master's and MBA graduates reported to be very or extremely satisfied with the impact their degree had on their career.



The majority of surveyed graduates (55%) reported they were able to accomplish tangible career goals – such as switching jobs or starting a new company – as a result of their master's degree. How did this hold up for young graduates? Very well. In fact, among recent graduates (those who graduated between 2010-2015), 62% stated they had accomplished positive career outcomes.

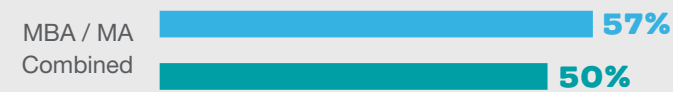
## The Majority of Master's / MBA Graduates Reported Successful Outcomes



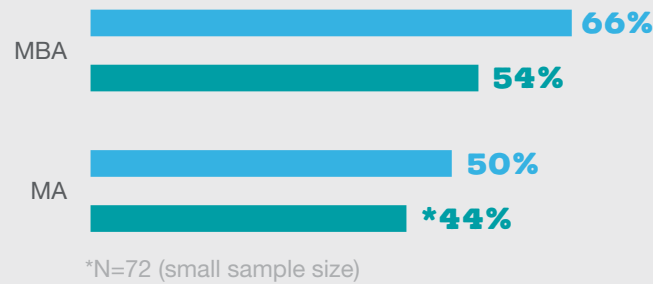
## Non-Profit School Graduates were More Successful

Non-profit school graduates have a slight edge over for-profit graduates in achieving career outcomes. According to survey results, 57% of non-profit school graduates have achieved at least one of three successful career outcomes compared to 50% of their for-profit peers.

### % Successful split by school type



Taking a closer look, it appears attending a non-profit school impacted MBA graduates more significantly. These graduates were 22% more likely than for-profit graduates to have achieved a successful career outcome. By comparison, master's graduates from non-profit schools were only 14% more likely to have achieved successful outcomes (although this is from small sample size of 72). from non-profit school were 14% more likely.

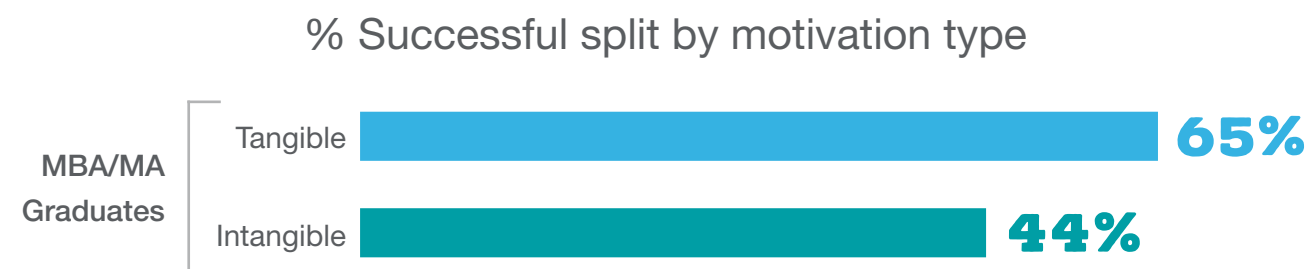


Public and private (non-profit) Private (for profit)

# Tangible Degree Motivations Drive Positive Results

Can a student's motivation in earning a degree predict success as a graduate? LinkedIn sought to answer this question by providing survey respondents with a list of 10 motivations for pursuing their degree, and asked them to select their top three choices. These responses were then categorized as either tangible or intangible motivations.

Graduates who had tangible reasons to earn their degree were 48% more likely to have achieved successful outcomes than those with intangible motivations. This is especially true of general master's graduates.. Those with tangible motivations were 44% more likely to be classified as successful. By comparison, MBA graduates with tangible motivations were 10% more likely to be categorized as successful.



Graduates with tangible motivations were **48%** more likely to have achieved successful outcomes.

Graduates who reported tangible motivations were also 13% more likely to feel satisfied with their degree.

## MARKETERS:

Use tangible motivations in your messaging to attract more success-driven prospects and students.



## TANGIBLE MOTIVATIONS

- Increase salary
- Upskill for a new role
- Start a new business
- Accelerate career
- Impact communities
- Overcome a plateau at work



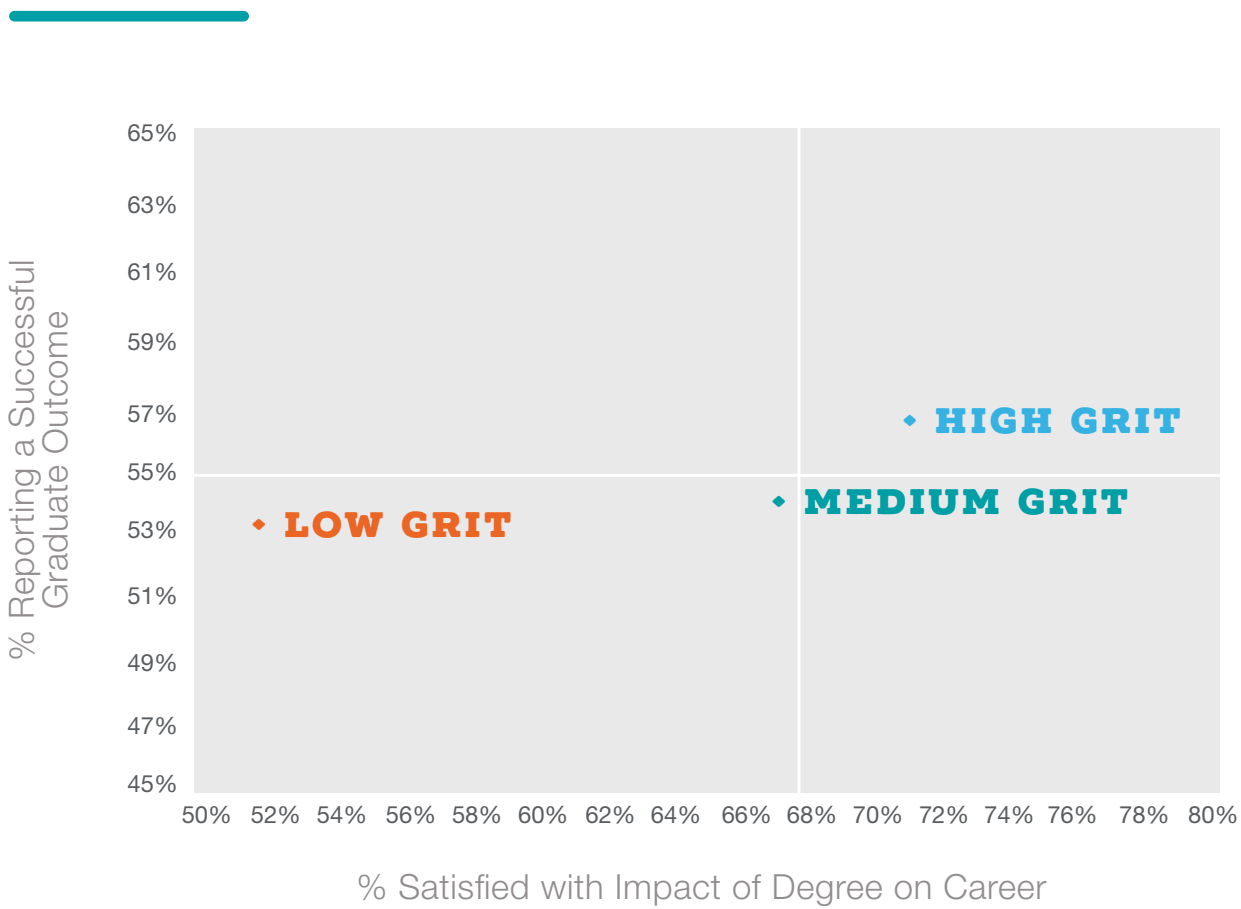
## INTANGIBLE MOTIVATIONS

- Meet family expectations
- Pursue personal achievement
- A passion for learning
- Increase self-confidence on the job

# High Grit Correlates with Satisfaction

Grit is an attribute that Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth, author and the Professor of Psychology with the University of Pennsylvania, has made popular in the field of education. Her work has defined grit as a person’s ability to pursue long-term goals with perseverance and passion. LinkedIn used Dr. Duckworth’s 8-question grit survey to classify respondents on a scale of high, medium, and low grit and then identify any correlation with satisfaction levels with their graduate degrees.

What the results showed is that a high grit ranking correlates with the graduate’s degree satisfaction.



## Grit is everywhere

Surprisingly, high grit scores did not correlate significantly with any one undergraduate major or company size. At a closer look, 45% of STEM graduates, 48% of humanities graduates, and 49% of business and finance graduates ranked high on grit.

Once in their fields, graduates working in the finance industry showed a slightly higher grit score than other industries such as construction or government.

Graduates with high grit also were found equally among the three degree outcomes, though Career Enhancers had a slightly higher number.

**MARKETERS**

Don’t try to target high grit prospects with demographic targeting. Tailor your messaging and content to appeal to their common attributes and goals, such as persistence and tangible motivations. Remember, context matters too, so align your content with aspirational platforms like LinkedIn.

# Successful Alumni Are Engaged Alumni

When considering successful graduates, including those with high grit scores, LinkedIn also explored those members who did not complete their degree programs. Those categorized as successful graduates were found to be more active on LinkedIn compared to their peers who did not obtain their degrees. Specifically, 35% of successful graduates had more connections and 43% had more page views and post shares.

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## Successful alumni are more active on LinkedIn\*

**43%**

more shares  
on LinkedIn

**35%**

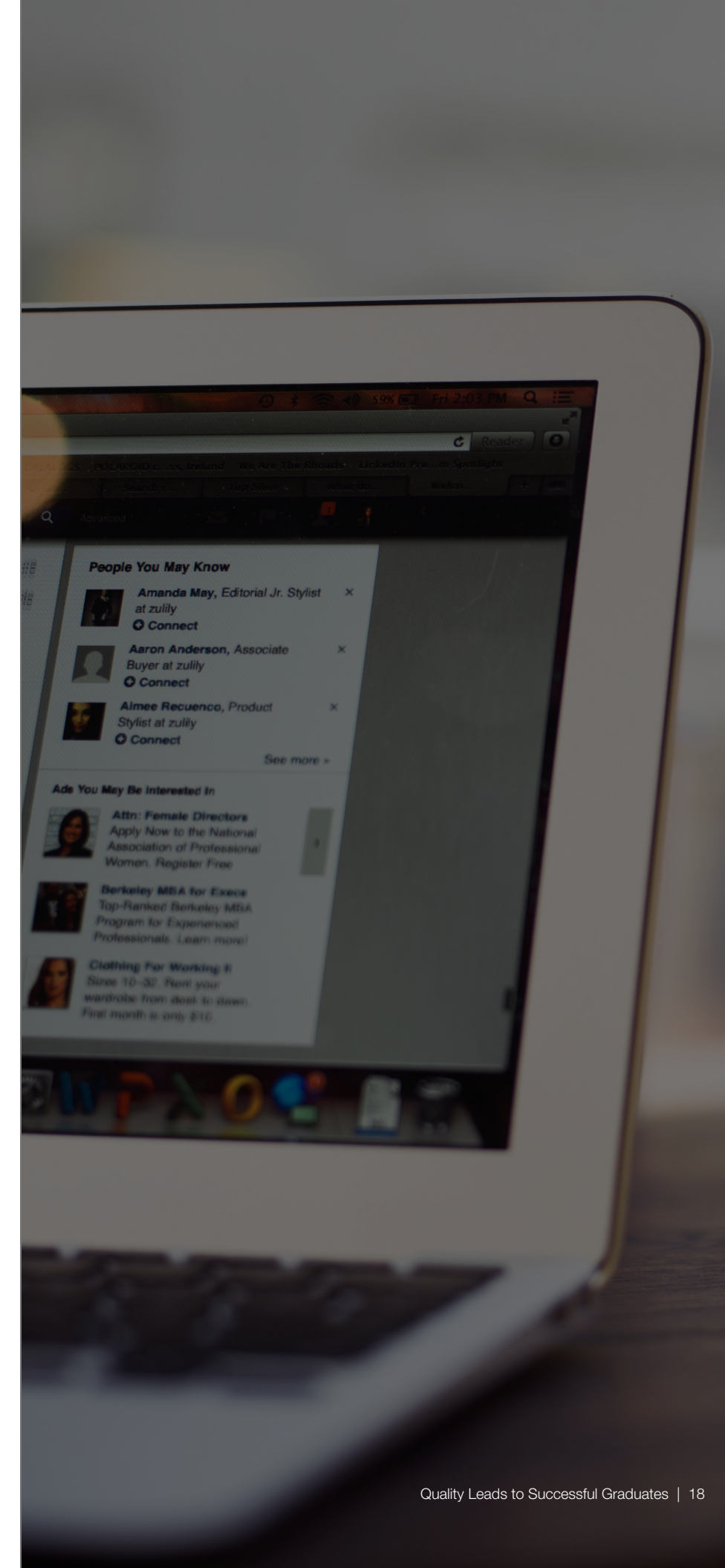
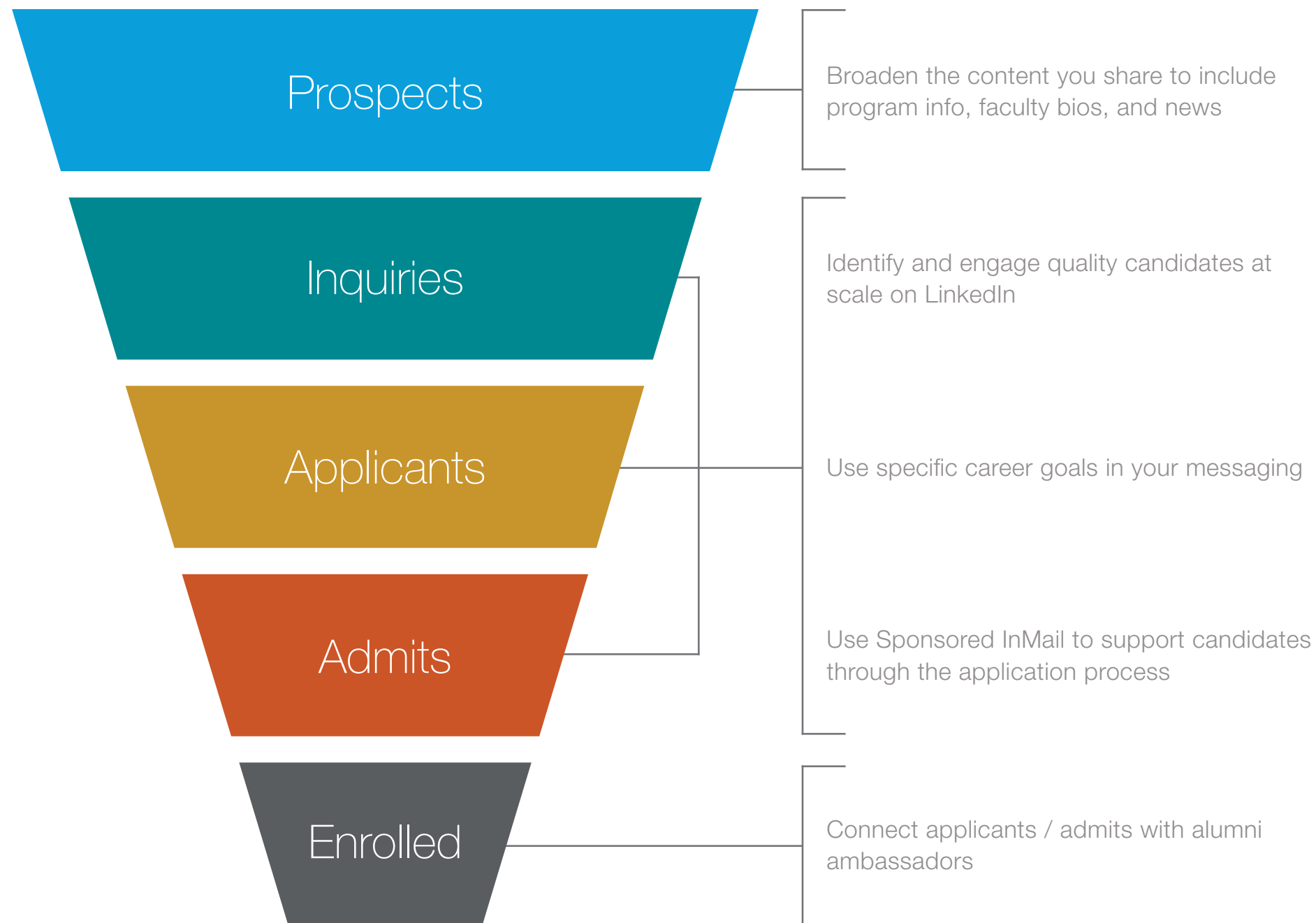
more connections  
on LinkedIn

**43%**

more page views  
on LinkedIn



# Top tips for admissions & marketing



# Quality Leads to Successful Graduates

## Why higher education is getting social

In dual studies by CarringtonCrisp and LinkedIn, it is evident that social media offers an effective channel to identify and engage with high quality school candidates. Once high quality candidates enroll in your university or college, you have set the foundation for a self-fulfilling positive cycle whereby successful students transition into successful alumni. Successful alumni are shown to be more engaged and willing to help recruit and refer current students.

In order to nurture this cycle, higher education professionals are turning to LinkedIn to remain in touch with quality candidates and alumni alike. While career services professionals are more comfortable with using LinkedIn, universities and colleges can better integrate their efforts by including LinkedIn as a valuable platform for admissions and marketing professionals as well.

With LinkedIn as an important social hub, all your prospect, student, and alumni engagement efforts can thrive.



With LinkedIn, all aspects of the journey are unified





Engage a higher quality  
student audience on LinkedIn

Visit [lnkd.in/highered](https://lnkd.in/highered) for more information