LEAD GENERATON

LINKEDIN STRATEGIES TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Grow your network, build relationships, generate more leads and increase sales. Never before have we had the opportunity to do this as exponentially as we do today on LinkedIn. Learn these online marketing strategies to help you grow your business.

Take Social Selling to the Next Level

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Lead Generation Strategies on LinkedIn

Sales in today's world has changed a lot from a few years ago. We no longer pick up the phone, cold call someone, and make an appointment to see them to start our sales process. These days just about everything is online. (Even the phonebook!) We network, connect, share, converse mostly online and then sometimes actually get out in the real world to continue our relationships.

Here are some statistics you might find interesting about these changes:

- B2B buyers complete 57% of the buying decision before they are willing to talk to a sales rep.
- 2/3 of companies have no social media strategy for their sales organizations
- 72.6% of salespeople using social selling as part of their sales process outperformed their sales peers and exceeded quota 23% more often.
- 53% of salespeople want help in understanding social selling better.

Source: http://www.triblio.com/blog/social-selling-statistics/

Even though the way we go about prospecting and lead generation has changed the actual process of what we need to do has not. A typical lead generation process still consists of:

1. Prospecting or researching our target market.
2. Touching base with potential clients (Cold call in some cases)
3. Building the relationship
4. Taking the relationship to the next level or moving it into the sales process. (usually offline)

Prospecting & Research

Know your Target Market

The steps outlined in this document are working from the premise that you have already identified who your target market is. (Buyer Personas) And have taken marketing steps towards reaching out to those people in the form of website optimisation (SEO), Social Media, Advertising, etc.

Optimise your LinkedIn Profile (And all social media profiles for that matter)

The steps in this document are also working from the premise that you have optimised your LinkedIn profile with keywords, written your summary from the perspective of the client and have as much of your profile filled out as possible, including your contact information, skills, recommendations, volunteering and interests. You might even have a banner. (Recommended)

By making sure your profile is clean, optimised and appealing helps attract people to you, thereby cutting out a bit of the work for you!

One of the many great things about LinkedIn is that it helps you to navigate through the research stage with much more information that we have ever had available to us in the past. And in most cases that information is free. (Apart from the time taken for the research)

Research & Identifying Potential Clients

There are a couple of ways you can go about researching and identifying who your potential clients are. Identify potential clients through:

- Advanced Search Function
- Groups

The Advanced Search

The Advanced Search function on LinkedIn is fantastic. The search capability is very detailed enabling you to get quite specific about the type of clients you want to connect with. If you have the Premium version you can get even more specific with information like company size, groups, fortune 500, seniority level, etc. So when you know who your target audience is, this can be very helpful in narrowing down who you would like to contact.

The Advance Search function also offers Boolean Search which gives you a number of ways to filter on searches. There are Boolean search parameters which help you find exactly what you are looking for.

The types of searches you can perform is endless. Below is a list of the Boolean parameters you can use in your search:

Boolean Parameters

Quotes - Exact Phrase match = “xxx” i.e., “keyword” “CEO” “Sales Manager”

Parenthesis – a complex search where you can combine terms and modifiers i.e. CEO in the health sector you could do a search for (CEO) AND “health” or something like software AND (engineer OR architect).

AND – to search for profiles which include two terms, you can separate those terms with an upper case word AND. I.e. software AND engineer

OR - to broaden your search to find profiles which include one or more terms. I.e. Helpdesk OR “Help Desk” OR “Technical Support”

NOT - do a search but exclude a particular term type with an uppercase NOT i.e. NOT director

There are many variations you can use in Boolean search and the above gives you a small taste of what is possible.

Another great feature of Advanced Search is you can **save your searches**. The saved searches also let you know when people joined LinkedIn and updated their profiles. This means you can come back to these searches and see if any new potential clients have joined these lists based on the search criteria.

You can really start to see how the Advanced Search function can really find your target market quite specifically and quickly.

Groups

Connecting with new people you don't know on LinkedIn can be tricky if there is no connection already in place. People can only find you if you are connected in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd level networks or you are a member of the same group.

So joining groups is a great strategy. An even better one is to join groups where your target market is! Most people join groups for their industry and it is a good idea to join a few of those. But out of the 50 groups you can join, make sure a large number of them are where your target market is. Remember you can also join groups that are in your location or the location that your business resides in if they are relevant to your business growth. (There might be local networking groups in here as well)

The reasons working in a group is so productive is, because not only do you get to see what your target market is interested in and what they are talking about. You get to message them through Inmail for free. If both of you are in the group then you can message for free which generally only happens with 1st level connections. Enabling you to reach out to a prospective client for free.

Keep an eye out for how many people are in the group and how regular their discussions, posts and activity is. If the activity and numbers aren't high, look for another group. (In some cases though, this group might be relevant)

Remember that if someone starts searching for what your business offers and you are connected in their networks by 1st, 2nd or 3rd level or a group then they will find you. Outside of these connections you won't show up. So you can start to see why belonging to groups where your target market is can be very beneficial when they are looking for products and services that you sell!

Touching Base & Prospecting – the Cold Call online

A lot of sales people have had to change the way they approach the "cold call" because technology has changed so much.

Once you have gone through the process of identifying who the people are that you want to touch base with what's the best approach?

You have probably had your fair share of experiences online with people sending through connection requests with not much information, no relationship with you or any of the connections you have online. Most people don't like this approach as it instantly raises suspicion and automatically puts you or your potential prospect on the defensive.

There will always be an element of wariness with people when the approach is "cold." Having an optimised profile will automatically put you a step ahead of most people currently on LinkedIn who pretty much have a resume with not a lot of detail.

When putting together your connection request for connecting with prospects that you don't know on LinkedIn it is important to speak with the person in their language, tone and style.

The second thing to remember is to tell them why they should connect with you. When going through this process it is a good idea to have a couple of "scripts" prewritten so that you can personalise and change things as you make each connection. This will save you a lot of time Instead of writing everything from scratch.

Touching Base – the Cold Call

Cold calling or that first connection can be daunting but there are ways to minimise the impact of a cold call and personalise the experience for everyone involved.

The best way to do that is to send personalised connection requests. Introduce yourself, tell people why you would like to connect (expanding your network) and tell them why you would like to connect with them (we have a similar target audience, we share similar interests, we offer supportive services to the same client base, etc.) Let them know that you are there if there is anything you can do to support them and wish them well.

Remember at this phase a number of people will not respond and that's ok, it's important to remember not to be offended. Sales is a numbers game and this is the first step. The good news is that some people will respond. And for those that do, we can move to the next level.

Building the Relationship

So you have sent out your connection requests, what now?

Keeping the momentum going after someone accepts your connection request is of great importance at this stage. Once again have a "script "of a thank you message so you can keep the conversation going.

The same goes if a person sends out a connection to you first, it is always a good idea to personalise the response.

A good way to start building the relationship is to offer your new contact something of value. It could be something like an eBook, video, case study or other type of download that is of value to the client. Something niche that you provide that helps them in some way without a sales pitch is a great way to start. Other good strategies to be aware of are, keep your messages short (esp. if people are reading them off a mobile device) include a few bullet points to catch their attention and a PS. If it is relevant.

It is always a good strategy to follow that note up with another in the next week or two depending on the feedback from the potential client. Perhaps even asking them if they would like to join your list to help stay in touch if there looks to be not a lot of engagement from them in the early stages.

Taking the relationship to the next level

The key to using these strategies is to take the relationship off line. How can you move this contact from a potential to a real prospect? Moving the relationship to the next level could be face to face, skype or even a telephone call. It's taking things to the next stage where potentially you can convert the prospect to a potential client.

It's important to remember to use LinkedIn to warm leads up as opposed to selling on the spot.

So how do you grow your network?

A good place to start is by looking at your own network. Check out what's going on with your connections and interact and engage on a regular basis. A good strategy to staying connected with people is to offer daily posts which add value, information or interesting things. This gives them the opportunity to comment on things you are doing which also encourages interaction. It is always a good idea to comment on others posts, like what they do (if you like it) and congratulate people on anniversaries, birthday's, etc.

Where possible make introductions. By helping others meet people that might have some value to them usually encourages people to return the favour in kind. (Law or reciprocation in action)
If there are people in your connections network that knows someone you would like to meet, you can always ask them to introduce you to others which is always a nicer way to start the relationship off. Make sure they actually know the person before you ask for the introduction.

Extra Sales Tips - Additional things you should be doing on LinkedIn

Daily Status updates – publishing daily posts on social media helps you stay top of mind, helps strengthen your branding and reminds people of your specialties. Make sure the content you share is relevant and valuable and not a sales pitch.

Reply to new connection requests with a personal thank you message – this helps to open up the conversation and start building the relationship. You could also include a blog or eBook in your message as a value add to further enhance the relationship moving forwards.

Make sure you check your messages daily and respond where appropriate - Email on LinkedIn is the same as email in the real world. People don't like to be kept waiting if they are potential clients. (Obviously there will be emails that you won't respond to like spam and sales pitches)

Keep an eye on your target market list - send out new connection requests as new people join that fit your target market. Try to send out 5-10 per day.

Connect with people that you meet at networking functions – this helps you stay in touch and keep a track of things. You can then start the relationship building process with them from there.

Relationships Tab – The relationships tab enables you to keep your messages and conversations with people you have had contact with. You can also set reminders for when you want to send them a message again.

There is a **Tag tab** also that gives you the ability to tag people into particular tag groups so you can keep across everything. I.e. you can tag people as existing clients, networking contacts, personal, etc. And you can also set yourself reminders to contact people and make a note of how you met! It is kind of like a mini CRM. Enabling you to keep abreast of your database on LinkedIn.

Check your notifications daily so you can see what is going on in your network. You probably won't have to act on many of these but it is good to know what is going on and often leads to connection opportunities that you were otherwise might not have known about.

Networking online is an excellent opportunity to generate more leads which potentially could turn into clients. If you would like more information on how to utilise Social Media for more lead generation strategies in your business please feel free to [contact us here] or call us on (02) 8912 2178.

Happy Selling!

The Team at Sales, SEO & Social Media

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Kaylene runs Sales, SEO & Social Media which is a company that specialises in online digital marketing strategies with a focus on lead generation & increasing sales. Using Inbound Marketing Strategies, we take sales & marketing to a whole new level. We strive to make sure your experience with working with us is bringing the best out in you for your clients.