

AS SEEN IN



Grow Your Business USING LINKEDIN

by Lisa Kanda

Did you know that LinkedIn is celebrating its 10th anniversary? Launched on May 5, 2003, it is now the world's largest professional network with 200 million members in 200 countries and territories around the globe. Yet, many business professionals are not utilizing this tool to help grow their business.

The power behind using LinkedIn is in making connections. While this sounds simple, many members don't grow their LinkedIn relationships using a strategic approach. With clear goals in mind, your efforts will align with your purpose and produce results.

State Your Goals

To make connections that count and provide business opportunities, start with the end in mind. Write down two or three goals you would like to reach using LinkedIn. For example:

- I will become known as the "go to" person in my area of expertise by providing resources in my status updates 3 times a week.
- I will develop 5 potential referral sources each month.
- I will actively engage in 3 groups that comprise of my target market.
- I will refer business to at least 1 connection a month.

Specify Your Approach

Are you interested in creating a large LinkedIn network that includes many strangers, a more intimate network of people you know and trust, or somewhere in the middle of the two approaches? LIONS, LinkedIn Open Networkers, are those that readily accept all invitations to connect. But there are pros and cons to both. A large network will give you a larger marketing audience, but can potentially leave you more vulnerable. First-level connections have access to your email address leaving you open to receive promotional spam and viruses. More connections will improve your ranking considerably in search results, but may keep you from providing introductions if you don't know the person seeking to be introduced.

Plan Your Activity

How much time are you willing to dedicate to cultivating relationships on LinkedIn? By putting aside a half hour a day,

you can see tremendous results. Stay focused on activities that will get you closer to your goals. Have a hot lead or prospect meeting? Use the advanced search function to discover which of your connections knows someone in the company or follow their company page for industry insight. Continually update your profile with skills, media and keywords. Review connections in your first-degree network to expand your network. Join groups that are active and reach your targets and leave groups that are inactive or filled with spam posts.


Create a Calendar

It takes focus and dedication to make any initiative productive, so add your LinkedIn networking time to your calendar and just do it! One approach is to state on your calendar exactly the activity you will complete while on LinkedIn each day. For example:

- Monday – respond to invitations and messages
- Tuesday – share a status update from LinkedIn Today; like, share or comment on updates by connections
- Wednesday – participate in or start group discussions
- Thursday – share a resource in a status update; follow 3 companies for future potential
- Friday – send invitations to people you met in person at networking events

Record Your Results

It's easy to miss the incremental "wins" if you are only looking to gain new clients and business. It takes time and effort to make those connections that will count toward your business growth. Pay attention to how many connections you add each month, the engagement you receive on your status updates and discussions, or how many in person (or Skype) appointments you can schedule with referral sources and leads.

LinkedIn may be a decade old, but it's not too late to get started. Follow a plan, be proactive, and watch your business grow. 



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