



5 TESTING IDEAS

— from the —
LINKEDIN MARKETING VAULT

OPTIMIZE. ITERATE. SEE ROI.

So, you want your content to resonate with your audience...

A/B testing is like putting together a puzzle: you need to test and iterate until you optimize every component of your campaign, including captions, images, CTAs, etc. Another popular analogy is the ‘Goldilocks Effect.’ Is your campaign too hot, too cold, or just right? You won’t know until you taste test each bowl of porridge. And this is the process for each and every campaign we run at LinkedIn Marketing Solutions.

▷ *According to Aimia Institute, millennials are 44% more likely to permanently disengage with brands after receiving high volumes of mass generic email communications.*

Oftentimes, tests reveal that the smallest tweaks can make the greatest performance impact. We find that our best campaign strategies are gut-led but data informed. However your gut might not always be right and while you may be confident in your hypothesis, testing may prove you wrong. It’s happened more than once to us!

In a world where brands like Amazon and Netflix are leading by providing excellent customer experiences, B2B marketers can’t afford NOT to A/B test. Consumer expectations for personalization and excellent content experiences have changed. If you build a testing culture aren’t afraid of ‘failing forward’, you’ll always be in a great position to create great consumer experiences. Furthermore, the more you A/B test, the more relevant your content will become to your prospects and customers.

‘Failing forward’ = getting ahead by not being afraid to fail. Fail in an effort to improve. Fail for the sake of being proactive rather than reactive.

Read on to uncover testing principles & tips, a super quick crash course in using LinkedIn Direct Sponsored Content, tests we’ve run here at LinkedIn Marketing Solutions and more. Hopefully this will spark some ideas of tests you’d like to run with your own team of B2B marketers, or should I be so bold as to call us modern data scientists?



Alex Rynne
Content Marketing Manager
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE, YOU ASK?

*First Thing's First:
3 Testing Principles*

*Our 3 Finest
Testing Tips*

*LinkedIn Direct
Sponsored Content 101*

*5 Types of Tests &
What We've Learned*

*Testing Ideas We're
Keen to Try Next*





*Can You Spot
the 5 Differences?*

1: Top left graph fill on notepad, 2: Top left keyboard function keys, 3: Top right mouse, 4: Pencil in pencil jar, 5: Middle right coffee cup handle

FIRST THING'S FIRST: 3 TESTING PRINCIPLES

Before You Start Testing

These three principles apply to all A/B testing on LinkedIn. They will help make sure you generate meaningful data for optimization.

1. Plan to Run Tests for at Least Three Weeks

For your test results to be truly meaningful—that is, good indicators of how to improve performance in the future—it's important to get a large sample set. Three weeks is the minimum amount of time we recommend. With that much data in hand, you won't be misled by outliers.

For example, if your three-day campaign included a national holiday, that atypical data would heavily skew your results. A longer run time smooths out those bumps.

2. Only Test One Variable at a Time

It was good advice in your high school chemistry class, and it's good advice in marketing. Your test campaigns should be identical save one single aspect you're testing. For example, if you changed the headline and tried a different visual, it would be impossible to tell which change made a difference.

If you want to test several variables, you can run multiple tests simultaneously – one that tests the headline, one that tests the visual, one that tests targeting. But in each case make sure you have one “control group” and one with just a single variable.

3. Keep Bid Rates the Same When Testing Targeting

When trying to determine which audience will be the most responsive, you can A/B test targeting different groups. Just make sure to keep all other aspects of the campaign the same, save for the change in targeting. That includes the bid rate—there may be variations in bid prices due to audience and region, but try to find a middle ground for your bid.

In a survey, 41% of overall respondents say they would consider ending a brand relationship because of irrelevant promotions, and an additional 22% say they would definitely defect from the brand.”

OUR 3 FINEST TESTING TIPS

Tips For Testing

The following best practices emerged over time as our team learned what was most effective for our own marketing on LinkedIn.

1. Run Multiple Creatives

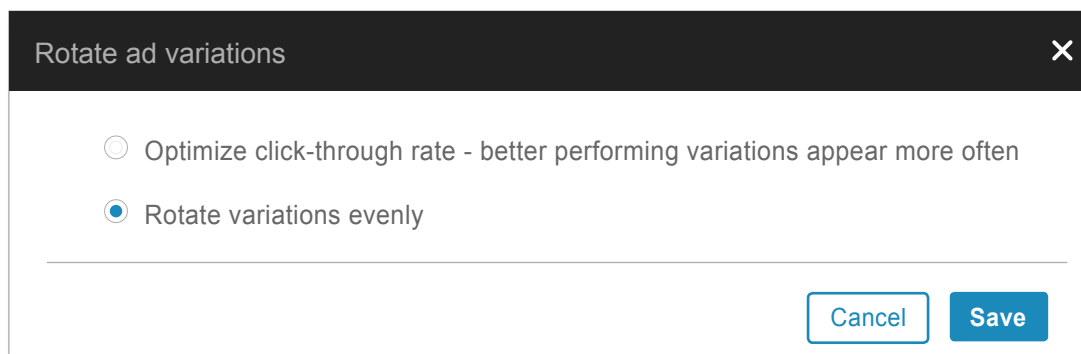
When running a LinkedIn Sponsored Content campaign, you can gain more exposure and more ability to optimize by testing multiple variations on your creative at once. Our team runs at least four for any major campaign. After some lead time, you will be able to optimize based on performance. Shift spending to the best performers, turn off the lowest performers and replace them with new challengers.

2. Set Campaigns to “Rotate Variations Evenly” for Testing

You can choose from one of two options when running multiple campaigns: Either have LinkedIn’s software optimize automatically, making your top performers appear more often, or have LinkedIn serve each variation evenly without weighting for performance. While the automated option can serve as an excellent time saver, to get more meaningful data, select the second option.

3. Create Unique Tracking Parameters

Make sure there is a way to easily attribute traffic from each of your campaign variations. Using unique trackable URLs to your landing page enables you to determine which variation is more effective at driving conversions.



LINKEDIN DIRECT SPONSORED CONTENT 101

First, what's the difference between LinkedIn Sponsored Content and Direct Sponsored Content?

LinkedIn Sponsored Content allows you to publish relevant content and reach a targeted audience of professionals beyond just your LinkedIn Company Page followers.

Direct Sponsored Content is a feature which allows you to share content directly in the feed, giving you the ability to personalize and test content without having to originate posts on your LinkedIn Company Page. Make your content more relevant by sending personalized messages to specific audiences. Then test and retest a variety of content in real-time to optimize performance.

Got it? Good. Moving on to the good stuff, the tests and the data...

Personalize your message to target each audience

Test variations of your content

Control what gets published on your Company Page



5 TYPES OF TESTS AND WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

1. Image tests
2. Test variations in copy
3. Character count test
4. Test creative placement to draw a reader's eye
5. The kitchen sink test

1. Image Tests

I'm sure you've heard us say it before and we'll say it again—visual is the new headline. When we've added more visual interest to our content, we've gotten more attention.

Every LinkedIn Sponsored Content post is accompanied by a photo (1200x627 pixels will render best on the LinkedIn platform). We also try to sprinkle some eye-catching visuals throughout, featuring short stats and quotes lifted from larger pieces of content.

When we tested rich media versus a non-rich media post, we found time and time again that rich media performs better. In fact, CTR for rich media can be up to 4x the CTR of updates with text alone.



- ▲ Rich media images have 38% higher CTR than linkshare updates with a thumbnail image preview.



▷ **Image Testing Tip**
To ensure the text on your image isn't cut off, make sure it's within the text safe area, which is 1000x586.

5 TYPES OF TESTS AND WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Our team typically creates 3-4 different Sponsored Content images to test against each other within each campaign.



◀ For example, we pulled these 3 stats out of **The Sophisticated Guide to Content Marketing**.

5 TYPES OF TESTS AND WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Image Test #1

An object versus a human.

This test featuring an image of a person versus an object (keyboard and smartphone) proved that the photo of a person generated significantly better results.



◀ The image of the human saw +160% CTR and +289% CVR.

Image Test #2

Background color.

What is it about woodgrain? Does it feel more authentic? Does it just provide a little visual interest? Either way, the post with the darker background saw 32% more clicks than the plain white background on the right.



◀ This image saw a .332% CTA + 32% Clicks.

5 TYPES OF TESTS AND WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

2. Test Variations in Copy

Copy Variation Test #1

CTA Test

What a difference a single word can make! In the following example we tested the CTA “download the guide” vs. “download the eBook.” The version on the left with “guide” saw a 95% increase in CTR and 50% more impressions.

LinkedIn Marketing Solutions Here's everything you need to know about content marketing. Download the eBook today: <http://bit.ly/2bJaxQj>

LinkedIn Marketing Solutions Here's everything you need to know about content marketing. Download the guide today: <http://bit.ly/2bJaxQj>

89%

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89% of marketers said their primary high-level objective for investing in content marketing is to acquire new customers. Source: Starfleet

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THE Sophisticated MARKETER'S Guide to CONTENT MARKETING

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LinkedIn

LinkedIn

◀ The post with the word 'guide' rather than 'ebook' saw a +95% increase in CTA and +50% impressions.

Copy Variation Test #2

Incorporating a Stat

When we tested an update with a statistic and without, we saw a 37% higher CTR and 162% more impressions for the former.

LinkedIn Marketing Solutions B2B buyers rely more on content to make purchasing decisions than ever before: <http://bit.ly/2gJK1CY>

LinkedIn Marketing Solutions 75% of B2B buyers rely more on content to make purchasing decisions than they did a year ago: <http://bit.ly/2gJK1CY>

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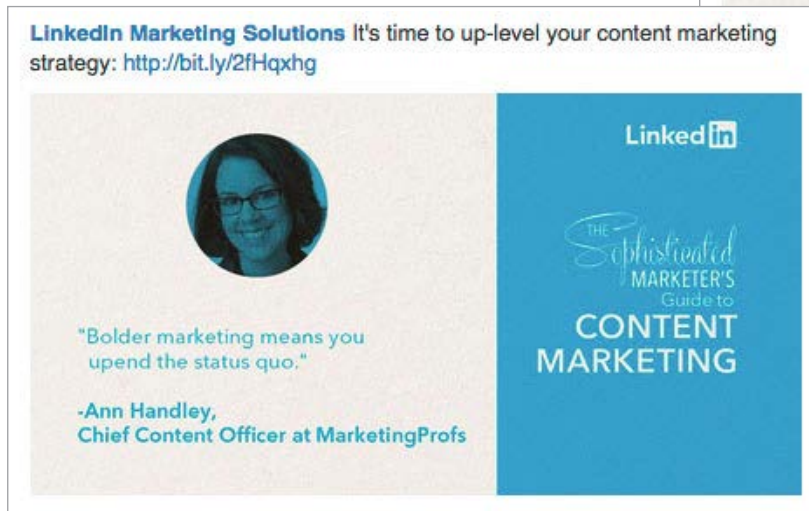
LinkedIn

◀ The image with the stat saw +37% CTR and 162% more impressions.

5 TYPES OF TESTS AND WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

3. Character Count Test

It might seem strange that character count would matter when the text is as short as this. Surely an audience can read 140 characters as easily as 70? But we saw an 18% boost in engagement just by getting to the point a bit more quickly.



▲ When we tested the impact of shorter character length, we saw more than an 18% boost in engagement rate.

▷ **Insider Tip**
Keep it short and sweet. Captions should be 150 characters or fewer.

5 TYPES OF TESTS AND WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

4. Test Creative Placement to Draw a Reader's Eye

Did you spot the difference between the two pictures below? In the first image, the model is looking right at the CTA button, subtly drawing readers' attention to it. That version saw an 89% increase in clicks over the first image.



▲ This image saw a CTR of 0.339%. (In other words, an 89% increase in click-throughs.)



5 TYPES OF TESTS AND WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

5. The Kitchen Sink Test

In this example we wanted to test image headline, subheadline and the call to action verbiage. We found the one with “download the research” received more clicks and impressions than the one that read “download the eBook.”



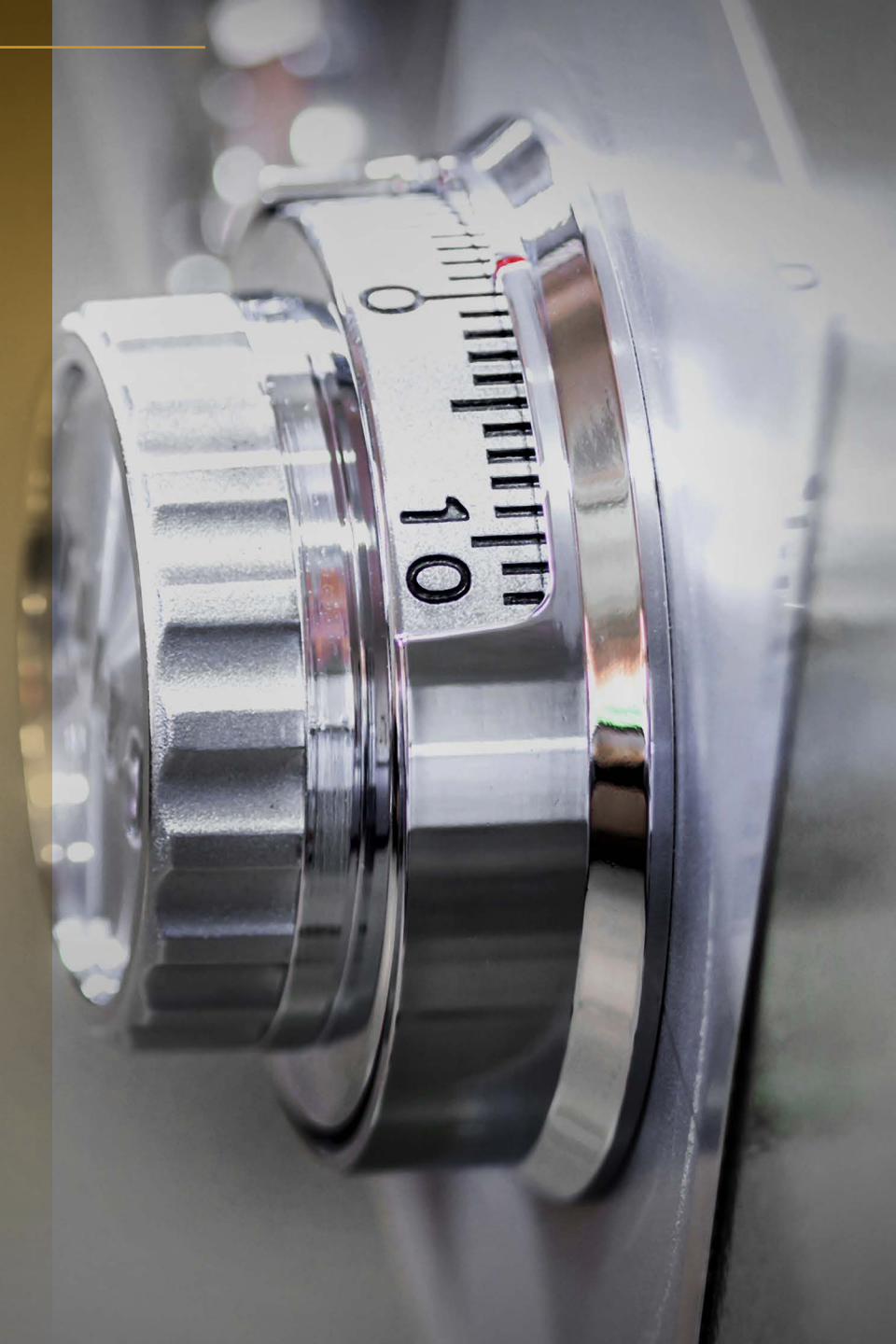
▲ Ad Impressions: 8,727, Ad Clicks: 33, CTR: 0.38%



▷ *Insider Tip*

We typically recommend keeping text on our Sponsored Content images to a minimum, but that is exactly why we continue to test and iterate until we know exactly what our audiences in different regions prefer.

This is just a small sample of the tests we have run on our LinkedIn Marketing Solutions team. And we continue to experiment every day. The moral of the story here is to keep testing and iterating until you find what copy and imagery resonates most with your audience.



TESTING IDEAS WE'RE KEEN TO TRY NEXT

Branded vs. unbranded

My hypothesis is your logo holds a certain amount of credibility and therefore the branded version may see better engagement.

Including a CTA button vs. no CTA button

My hypothesis is that the call-to-action button would entice more folks to click.

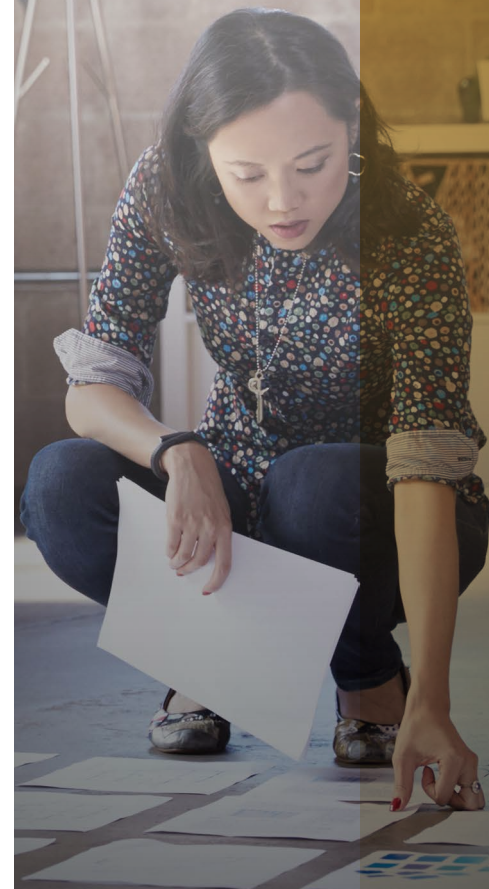
Which resonates best? eBook, guide, workbook, crash course?

My hypothesis is that eBook is quickly becoming a dated and overused term.

Test & Iterate = A Happy and Engaged Audience

We're not saying, "Make these specific changes and get results," of course. The delightful challenge in marketing is that every audience is different. What works for one group will leave another group cold.

Take these tips back to your own marketing lab and use them as inspiration for your own experiments. Commit to ongoing testing and improvement because each piece of data you get from these tests will help you understand your audience just a little better, and in turn improve your results.



RESOURCES TO SET YOU UP FOR SUCCESS

Secret Sauce: How LinkedIn uses LinkedIn for Marketing.

We're offering a behind the scenes tour of our process—how we use each tool in the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions toolbox.

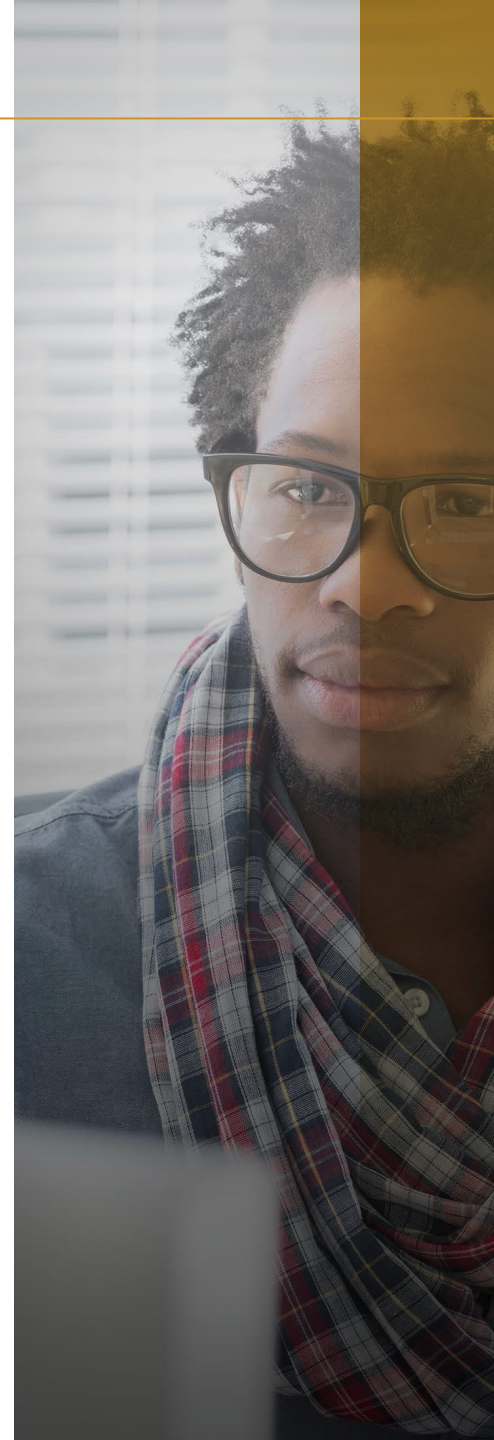
Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to Content Marketing.

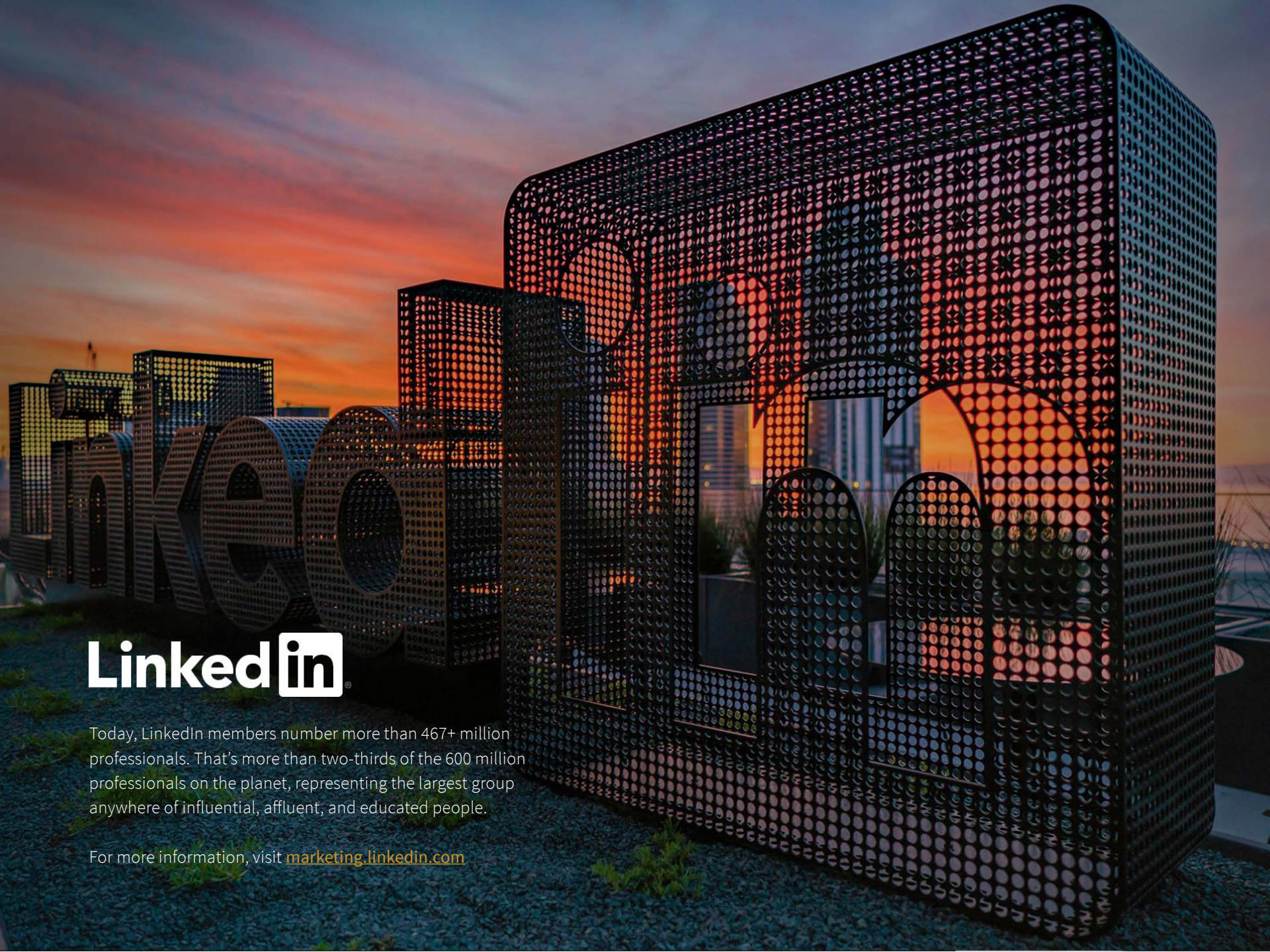
Everything you need to know about implementing an effective content marketing strategy on LinkedIn.

Get Started with Advertising on LinkedIn.

Create an ad in minutes. All you need is a LinkedIn account.

GET STARTED





LinkedIn

Today, LinkedIn members number more than 467+ million professionals. That's more than two-thirds of the 600 million professionals on the planet, representing the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent, and educated people.

For more information, visit marketing.linkedin.com