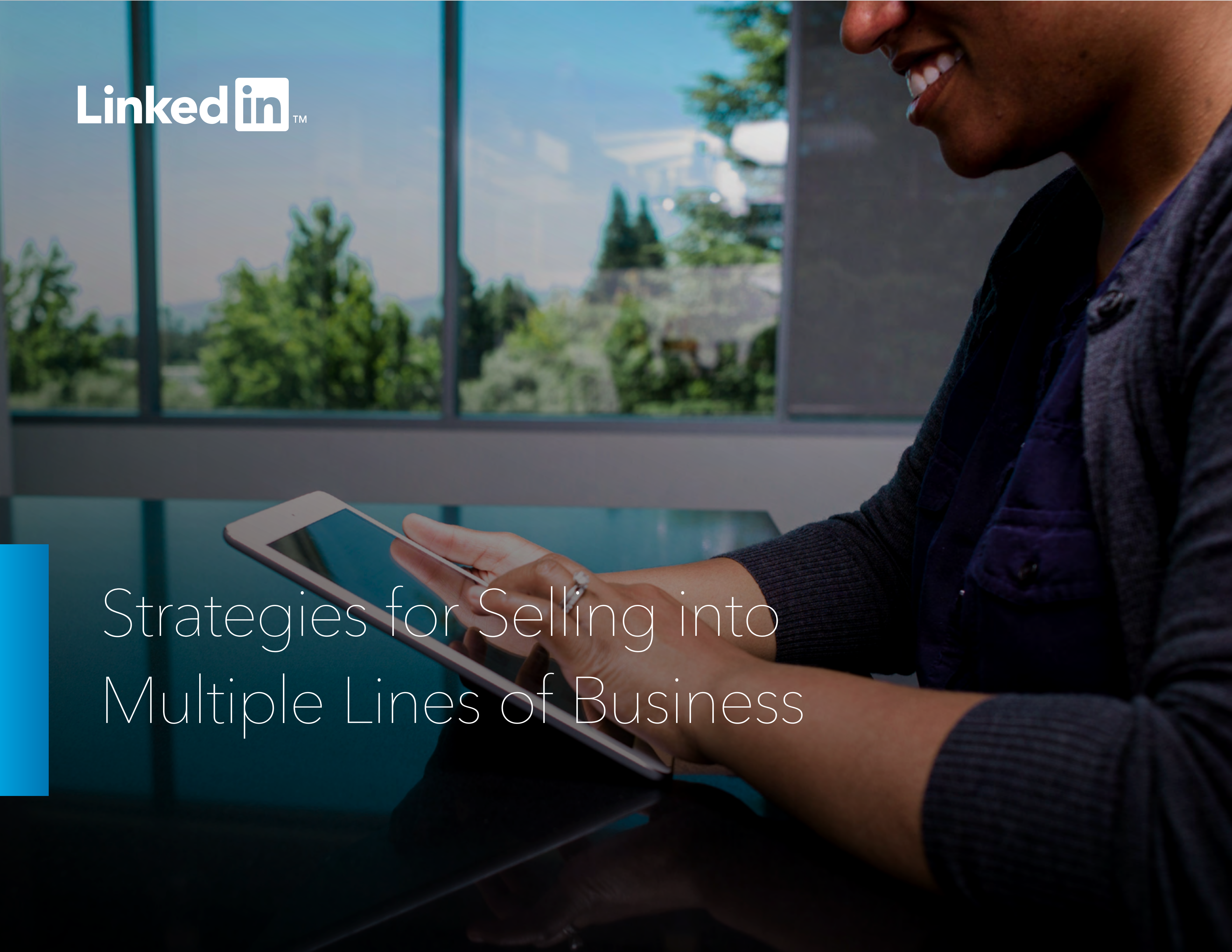


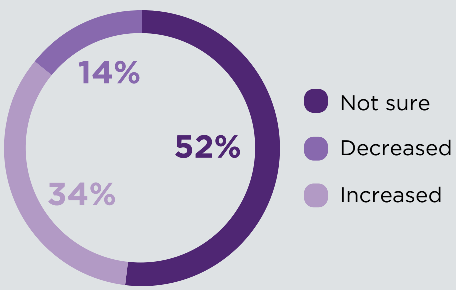
Strategies for Selling into Multiple Lines of Business

INTRODUCTION

It is natural for a salesperson to gravitate toward a single person as the sales process progresses. You've spent a great deal of time together, and the conversations have probably included a few anecdotes about your kid's soccer game or where you went to school. Over time, you discover that you have some things in common and develop a personal relationship.

However, there is usually more than one person of influence involved in a B2B purchase. According to *Demand Gen Report's 2014 Buyer Behavior Survey,* 34% said the number of team members involved in the purchase process has increased over the past year.

Has the number of team members usually involved in your B2B purchase process changed over the past year?



More than one third of respondents to *Demand Gen Report's 2014 Buyer Behavior Survey* said the number of team members involved in a sale was increasing.

While developing a strong one-on-one relationship may seem like the ideal way to move a deal forward, it can potentially backfire. What if that person moves to another position in the organization or leaves the company all together? Or what if the person you have been focused on is only influential on the current deal, but someone else on the team has more sway on the next project?

There is an inherent need to continually evaluate who the influencers are in an organization — and that can change based on the type of purchase, the size of the deal, the timeline of the decision, and a host of other factors. Those dynamics can shift from deal to deal, or they can even change in mid-stream if someone leaves or moves to another position in the organization. If you've focused all of your efforts on winning over "Tony," and "Tony" is suddenly no longer in the equation, the deal can go sour.

"The notion of maintaining contact with multiple buying influencers, determining their relationships and decision authority as they make decisions, is as old as sales itself," said Joe Galvin, Chief Research Officer and EVP at Miller Heiman. "This is why relationships matter in sales."

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-Joe Galvin,
Miller Heiman

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BREAKING FREE OF THE ONE-RELATIONSHIP HABIT

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The concept of multi-threading comes from the software programming world. As defined by TechTarget's glossary of computer terms, "Multi-threading is the ability of a program or an operating system process to manage its use by more than one user at a time and to even manage multiple requests by the same user."

In the sales arena, multi-threading involves reaching out to more than one person at the target company and managing multiple relationships to ensure that the deal progresses.

Peter Kim, Director of Relationship Management for LinkedIn, explained that multi-threading is not a tactic to be used selectively. "In any given account, you need as many voices as possible to influence and educate you on the full spectrum of needs. By going as deep as possible at all levels, across different departments, etc., you acquire a more complete and holistic voice of the customer."

Kim noted that this benefits the salesperson in terms of assessing opportunities to add value to the organization, as well as mitigates risk in the event that the relationship gets off track. "So, this mindset is critical for each and every relationship managed by sales."

Lessons Learned From Relying On A Single Relationship

A member of the sales team at New Relic, a SaaS vendor of performance management software and analytics, was close to closing a deal with the CTO at a Fortune 15 consumer products company. But then the deal hit a snag.

"My sales rep emailed me that the CTO was going to be out until the end of the quarter," said John Gilman, VP of Worldwide Commercial Sales for the vendor. "That meant that the deal was not going to happen in that quarter, and the sales rep was going to miss his numbers. If we had a few other relationships at the company, someone else may have been able to step in and move the ball forward."

Gilman pointed out that a multi-threading approach is helpful to avoid similar situations. "For deals over a certain threshold, it is unacceptable to come to the table with one person at the target company," Gilman said. "You need to know who their manager is, who can say yes, and who can say no. Also, you need to know who can help make the deal bigger."

An examination of successful deals shows that the approach works, according to Gilman. "Most of our successful deals have taken a multi-threading approach that relied on multiple relationships with influencers in an organization."

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-John Gilman, New Relic

LinkedIn Sales Navigator allows me to work every possible angle of an account. By using the advanced search feature, I am able to find relevant contacts and reach out to them directly as opposed to speaking with six or eight people who continually pass me along to the wrong point of contact.

-Jacob Champion,
New Business Development, Reis Services

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ESTABLISHING A MULTI-THREADING MINDSET

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Today's B2B salespeople have to develop strategies to ensure that they are interacting with everyone in the organization who has a stake in the purchase. While there is typically one person making the final decision, CSO Insights *Sales Performance Optimization Study* showed that, on average, a salesperson will interact with at least four people to close a deal. If your strategy is to go after that one decision-maker, you could lose the deal and much more.

A better strategy is to "land and expand," according to Matt Heinz, President of Heinz Marketing. "Use your first contact to get introductions to others. Don't do it in the name of your deal, but do it as a means of sharing new ideas, best practices or other value-added information."

LinkedIn is a powerful tool for identifying additional contacts at an organization, and conversations with your first contact can help uncover other influencers in the organization.

Your company's sales reps should know who the buying influencers are, and how their function within their business relates to other operational areas. "Each of the individuals involved in the buying decision probably talks with at least one other person within their firm before making the decision," said Koka Sexton, Senior Social Marketing Manager for LinkedIn.

Once the salesperson has the lay of the land, they want to focus on helping their most influential contacts build the internal case for the purchase. The sales rep needs a sound understanding of the company's internal process in order to give the "influencers" plenty of useful material so they can get all their stakeholders on board, Koka noted.

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>
> **-Matt Heinz,**
> Heinz Marketing

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EQUIPPING YOUR SALES TEAM

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LinkedIn's Sales Navigator is uniquely positioned to help sales teams take a multi-threading approach to selling:

- **Get lead recommendations.** Lead Builder is Sales Navigator's prospect suggestion tool. It uses current account profiles, information on the Web, and criteria that you select to find the most active leads. Lead Recommendations can help uncover decision-makers and influencers at your target accounts.
- **Tap into your team's network.** TeamLink identifies how members of your team could connect you with a lead or account.
- **Connect to your CRM to track account activity.** Sales Navigator is compatible with a number of widely-used CRMs, including Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics, which enables users to quick and easily integrate it into their existing processes.
- **Scour the social networks.** LinkedIn's social selling tools can help identify the influencers connected to your contacts in the organization.

Right Title, Wrong Contact

Optimizely, a provider of A/B testing technology, has a sales team that is "young in their careers, enthusiastic and optimistic, as are our customers," said Dan Ross, Director of Sales Operations for the vendor.

To illustrate the benefits of multi-threading, Ross relayed an example of a prospect who seemed to have the right title and expressed interest, but the deal was not moving along. "In pipeline meeting after pipeline meeting, this deal would keep coming up, but it was stalled. It turns out that the person was just occupying our time by having a nice conversation with our sales rep. The cost was six months of the sales rep's time and some uncomfortable conversations with my VP."

A multi-threading approach, Ross noted, would have uncovered other influencers within the organization. "The goal is to identify power base, and power is not a person, it is a state of being."

In a B2B sales cycle, there is usually not just one person involved, Ross said, and it is important to understand the organizational dynamics. "You want to learn not just who is the person above your contact, but also who is left, right and below them."

Now, the vendor begins the multi-threading approach at the prospecting level. "When you're just starting to engage with a company, there is no strong emotional connection with one individual."

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-Dan Ross,
Optimizely

CONCLUSION

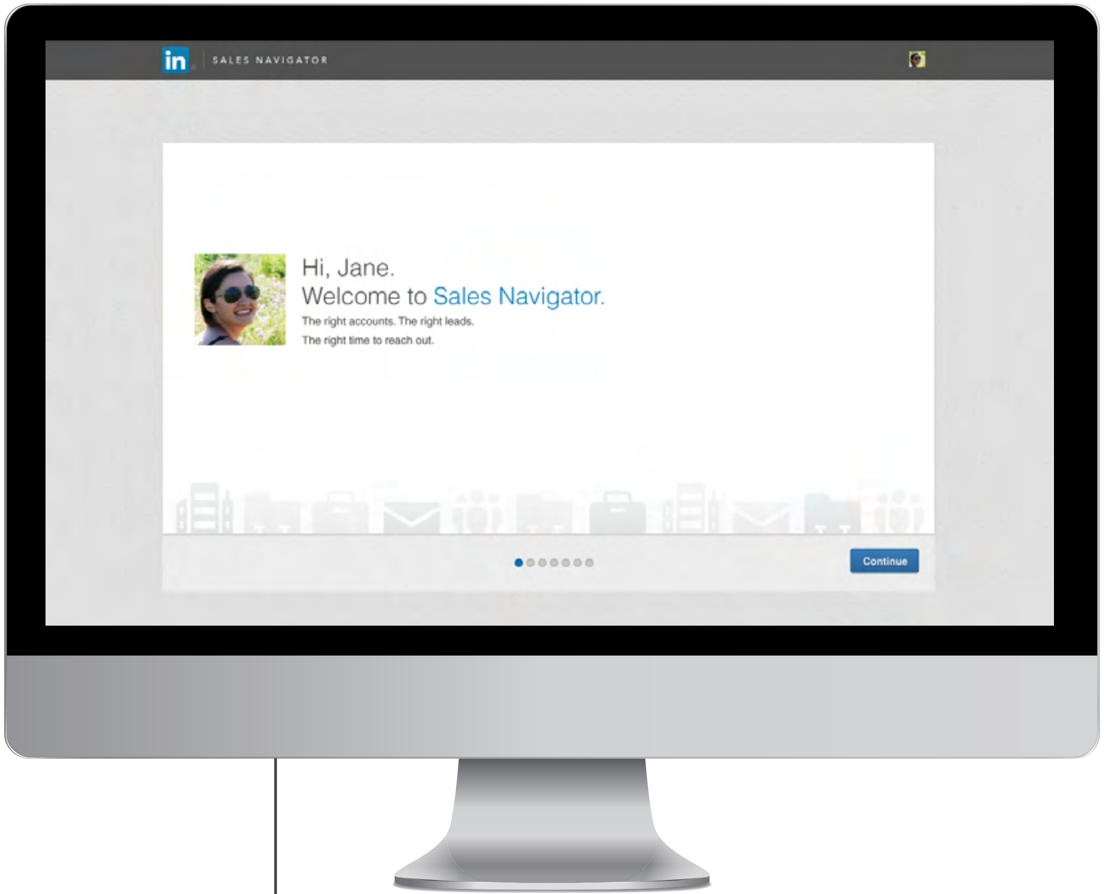
Today's selling environment requires more than just knowing the org chart at the companies you are targeting. It requires getting to know the people inside that org chart — peers, superiors and support staff alike.

The larger the deal, the more decision-makers and influencers are involved, according to research from Baseone. Nearly half (47%) indicated that two to three people were involved in the decision-making process, while 18% indicated that four to five were involved in the buying decision.

Decision-makers are more likely to be working in general/executive management and purchasing/procurement roles, according to Baseone's research. In larger organizations and where the purchase value is higher, though, respondents are more likely to have been influencers; these are particularly likely to be working in production/operations and research and development.

The dynamics also change from deal to deal. You never know when someone gets promoted, gains more influence, or otherwise finds themself in a new position of power that can move your deal forward.

With tools such as LinkedIn Sales Navigator, sales teams can take a multi-threading approach to understand who the influencers are in a particular deal and in the organization overall. Sales reps that rely on only one contact can't find their deals — or worse — if they don't break the single-relationship habit.



LinkedIn's Sales Navigator provides a ready-made toolbox and infrastructure to begin social selling.

ABOUT DEMAND GEN REPORT

Demand Gen Report is a targeted e-media publication spotlighting the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and, ultimately, drive growth. A key component of our coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts. For more information, visit **www.demandgenreport.com**.

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