

LinkedIn and B2B Marketing: A Perfect Pair?

Marketing Experts Highlight Tactics To Leverage The Business Social Network

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Editor's Note: The following article is the second in a two-part series highlighting the nuances of B2B marketing on LinkedIn. To read part one visit [this link](#) to access the complimentary download.

Over the past few years, **LinkedIn** has evolved into a major social media platform for B2B marketing. But just how does LinkedIn compare to other social media platforms, and how should marketers take advantage of its unique capabilities?

[In part one of this report](#), we focused on how LinkedIn actually compares to other social media platforms, and we looked at how company profiles, LinkedIn Groups, and individual user profiles all fit into the B2B marketing picture. This week, we'll look at how marketers are using content to succeed on LinkedIn – and we'll also examine some criticism of the site's analytics and third-party app offerings.

Fertile Ground For Quality Content

If company profiles and LinkedIn Groups provide the engine for B2B thought leadership and lead generation, experts and marketers agree that quality content provides the fuel.

"Our LinkedIn lead generation begins with building our company's reach via our assets within LinkedIn," noted Rebecca Corliss, Inbound Marketing Manager for **HubSpot**. "Helpful content is the primary driver of reach growth."

In terms of sharing quality content "most companies really don't act very generously," noted Todd Wheatland, VP of Thought Leadership and Marketing at **Kelly Services**. "It can't be all about you – you have to reach out and not just talk about yourself. The more we get away from just being about ourselves, we see a quantifiably solid lead increase in the metrics that we get."

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-Ann Handley
Author
"Content Rules"

Ann Handley, Chief Content Officer of [MarketingProfs](#) and author of the Book "Content Rules," also emphasized the importance of using LinkedIn as a platform for sharing content. "A lot of companies basically just spam the LinkedIn boards and answer questions by shilling their own stuff," she said. "Embrace quality content, make your profile page as robust as you can – embed videos, use it to feed blog posts and Tweets, make it a vibrant presence as opposed to a static, unchanging page."

Measurement and Metrics: LinkedIn's Achilles Heel?

While LinkedIn now offers many anecdotal examples of its lead-generation capabilities, B2B marketers are far more interested in quantifiable results. According to Corliss, for example, HubSpot now generates over 1,500 leads per month via LinkedIn. "As our LinkedIn assets grow, we share links to our most helpful content, which drives traffic to HubSpot.com," she said. "Of that traffic, the most qualified converts into leads."

According to Wheatland, Kelly Services looks first at basic measures of LinkedIn activity, such as new group members and new connections, as a first-line method to assess its progress. Then, he said, Kelly tracks and measures the response on LinkedIn to company-hosted content assets, such as presentations or white papers, that generate actual leads to the company's web site.

"What we're trying to do is build traffic back to our website where we can capture a lead by offering a download of a full report that we excerpt on LinkedIn, or something similar," Wheatland explained.

While referrals and leads are vital metrics, Handley advised B2B marketers not to lose sight of other important metrics. "You always want to look at the leads you're driving, but also look at how your message is being amplified across the network."

When a company wants to look beyond lead-generation metrics on LinkedIn, it often faces another problem: a relative dearth of analytics tools. In fact, this may be the single most common issue experts cite as a barrier to effective B2B marketing on LinkedIn.

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"There are some metrics you can measure, but it's still mostly soft ROI," noted LinkedIntoBusiness.com founder Viveka von Rosen. "What LinkedIn really needs is something like Facebook Insights. They aren't nearly as sophisticated today as Facebook, which I find somewhat interesting."

She added that one explanation for the lack of analytics tools could be LinkedIn's own corporate culture. "LinkedIn is very conservative, their API process is very conservative, there are very few apps cleared to work with it. I do see more coming, though – there's a huge demand for social CRM for LinkedIn."

"It would be good to have access to greater reporting, as well as deeper analytics around who is engaging/sharing content," agreed Wheatland. "Companies are definitely willing to pay for this." He did praise LinkedIn for its tight integration with Slideshare – which he described as Kelly's other primary platform for B2B social media marketing.

The Value Of Hands-On Content Curation

While B2B marketers clamor for more advanced analytics capabilities on LinkedIn, some experts warn against relying too heavily upon technologies that integrate and automate a company's LinkedIn activity.

On one hand, said von Rosen, Salesforce.com now offers the ability to pull LinkedIn contact information into the salesforce platform, giving sales reps the ability to set up meetings, schedule replies to communications, and perform other basic tasks. And according to Collins, HubSpot's software will "soon allow you to publish and schedule content to LinkedIn via the software itself." These are important first steps, especially for large B2B marketing organizations with complex requirements and multiple social media initiatives to manage.

On the other hand, LinkedIn users like Wheatland caution against relying too heavily upon automation to manage a company's presence. "We still default to direct management of LinkedIn rather than using scheduled posting tools or third-party platforms," he said. "We're not just posting into groups – we manage groups. We really need to manage the integrity of what goes on there, and to do that right you've got to be on LinkedIn doing those things."

"There's a bit of magic that happens when you really curate and stimulate conversations" on LinkedIn, Wheatland added. "You can visibly lead the discussion, allow people to post freely, but monitor and moderate carefully to keep it appropriate."

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