

From corporate America to small business America: It's all about the network

Balihoo

As an e-commerce and marketing professional, Shane Vaughan was excited to shift from leading search engine marketing for Hewlett-Packard to running marketing for a newly formed (and much smaller) business: Balihoo, a marketing automation startup. However, to make the transition from a global company to a small business – and in an industry that was new to him – he needed to build out his professional network, and use that network to market the company, drive sales, and hire the best talent. Here's how Vaughan used LinkedIn to help himself and his company succeed.

Personal branding: diving into a new industry

Vaughan was already a longtime LinkedIn user, but as he prepared to shift gears to become Balihoo's new Chief Marketing Officer, he knew it was time to revisit his network.

"My network was filled with HP contacts who didn't apply to my new role," Vaughan explains. "I had to move beyond hardware vendors, and open it up to experts and influencers that would help support my new company. I needed to create a map of the industry and who mattered in it."

Building out a new network of industry experts and influencers helped Vaughan to quickly learn the space and sharpen his marketing automation expertise. "Using LinkedIn dramatically amped up my learning curve," Vaughan says. "It let me dive faster and further into a new industry. Without LinkedIn, it would have been much harder to make this transition."

Tips on using LinkedIn for small business:

- 1) **"Follow your competitor's Company Pages,"** Vaughan suggests. "They're using LinkedIn to build their networks and project thought leadership, just as you are – so you need to understand what they're doing and where they're going."
- 2) **Look at "Who's Viewed Your Profile"** on a regular basis. "It can give you hints as to what's happening in the market that you can leverage and learn from."
- 3) **Maintain relationships.** "Even if you haven't seen someone in person for a couple of years, LinkedIn makes it easy to keep up on what they're doing, without taking a lot of time," Vaughan says. "For example, just before you go to a conference, you can research profiles of attendees so that you have something to talk about when you meet."
- 4) **"Build brand awareness** by creating a LinkedIn Company Page and posting regular updates," Vaughan says.
- 5) **Target ads to specific audience** for more relevant and impactful messages. "LinkedIn Ads let us reach the exact people who are receptive to our marketing messages," Vaughan says.

Marketing: targeting with precision

As Vaughan strengthened his network, he began to focus on how LinkedIn could help him connect with Balihoo's target audience. One of the first things Vaughan did was tap into LinkedIn Groups. "We formed our own Local Marketing Automation group, and built up a significant audience of people interested in our solutions," Vaughan said. "Groups are a great vehicle for getting your thought leadership out to an industry."

In parallel, Vaughan set up a Balihoo Company Page to showcase the company's brand and products, and make the business easily found. Advertising on LinkedIn also helped to build out brand awareness. LinkedIn's targeting features helped Vaughan create ads aimed at the exact audience he needed. "LinkedIn Ads are the only ones I know of that let us target by company name and job title," Vaughan says. "As we learned more about our audience through LinkedIn networking and Groups, we could feed that information back into LinkedIn Ads, making them even more effective. I was able to speak to a very specific audience, instead of having to go wider with a generic message."

Sales: building key relationships

With a growing company presence on LinkedIn, Vaughan took to his network to generate new business development opportunities. "We found people at adjacent companies and with similar goals," Vaughan explains. "We located a great partner, Log My Calls, through LinkedIn, and we worked with them to create joint webinars and white papers."

LinkedIn search tools also helped Vaughan dig deeper on prospects. "We could investigate sales organizations and find out how they were put together," he explains. "Based on job titles, we learned who might have responsibilities for marketing automation, and then targeted outreach to those people."

"LinkedIn helped me raise my professional profile and promote my business in ways that used to only be available to larger, more established companies. It's bringing enterprise-class tools to every small business – for everything from marketing to hiring."



Shane Vaughan

President of Ecommerce, Agri Beef Co.
Former CMO, Balihoo

Hiring: finding the right hire

"LinkedIn was my primary vehicle for identifying potential talent," Vaughan says – Balihoo is located in Boise, Idaho, which has a limited market for technology talent. Searching LinkedIn for candidates by skills, employers, and location allowed Vaughan and his colleagues to tap into nearby markets like Portland and Seattle for promising employees.