5 Tips for Using LinkedIn to Find and Sell to Anyone

Here’s how to sell effectively on LinkedIn without annoying your connections.

June 17, 2019 5 min read

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With a database of over 600 million professional users around the world, LinkedIn is one of the most important social networks for sales professionals and entrepreneurs. The size of this database means that most of your prospects are likely just a few clicks away and you can easily start a dialogue with them, rather than making cold calls or hoping to meet the right contacts at conferences and industry events.

However, you still have to know how to use LinkedIn the right way in order to connect with relevant contacts and ultimately make more sales. Below are five simple yet highly effective tips that you should use to grow your business using LinkedIn.

1. Use LinkedIn’s search functionality

LinkedIn has a powerful search function within the platform, where you can type in key terms that lead you to finding contacts.

For example, in order to find one person within a company you should contact first, start by typing in the name of the company. From there, you’ll be able to narrow down results by location or job function. This specificity is important,

because rather than heading straight to the C-Suite level (the names of whom you could likely find on a company website), you can use LinkedIn's search capabilities to find mid-to-senior level professionals that would be likely to directly use your product or service and perhaps be more receptive to new connections than an executive would.

2. Join relevant groups

LinkedIn has thousands of groups based on both industry and location, and you can join up to 50. Hop into these groups to grow your local presence by searching for your city and joining relevant groups, then do the same at an industry level by searching for terms related to your sector.

Within groups, you can post content that demonstrates your expertise, and you can provide useful insights when engaging in discussions within groups. Keep in mind, though, that you shouldn't be salesy within groups, as people are there to be social and communicate about topics related to the group, not read ads.

However, a key reason why you should join groups – and how you can leverage them to ultimately sell more – is the direct access you'll have to send InMail or a connection request to anyone in the group.

3. Find content related to the target company

People are still on LinkedIn to be social – they just want to interact in a professional way and communicate about work-related issues. So, just as you shouldn't be overly salesy in groups, you don't want to be salesy when making connection requests or sending InMail messages.

Instead, a good tip is to talk to a prospect about what's

going on at their company. The easiest way to do that is to set up a Google Alert to get an email anytime that company is mentioned in the news. When you do see an article or press release their company is mentioned in, reach out to them on LinkedIn to congratulate them or acknowledge the news. Then you can start a dialogue about what the article is about and ask if they have time to connect more to talk about how their business is doing.

That looks a lot different than a direct sales pitch, and it tends to be effective.

4. Make sales personable

Going along with the idea of being social on LinkedIn, you also have to make sales personable. That means instead of sending InMail saying you have a product you'd like to show them, find out more about the individual you're trying to sell to. Examine their profile, and read their posts to understand more about what they care about.

Then, see if they're posting about a conference you're going to and ask if you can schedule time to chat there, or ask them to grab coffee if you're in the same city. Find a way to get face time while being personable, and then try to understand their goals, which may not be the same as their company's goals.

From there, you can see how your offerings can help them achieve their specific goals. For example, if that prospect is trying to get a promotion or make themselves more marketable to other employers, perhaps they'd be more receptive to hearing about how users of your offering develop desirable skills, rather than how it saves money. Both can be true, but being personable allows you to craft a message that resonates with individual prospects.

5. Ask about their service providers

Lastly, when you’re connecting with prospects on LinkedIn, you can try asking if they have a service provider that provides something similar to what you offer, and ask if they are happy with their current service. While that’s more direct than some other approaches, it still can be less off-putting than, say, asking them to schedule a demo of your offering right away.

If they answer that they are happy with their current provider, then at least you know where they stand, and it doesn’t hurt to keep in touch socially so you can stay on each other’s radar. And if they’re not happy with their current provider, then you know you have an opportunity to make a sale, and you can start to be more specific about what you offer.

Using these tips can help you get the most out of LinkedIn. This social network can be an extremely powerful tool for closing more deals, but you have to be social to get there, rather than going straight for the sale.

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