

READ ME IF YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR INMAIL RESPONSE RATES ON LINKEDIN

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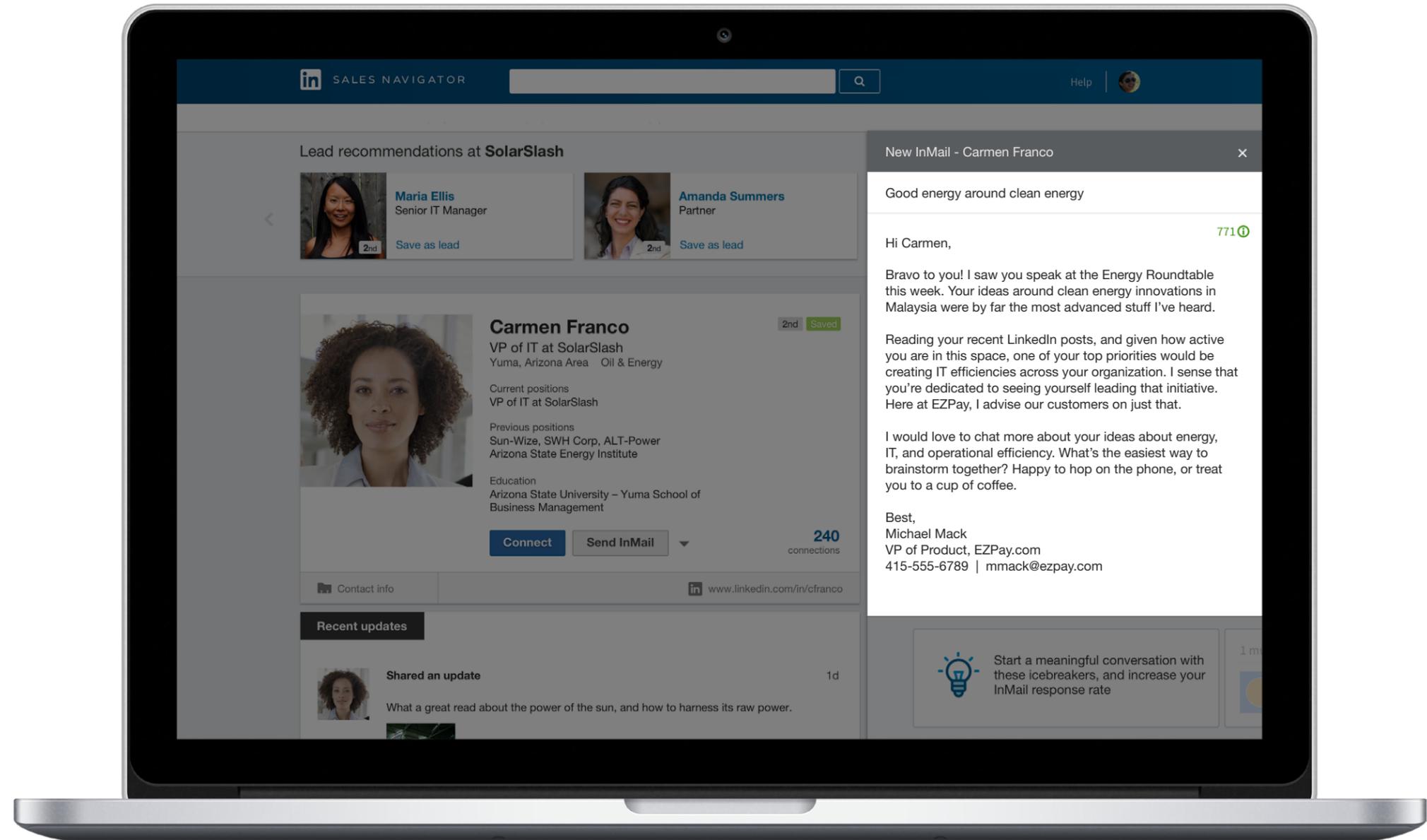
in a series of 6

Why it matters

InMails have a **10-25%** hit rate when it comes to soliciting a response from prospects - **300%** higher than emails with the exact same content.¹ This has to do with how InMails work. They come optimized for mobile within the LinkedIn app, they trigger immediate notifications on mobile, and they go to a dedicated inbox (in LinkedIn) as well as to the recipient's standard email inbox. In other words, InMail targets three touchpoints with the prospect, instead of just one – automatically increasing your chances of a positive reception.

As valuable as InMail is for connecting with prospects, the best salespeople only use InMail when a referral isn't possible. Personal introductions still yield the highest success rates – up to **500%** higher than an unsolicited approach.² But if you lack a common connection with a prospect, a well-crafted, personalized InMail gives you a great shot at starting a conversation.

This eBook explains how to write a standout InMail message, using a proven approach and format for every single InMail you craft.



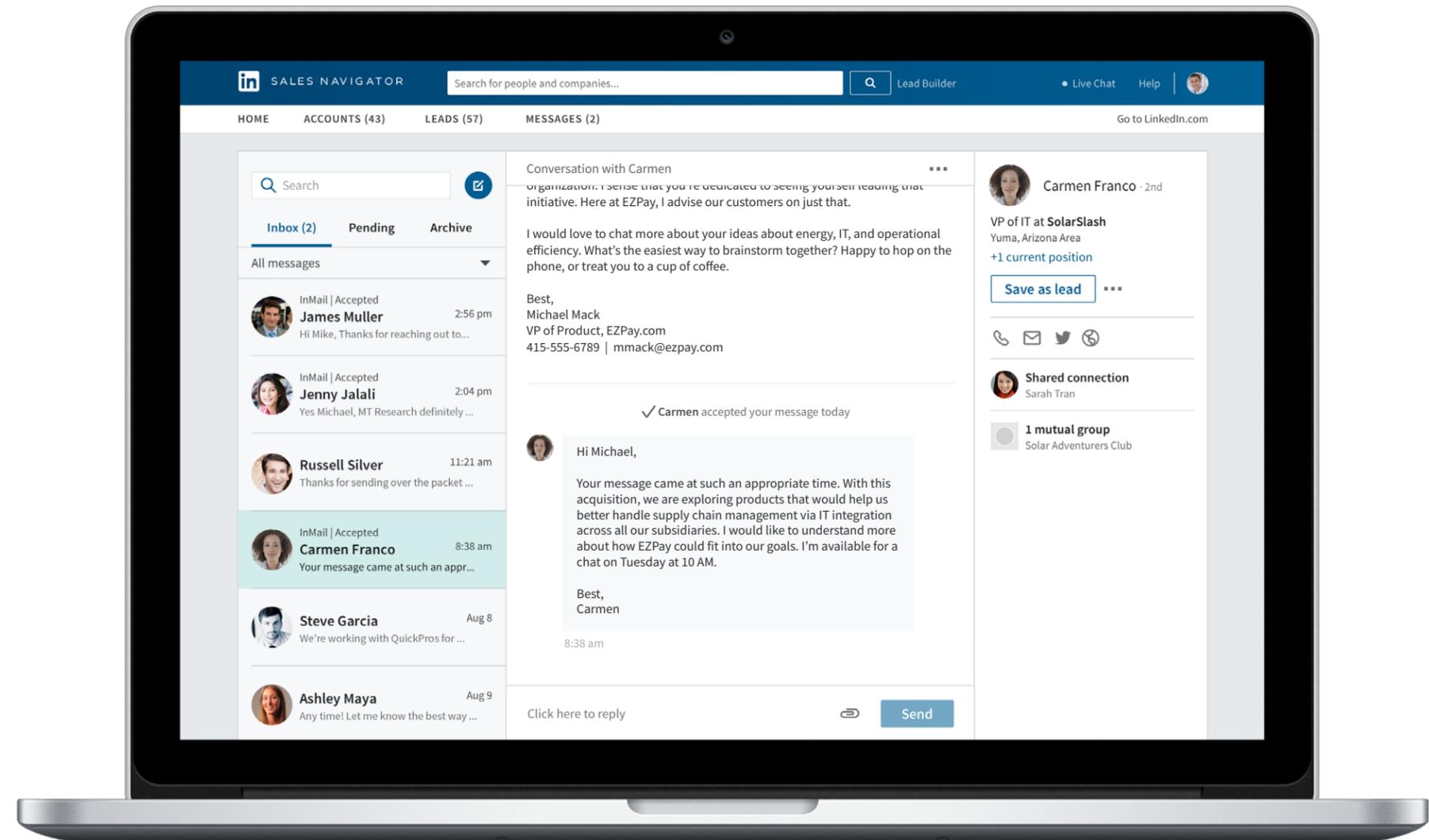
^{1,2} LinkedIn, "How to Personalize Your InMail Pitch"

STEP 1

Focus on the best targets

Marketers are abandoning the batch-and-blast approach in favor of a more refined, selective one. The best marketers carefully develop their target list before putting together an email. This is what enables them to send the most relevant messages to the most fitting recipients for the highest open rates.

The same approach is especially important on InMail, where you'll quickly lose credibility if you're just "spraying and praying." Make sure you have a reason for every instance of outreach. Research the LinkedIn member and ask whether you can offer value by sending a message. If the answer is no, cross that recipient off your list for now.



STEP 2

Start socially

One of the biggest reasons cold outreach falls flat is because of how impersonal it feels. Taking the time to personalize your InMail will go a long way to warming up the prospect and encouraging a reply.

To find a compelling opening for your message, look at your prospect's profile for a common connection or an interesting talking point. Leading with this will demonstrate your interest in them as a person, and make them far more receptive than if you were to send a straight-up sales pitch.

Not sure what makes a natural, compelling talking point to lead off with? Consider these options:

- Shared hobbies and interests
- Shared education history
- LinkedIn posts they have published or commented on
- LinkedIn Groups they belong to



PRO TIP

Be authentic about your interest. It's easy to detect fake enthusiasm even in electronic communications.

STEP 3

Grab them with a subject line

Write a subject line that is clear yet compelling by focusing on what's in it for the reader, and making it about them. According to one study, emails with a personalized subject line get 50 percent higher open rates than those without.¹

The trick is finding a way to spark curiosity in 80 characters or less (think about six or seven words) so it shows in the preview and on a mobile device screen.

As you craft the InMail subject line, use your reason for outreach, or mutual connections or interests, for inspiration:

- Mention a shared connection: "Joe Jones suggested I get in touch." LinkedIn members are more likely to read and respond to an InMail when you reference a common connection. A prospect is 46 percent more likely to accept an InMail if they are connected to someone who works at your company.³
- Reference a mutual interest: "Hello from a fellow marathoner." Mentioning a commonality taps into the recipient's passion and demonstrates you've done your homework. In fact, our data shows that LinkedIn members who share a Group in common are 21 percent more likely to write back.⁴
- Praise the recipient: "Loved your post on innovative manufacturing processes!" or "Congratulations on your new role at [COMPANY]." This shows you've done your research.

Ideally your subject line will provide a smooth segue into your message. For instance, if Joe Jones suggested you reach out, the first line could explain why.

³ PR Newswire, "Personalized email subject lines boost open rates by 50 percent"

⁴ LinkedIn, "9 Stats That Will Help You Write Better LinkedIn InMails"



PRO TIP

Get alerted when a new prospect matches your LinkedIn saved search criteria and then send a relevant InMail (such as "Congratulations on your new role!").

STEP 4

Make it personal

People ignore messages that aren't tailored to them, so generic cookie-cutter emails are out.

Sure, templates can be more efficient. But taking the time to more deeply personalize your messages boosts the chance of triggering a response.

In addition to calling the person by name more than once, make the message contextual and personal wherever possible. For instance, reference your prospect's priorities based on insights such as shared connections and company/individual mentions in the news that you uncover using InMail for Sales Navigator. Then explain what value you can offer that prompted you to reach out.

Ideas for personalizing:

- Mention a common contact
- Refer to a common LinkedIn Group
- Ask a follow-up question about a LinkedIn Group posting (theirs or someone else's)
- Discuss a common company, experience, or personal interest
- Ask for an opinion

Remember that a conversational tone comes across as more personal, so aim for a free-flowing message that sounds like it came from an everyday person.

PRO TIP

If you think of your subject line as the promise, think of the first line of your InMail as the payoff. Get the subject line-introductory sentence combination right, and you greatly improve your chances of getting read.

STEP 5

Keep readability in mind

According to an analysis by email productivity service provider Boomerang, the ideal length for an email is 50 to 125 words.⁵ This translates perfectly to InMail, since more than 50 percent of these messages are opened on smartphones, and often by busy professionals.

Show you respect the prospect's time by writing a short message that is easy to digest. Write in plain, easy-to-understand language, with a goal of starting a conversation. The Boomerang research found that sales emails written at a third-grade reading level get the highest response, followed by emails written at a kindergarten reading level.

Keep the Rule of Three in mind. Top sales strategist Jill Konrath advocates using a max of three paragraphs and three sentences per paragraph. You're more likely to grab someone's attention with that approach.⁶



⁵ Boomerang, "Write Better Emails With Boomerang for Gmail"

⁶ Prialto, "Best Practices for Doing Sales Outreach via LinkedIn"

STEP 6

Your checklist for success

Here's a summary of best-practice copywriting tips for composing your InMail:

- Use a compelling subject line.** Referencing common interests or a specific challenge the prospect is facing are good starting points. Try to pique the prospect's curiosity.
- Make it about them.** Focus on benefits to the prospect, discuss their interests, and refer to awards or achievements noted on their LinkedIn profile to build rapport. Using inclusive language ("we" versus "I") can also help.
- Start a conversation.** Asking questions or sharing common details about your experience not only encourages a response, it shows you know what you're talking about – whether it's about a solution architecture or sports.
- Keep it short.** The average online reader's attention span is about eight seconds, so keep your messages to 100 words or so.
- Offer next steps.** Always close with an action – either requesting a meeting or providing your availability for a conversation. This is the best way to ensure a response and start building the relationship further.



PRO TIP

Try using InMail to extend the conversation with people who've already engaged with your long-form posts. The second tab on "Who's Viewed My Profile" will show you the profiles of those who've liked or commented on your posts.

STEP 7

Follow up

Only follow up at most once after your initial InMail. The trick is to forward the same InMail to your prospect 1-2 weeks after the original (assuming no response), asking again for an appointment.

If you stick to InMail exclusively and follow established best practices for the platform, you should see better performance rates as compared to other cold-contact methods.

That said, InMail's success can be improved by combining it with email and/or phone call contacts. Some consultants report an eight-percent increase in contact-to-meeting ratios when combining InMail with at least one other contact method.⁷

⁷ LinkedIn, "Answering 6 Common Questions Salespeople Have About InMail"



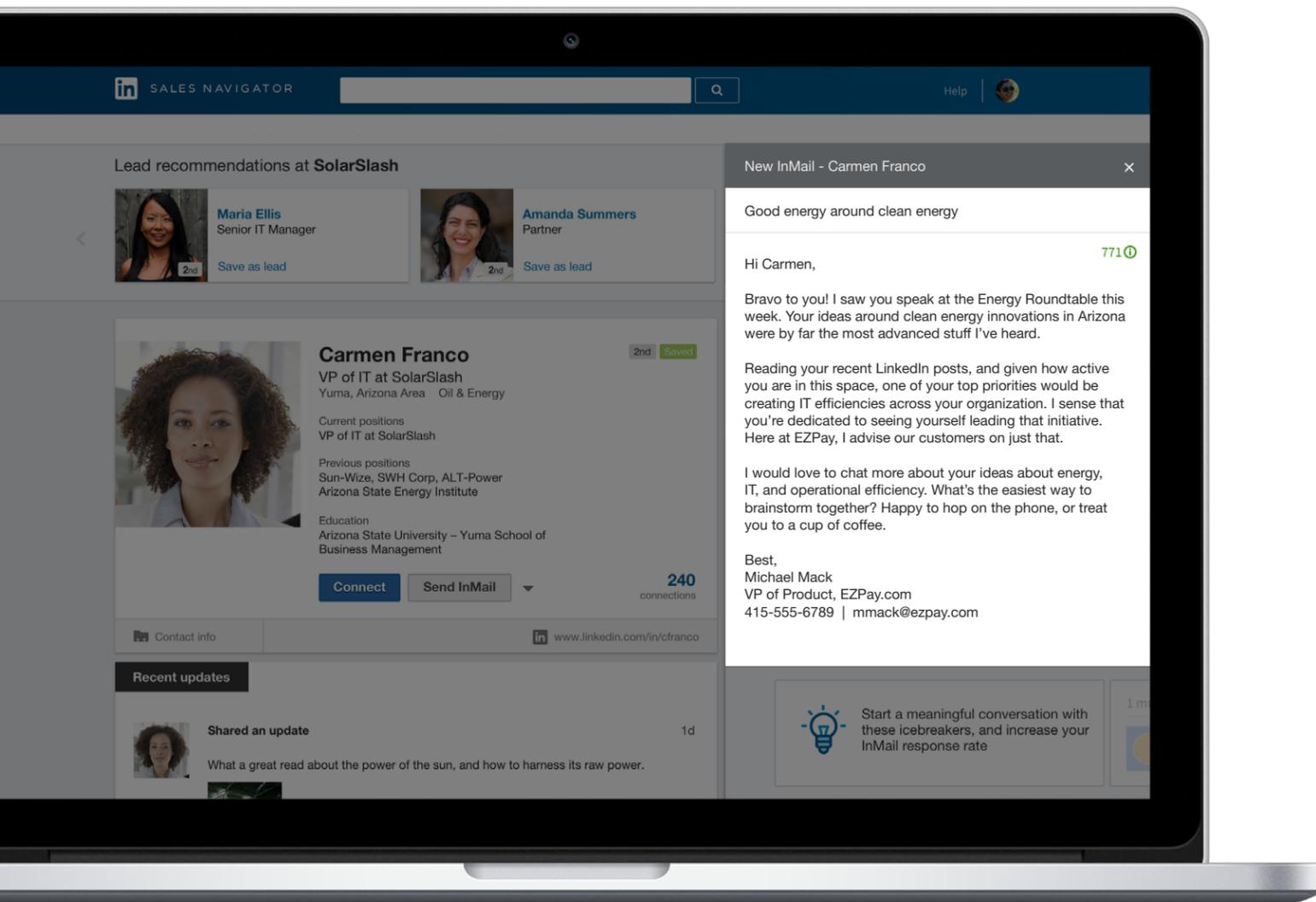
Breaking it down

An InMail is more likely to work if you lead with something that the prospect is interested in or passionate about. Notice how Michael puts this first in both the subject line and the paragraph structure of his InMail to Carmen to immediately catch her attention.

It's fine to state openly that you've learned about this more personal subject matter from the prospect's LinkedIn profile – this is, after all, information they've freely shared in a business context. However, Michael also does a good job of naturally incorporating aspects of Carmen's profile into his opening icebreaker, such as the fact that she works in Arizona.

When it comes to the business-end of the InMail, Michael's language is all about his prospect Carmen. Using phrases like “given how active you are” and “dedicated to seeing yourself” can clearly frame the prospect's situation and tie it into the seller's skills or services.

Michael also avoids any language that could be construed as too forceful or sales-y. Rather than assume that he can book time in Carmen's calendar, he asks “what's the easiest way” to demonstrate a willingness to accommodate her preferences. Give the prospect as much control over next steps as possible, but do include a specific call to action (in this case, a phone call or meeting).



About us

LinkedIn Sales Navigator makes it simple to establish and grow relationships with prospects and customers by helping you tap into the power of LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network of 500+ million members. Designed for sales professionals, LinkedIn Sales Navigator combines LinkedIn's network data, relevant news sources, and your accounts, leads, and preferences to produce customized recommendations and insights.

With LinkedIn Sales Navigator, you can focus on the right people and companies, stay up-to-date on what's happening with your accounts, and build trust with your prospects and customers.

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