

How to Transform LinkedIn into a Lead-Generating Powerhouse for Your Small Business

Are you among the many small business owners frustrated by the challenge of making LinkedIn 'work' and bringing value to your business? In this article, we present a straightforward process to drive connections and sales messages to targeted recipients, revealing leads and business opportunities along the way.

An Overview of LinkedIn for Small Business Owners:

As a small business owner or leader, having a presence on LinkedIn is crucial. With approximately 34.5 million LinkedIn users in the United Kingdom as of November 2023, it's a significant platform for people in business.

Whether or not you're currently utilising it, chances are the vast majority of your existing clients and dream prospects are on LinkedIn. Ignoring or underutilising this platform may be a missed opportunity, especially considering that 4 out of 5 people on LinkedIn play a role in business decisions.

In a recent poll, over 85% of LinkedIn users admitted they were unsure how to make LinkedIn work effectively, despite recognising its importance.

The 'Standard Model' for Making LinkedIn Work:

Numerous experts, from local consultants to global thought leaders, offer advice on using LinkedIn effectively. The core principles are consistent:

1. Ensure your profile is outstanding with all the necessary details, recommendations, and credibility indicators.
2. Research and connect with your target audience, sending thoughtful connection messages after slowly building their awareness of you by carefully commenting and liking their activity.
3. Nurture connections by slowly building strong relationships, and avoiding direct sales pitches until interest is expressed.
4. Move conversations offline when the relationship is established, entering the sales process.
5. Maintain an active presence by occasionally sharing educational and non-sales posts.

The Problem with the Standard Model:

The winning formula described above is undoubtedly effective, but the time, thought and effort it requires is a significant obstacle. Most business owners, excited after learning these 'secrets', eventually give up due to the impractical demands on their working day.

Time aside, managing multiple prospects at various stages of the process, each requiring personal attention, messages, and efforts, is unrealistic in the real world.

Additionally, although carefully writing thoughtful posts and articles might be 'your thing' (it's not many people's idea of fun!), the truth is that posting is largely a means to an end – it does raise your profile and reminds your connections that you exist – it might give you an ego boost when you get some likes or comments – but it rarely generates new business out of the blue! Just think about it – when did you last see a post in your feed and immediately contact that author to do some business???

The Solution – Streamlining LinkedIn (with a sledgehammer) for Small Business Owners:

Our solution aligns closely with the 'Standard Model,' with a simplified middle section:

1. Ensure your profile is outstanding with all the necessary details, recommendations, and credibility indicators.
2. Set up a library of educational / helpful content (well written, with supporting images that maintain and build your brand) that you can post on a frequent basis – but then simply schedule these posts (twice per week) to keep the noise going and at the end of the cycle, simply start over again and repeat!

Now the good bit:

3. Utilise the LinkedIn search tool to target specific demographic segments based on geography, job title, search keyword and industry. For example, you can search for all 'accountancy' people in the Leeds area with the job title of 'Director' who are second-degree connections to you.
4. Send 40 connection requests per day to these targeted LinkedIn users. Personalise your connection requests, using templated messages but changing the prospect's name.
5. After a few days, send a "gentle follow-up sales pitch" to accepted connection requests, expressing interest in further discussion. The balance here is essential – too hard a pitch and you will irritate recipients – too soft and you'll be swamped with 121s.
6. Monitor LinkedIn messages for replies, identify potential sales leads who have responded to your message and set up your meetings.

If executed correctly, this approach avoids irritation and may reach prospects at the right moment. The long-term nurturing process remains, but an occasional short-term opportunity might emerge.

The magic number is sending 40 connection requests every weekday, a quantity that aligns with LinkedIn's comfort level. Too many requests may result in account restrictions, while too few miss the greatest opportunity.

It Can't Be That Simple, Can It?

Yes and no. While the process can be straightforward, strategic planning enhances its effectiveness. Committing to the process, planning activities, and integrating it with other marketing efforts amplify its impact. Embrace the KISS principle—Keep It Simple, Stupid!

LinkedIn has the potential to be a sales and marketing gold mine. Approach it with care and thought, and explore further insights on the Linked Influence platform.