

The background of the slide is a light blue network of interconnected nodes and lines, with silhouettes of business professionals in suits standing on the nodes. A dark blue horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the slide, containing the title and subtitle text.

Turning LinkedIn Into a Lead Generator

How to Use Your LinkedIn Profile to Generate Leads

A CAPTURED AUDIENCE WITH A MEANS TO ENGAGE THEM

The social networking site LinkedIn has quickly become the place to locate, connect, and engage other business professionals online. With access to over 55 million members who have an average household income of over \$100K, it's no wonder why so many companies are trying to learn how to tap this audience when looking for new customers.

With new built-in tools and services to locate, engage and connect with potential prospects, it should be a no-brainer that spending even just a few minutes a day on the service could translate into significant increases to your bottom line.

The trouble for most businesses? How do they do it?

The purpose of this document is to show you a few concepts you could apply to in using LinkedIn to turn your profile from simply a professional snapshot into a lead generation tool.



THE MOST IMPORTANT CAPTURE POINT: YOUR PROFILE PAGE

Everyone on LinkedIn has a profile page. Everyone has access to edit their profile page and include as much valuable information as possible, which is then presented to anyone who looks at their profile. You would think that everyone would include as much valuable information as possible and yet you would not believe that only a small percentage of members actually do.

Your profile page is where any interested prospect or passer-by is going to learn who you are, who you work for, what you do, and how they can contact you. Without any of these items completed, you simply appear as just another member who's attempting to "figure this stuff out" rather than the owner or employee of a business that knows how to solve their pains. To do this, your profile page should include certain items that can quickly answer the most basic questions a prospect would have: Who are you? Who do you work for? What do you or your business do? And, how can I contact you if I wanted to?

The 5 Most Important Profile Items

If you are going to create a LinkedIn account or you already have one, there should be at least five pieces of information you should have completed in your profile to begin attracting leads.

These items are as follows:

1. Your current job title and employer (or business) name

This will be one of the first pieces of information members will look for and it is also included with your name when using other portions of the website. Be sure it lists your most recent title accurately and that you keep it up-to-date.

2. Your website address for your business

This is what will drive traffic to your website or a particular page of your website. A potential prospect who wants to know about your business will likely follow these links next to visit the website of your organization and learn in more detail what you offer. Without this, they can only learn as much as your profile states.

3. Your profile summary

This portion of your profile allows you to explain in more detail what you do, what your business does, and why someone should be interested in connecting with you. Take advantage of it. This is the only area of your profile where you have the ability to include more than a few lines of text.

4. Your specialties

Much like your profile summary, your specialties field allows you to highlight your areas of expertise into a comma-separated list. This is also a field that LinkedIn uses in their algorithm for people searches, "people you may know" suggestions, and other areas. So filling in this information increases the chances of your profile being presented to other individuals using the system.

5. Your connections

Let's be honest, the average person would rather follow someone else's lead before they do something themselves. This is the same with those that may want to connect to you on LinkedIn. A person who already has even just 25 connections seems more appealing than the person that does not have any. So go ahead and reach out to your closest network of friends, colleagues, and contacts and add a few into your network to get you started.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS TO BUILD CREDIBILITY

Another area of LinkedIn that can help you locate new business opportunities is the Answers tool. Within this section, members are able to both ask and answer questions that range across a variety of business topics. Members can engage in discussion, post replies to answers, and even be awarded for giving the “Best Answer.”

What this really allows a member to do is to showcase their expertise on a variety of topics. By answering questions, you are showing that you possess a body of knowledge that is of value to another person who needs that information or assistance. Now, while answering one question is all fine and good, showing that you can answer many questions will increase your credibility among the other members as it reflects that valuable body of knowledge.

How do I answer questions?

Answering questions can take some time, but by giving yourself just a few minutes a day and using these quick steps below, you can quickly begin to build credibility amongst your fellow members.

1. Once logged in to LinkedIn, locate the “Answers” link within the main navigation. *(NOTE: This link may be under the “More...” drop down menu item.)*
2. To locate a question to answer, you may use the advanced search tool located by clicking the “Advanced Answers Search” link and typing in keywords and phrases and selecting specific categories to search within. This will help you narrow down the list of questions into topics and category you feel comfortable in answering.
3. If you would rather browse for a question, simply use the category links on the right-hand side of the answers section to select a category and if needed additional sub-categories. These links will present all questions within those topic categories.

4. Once you have located a question that you wish to answer, simply click on the question to access the ability to respond as well as the listing of responses from other members.
5. Read the question carefully and when you're ready to answer, click the yellow "Answer" button below the question to begin posting your reply.
6. If you have any resources that may be available on the web, enter those into the "Web Resources" blocks. These can be a **GREAT** source of leads as you can direct the person to blog articles, white papers, or other resources where they can get more information from you or your business. **DO NOT** just put your website address here. Doing so is much like spam in your email inbox, it has no value and is just annoying.
7. If you have any additional information you want to share with the person who posed the question, fill it out in the "Write a note" block. **DO NOT** use this as a place to post a sales pitch, but **DO** consider it as a place to begin a separate and private conversation with the person.

JOINING A GROUP TO MAKE NEW CONNECTIONS AND FIND PROSPECTS

The ability to join a group of like-minded business professionals presents a great opportunity to locate new prospects and make new connections that can turn into potential business. While you can join multiple groups giving you access to hundreds if not thousands of other members, there are a few rules you should follow in order to make the most of this capability.

1. Locate and join the groups where your customers are, not where you want to be

Remember, one of the benefits of joining a group is having access to communicate with other members who could become customers. So be sure to join the groups where your customers would be, not the groups where your interests lie. You can join other groups that appeal to you, but to find customers be sure to locate and join groups that would appeal to them.

2. DO NOT spam!

A group message board is not for posting an advertisement. No matter how many other individuals you see doing so, do not be tempted to post a wide open sales pitch for your business. In many groups, this will get you kicked out and banned and is improper etiquette.

3. Be a part of the conversation or start your own

Joining a group can give you more opportunities to share your expertise by joining into the conversation of others and providing responses with value. While this may seem odd to “jump” into a conversation, it is also expected, and if your response contributes to the conversation, then it can be another great way to attract new connections that could turn to customers. The reverse works just as well. If you cannot find a conversation to join, simply start your own with a question or topic you believe would attract your potential customers.

TURNING CONNECTIONS INTO CUSTOMERS

LinkedIn can be a fantastic tool in your customer acquisition and lead generation arsenal as long as you learn how to get the most from your efforts. Completing your profile, answering questions, and joining groups are just a few among many ways to leverage the audience to locate and attract business leads.

And while we can tell you some simple steps to get started, the true results will be apparent with continued use of the capabilities we've mentioned here. So be sure to dedicate a few minutes a day or even just half an hour a week to work within LinkedIn locating and engaging prospects who could turn out to be your next customers!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM US

- » **Attend one of our Social Media workshops!**
- » **Read our blog articles about Social Media**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM OUR FAVORITE PROVIDERS

- » **How to Get Started on LinkedIn - a BNET.com article**
- » **100+ Smart Ways to Use LinkedIn - a Linked Intelligence article**
- » **Ten Ways to Use LinkedIn - from our favorite entrepreneur and venture capitalist Guy Kawasaki**

To your success!



About the Authors

Brian Hamlett is the Founder and President of mPower Consulting, a strategic marketing firm who's aim is to "make the web easy" for businesses and organizations. Their emphasis on educating clients in the tools and techniques has laid the foundation for successful growth at over 30 organizations from innovative start-ups to 10 year old family businesses to top Fortune 5000 businesses.

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