

The
Linked 
Guide for



Professional
Services Executives

FOURTH EDITION

The LinkedIn Guide for Professional Services Executives – Fourth Edition
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Introduction

LinkedIn is the premier social media platform for professionals – and its popularity is on the rise. As of March 2017, LinkedIn has over 460 million members, compared to 10 million just 10 years earlier. Many use the platform to connect with colleagues, industry contacts, prospective recruits, and more, but it also provides powerful discussion and sharing features.

Since the previous edition of this guide, LinkedIn has expanded its service with new features. In this fourth edition, we bring the guide up to date with the most important features for the busy executive.

In the following pages, we'll lay out a LinkedIn strategy for you and your professional services firm. We'll also explain the newest LinkedIn features and what they mean for you.

Chapter 1

Identify Your Goals

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to LinkedIn. It's a sophisticated tool with a dizzying array of features, and every firm will emphasize these features a little differently depending on their goals. As you start to assemble the pieces of your LinkedIn strategy, your first question may be: How well does LinkedIn work for professional services firms?

Is LinkedIn Effective?

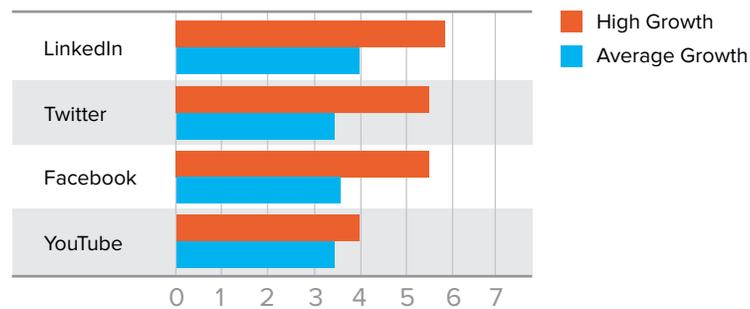
In a recent study¹ on the online marketing techniques of professional services executives, we found that LinkedIn was by far the most widely used social media platform, outpacing Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In fact, LinkedIn was the most popular online tool, period.

Of course, popularity isn't always the same as utility. So next we asked executives to rate the platform's effectiveness in helping them achieve their firm's objectives. We compared responses from firms with the highest growth and profitability (high growth) to those of average growth and profitability (average growth).



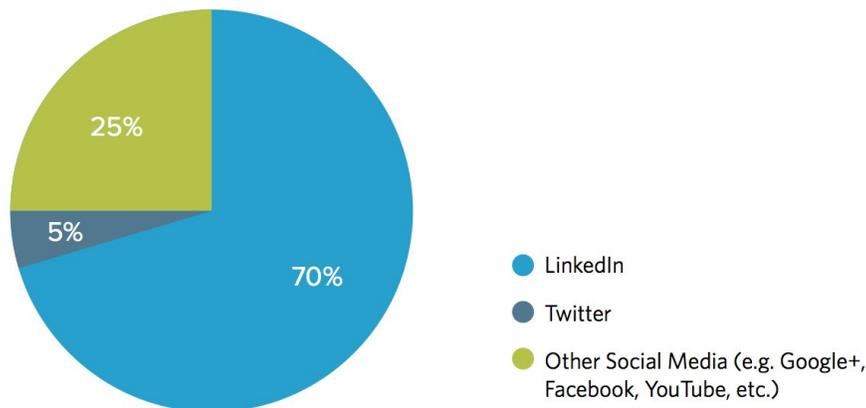
¹ https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/online_marketing_for_professional_services

Effectiveness Rating



Both groups rated LinkedIn as the most effective social media tool. Notably, high growth firms found ways to extract more utility from every social platform — and LinkedIn in particular.

Finally, we wanted to understand whether professional services buyers really used LinkedIn to gather information about their marketplace. So we surveyed 1,028 purchasers of professional services and asked which tools they used to evaluate service providers.²



LinkedIn emerged as far and away the most commonly used social media platform for checking out prospective providers. Over and over again, our research showed that a strong LinkedIn presence can help a firm achieve its business goals.

High growth firms found ways to extract more utility from every social platform — and LinkedIn in particular.

² <http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/beyond-referrals-how-todays-buyers-check-you-out>

Setting Goals

So how can LinkedIn help your firm grow and succeed? We've identified seven goals that – with the right strategy – LinkedIn can help you achieve.

1. Brand Building

Think of your firm's brand as the combination of its reputation and visibility. You can bolster both on LinkedIn by sharing educational content and joining industry conversations. And because social media adoption is still growing at businesses of all stripes, savvy firms can become highly visible to a variety of client groups. A strong LinkedIn presence is a powerful and cost-effective way to build your brand.³

2. Becoming a Visible Expert[®]

Many firms have talented professionals in their ranks who are virtually unknown to the outside world. LinkedIn can help build a professional's reputation and raise their profile among key audiences. This personal brand building translates into a multitude of benefits for an expert's firm, including positive impacts on billing rates, lead generation, firm growth, and the ability to close sales. Some of our most recent research found that buyers are willing to pay up to 13 times more for the services of a high-level Visible Expert.⁴

3. Content Promotion

One of the most significant trends in professional services business development is the rise of content marketing.⁵ Creating relevant and educational content, and making that information digestible for target audiences, cultivates visibility and credibility for your firm. LinkedIn makes it easy to share this content widely among your most important audiences.

4. Lead Generation and Nurturing

Most professional services firms are interested in new lead generation techniques. Online networking through LinkedIn can be a powerful source of new leads.

³ https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/the_brand_building_guide

⁴ <https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/visible-value-how-firms-benefit-from-visible-experts>

⁵ https://hingemarketing.com/library/article/B2B_content_marketing_guide_for_professional_services_firms

5. Recruiting and Job Search

LinkedIn is useful for both job seekers and recruiters. Whether you're looking for new talent or new opportunities, LinkedIn has a great deal to offer.

6. Partnering Opportunities

Need a teaming partner? Another firm to help launch a marketing initiative? How about a new distribution channel? LinkedIn can help you identify and scope out potential partners.

7. Industry Research and Monitoring

Looking to enter a new industry? Get an insider's view before committing major resources. Wonder how your firm is viewed by others? Monitor the buzz about your firm without leaving your office. With LinkedIn, you even have a way to influence the discussion.



Want to do it yourself?

From step-by-step How-Tos to in-depth courses, Hinge University will give you the skills and know-how to elevate your brand.

Check out Hinge University: HingeUniversity.com

Chapter 2

LinkedIn's Top Tools

By now, we've identified seven realistic goals for any LinkedIn strategy. In this chapter, we'll explore the top tools LinkedIn provides to help you accomplish those goals.

1. Your Profile

Your profile is the centerpiece of your LinkedIn strategy. New contacts at networking events, prospective clients, and referral sources will all check you out on LinkedIn – and your profile is what they'll see.

LinkedIn allows you to include everything from your experience and education to certifications and honors. Peruse all of the options that LinkedIn offers for your personal profile and make yours as complete as possible to help increase your visibility.

Let's point out a few key sections. To start, include a professional photo and headline that is consistent with the image you want to project. Use keywords in the headline so that when people search LinkedIn for those terms, your profile is more likely to appear. Your photo and headline create your first impression — make it count.

**Your
photo and
headline is
your first
impression
— make it
count.**

The summary section is your opportunity to get creative and be personal. Describe who you are, what you're passionate about, and notable accomplishments in your career. Including keywords in the summary section also helps your profile get found by people searching for those terms.

Under the experience section, list both what your organization offers and how you personally contribute. Include a couple of sentences about your specific role and capabilities, and a sentence or two about your firm's value proposition in order to provide your visitors with some context.

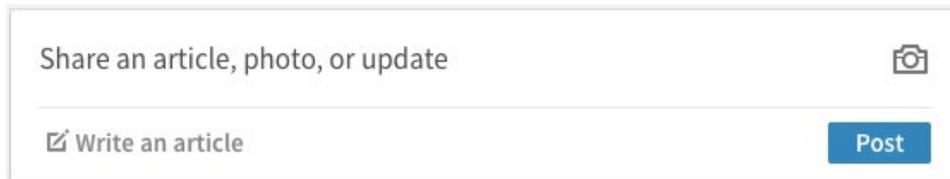
Your personal LinkedIn profile should also be a multimedia experience for readers. Sections of your profile allow you to include links, photos, videos, PDFs, presentations, and other media. Creating a visual profile will allow connections to get a feel for your experience and make you immediately stand out.

You can also prioritize and rearrange the order of the sections on your profile to emphasize the most important and relevant information. LinkedIn has a sidebar that indicates your profile strength, so keep working at it until you hit All-Star status!

LinkedIn has rolled out access to a new long-form publishing tool, as well. This feature allows users to publish and share original long-form content with their network. These pieces are visible on your profile, easily searchable both from inside and outside LinkedIn, and may be subscribed to by other users. You can access the publishing feature from your LinkedIn homepage. At the



top of the page, look for the “Share an article” box and click on the pencil symbol within the box. This will allow you to craft your post.



LinkedIn's algorithm works to match the right content to the right professionals, so your content may be pulled into Pulse, the social network's content aggregator discussed a bit later. Using the publishing feature can help to increase your credibility to the LinkedIn community as well as help drive traffic to your website or blog.

2. Your Contacts

This is the list of people to whom you are connected on LinkedIn. Through LinkedIn, you can communicate directly with these folks. Your contacts will also receive regular updates on activities that you choose to share, so having a robust list of contacts is important. This is your professional network and, as in the offline world, it is important to continually grow and nurture it. To help grow your network, take advantage of the People You May Know feature. This shows you a photo and brief description of people with whom you may want to connect.

There are multiple degrees of connections. Your direct connections are “first degree,” those connected to your first degree contacts are “second degree,” and folks connected to your second degree connections are “third degree.” When connecting to second degree contacts, it's a good idea to ask for an introduction. This is particularly handy for business development professionals reaching out to new prospects.



The “My Network” tab in the navigation bar at the top of LinkedIn offers a number of opportunities to interact with connections and provides recommendations for people to connect with. You can also filter through contacts based on a number of criteria. As your professional network expands, these search features help make interactions with contacts much more manageable.

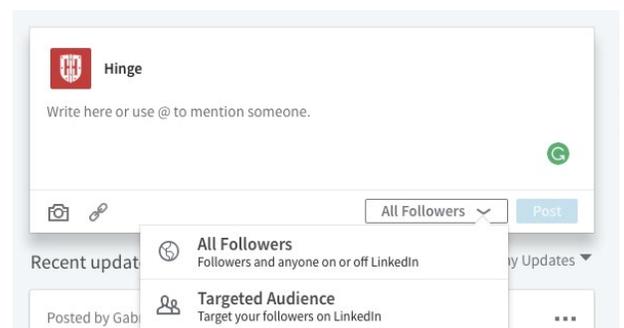
To integrate LinkedIn into everyday activities, you also have the option of syncing your email, contacts, and calendars, or importing lists of contacts.

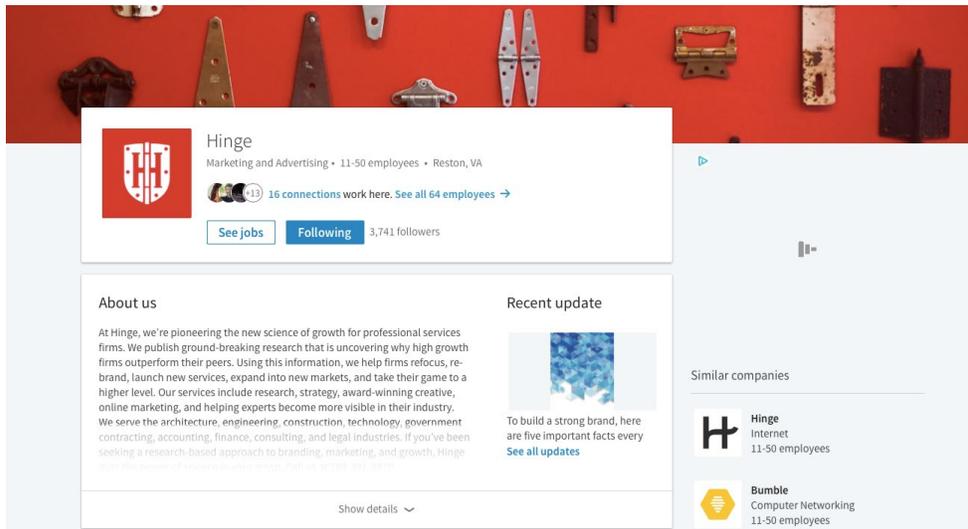
3. Your Company Page

Company Pages allow you to shape your company's presence on LinkedIn in a dynamic, attractive, and targeted way.

The most effective way to engage your LinkedIn audience is by posting relevant content in your company's status updates. While many firms are using this feature, not everyone knows that you can actually target your updates. In the Company Updates section of your page, simply select the profile of the audience you wish to target.

If your firm has sub-brands or personas for different markets or services, LinkedIn also provides a way to project these individual brands clearly and segment messages by audience – all under the umbrella of your overall brand. Showcase Pages function as subpages on your Company Page, but audiences can choose to follow a Showcase Page without following your overall brand, connecting only with the information that is relevant to them. You can create up to ten Showcase Pages from the “Edit” dropdown menu on your Company Page.





4. Groups

LinkedIn Groups are among the platform's most powerful features. You can start your own groups or participate in any of the thousands of existing groups. Some are very large with over 100,000 members, and some are very small. You can join groups of your peers (e.g., other managing partners or marketing directors) or groups populated with potential clients. You can also create and join private groups, allowing you to use LinkedIn for internal purposes. If your company is distributed across many locations, a private group allows you to keep everyone up to speed and build an internal community beyond emails and web meetings. Some membership-based organizations also use private groups to ensure that only paying or registered members can participate.

Group administrators have the ability to send messages to all members up to once a week, much like an email marketing list. Users can choose how frequently they would like to receive these messages as well as opt out completely.

To get started, try searching for groups by keywords. Also look at the profiles of your prospects and clients. What groups do they belong to? You can join up to 100 groups, so don't be shy about joining a few to learn what's on people's minds. Remember, however, that "less is more" when it comes to LinkedIn Groups. You'll get better results if you focus your attention on just a few. You can also start your own group. While creating a group is simple, it requires a lot of ongoing care to run and manage.

5. Search

For starters, you can search for people, firms, or groups. This is a good way to track down or research a contact. There are other ways to search, so you have a lot of ways to find what you are looking for. Businesses and individuals can also optimize their profiles for searchability both within LinkedIn and through outside search engines. This feature is managed in the profile or page's privacy settings.

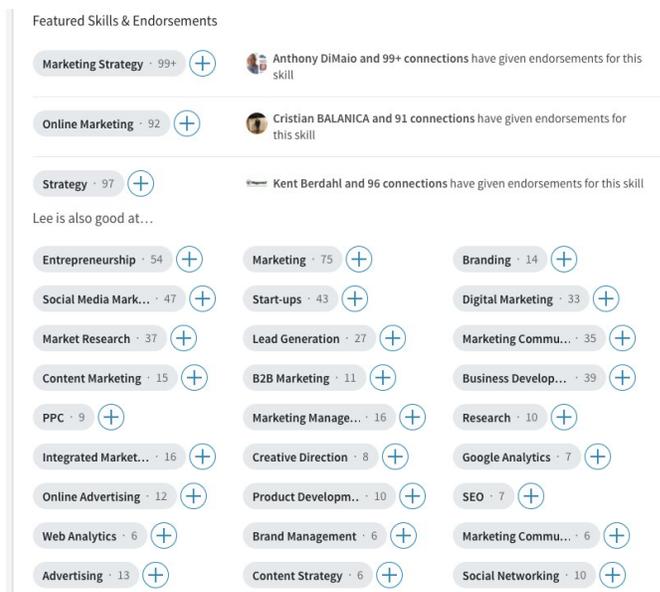
Users can select topics including Companies, Groups, Pulse, and Education. Based on the information in your profile as well as other factors, LinkedIn will suggest content that may be of value to you.

6. LinkedIn Pulse

When you sign in to LinkedIn, the Pulse content aggregator recommends popular posts based on your interests and profile. This content appears above the posts of your first degree contacts, in the order it was posted. You can arrange Pulse recommendations based on popularity or timeframe. You can also customize the news you see in Pulse by following various Influencers and Channels. This allows you to see articles from top news sources, exclusive insight from industry leaders, and more.

7. Recommendations and Endorsements

Think of a LinkedIn endorsement as a Facebook “Like” for a contact’s business skills. For time-starved professionals, this option lets you quickly endorse people you know. Alternatively, you can use the traditional LinkedIn recommendation to write a comment about an individual. Endorsements demonstrate that your connections believe you have the skills you claim.



Recommendations require someone to feel so confident in your skills that they write a traditional recommendation, placed prominently on your profile. Consequently, recommendations are much harder to earn — and carry more weight than endorsements.

You can choose to display a recommendation submitted by your connection, ask for edits, or decline to display it if you feel it doesn’t represent you appropriately. LinkedIn also allows you to request recommendations. Be sure that a connection understands your skills and experience well enough to offer a recommendation that will accurately represent your capabilities. You can also reorder your recommendations to ensure that your profile visitors see those that you believe will have the most impact.

8. Analytics

LinkedIn provides insights and analytics for both your personal profile and your firm's company page.

Personal analytics include:

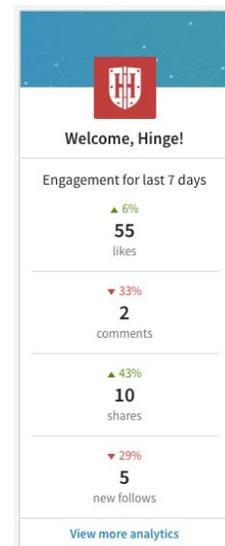
1. Who's viewed your profile
2. How you rank for profile views among your connections
3. Who's viewed your updates



Company analytics: Analytics for company pages are far more robust than for personal profiles. These insights include:

1. Performance of company updates
2. Reach
3. Engagement
4. Follower demographics
5. Follower trends
6. Page views
7. Unique visitors
8. Visitor demographics
9. Impressions
10. Links
11. Comments
12. Shares
13. Followers acquired

Endorsements demonstrate that your connections believe you have the skills you claim.



You may also view traffic driven to your website from LinkedIn via Google Analytics or other website analytics tools.

9. Mobile

LinkedIn is getting serious about mobile. Their mobile app has evolved to provide a user experience similar to that of a desktop computer. The app allows you to view companies you follow, find more companies, view updates, and engage with your audience right on your smartphone.

As we mentioned earlier, Pulse is LinkedIn's news aggregator and self-publishing platform. The social network has created a LinkedIn Pulse app for mobile, as well, so users can access and streamline their news experience on-the-go.

We expect this trend toward mobile access to continue to grow, and LinkedIn will be looking for new ways to help members engage their audience.



10. Premium Services

Not all LinkedIn features are free. Organizations can pay a subscription fee to place job listings, run highly targeted ads, and take advantage of more advanced talent search features. For individuals, LinkedIn's premium subscription-based offering allows users to see everyone who views their profiles, and send direct messages to those who are not direct contacts. This feature is helpful if you're looking to reach a wider audience or individuals with whom you don't yet have a connection.

See if these premium services align with your individual or firm needs and goals to understand whether they're worthwhile expenses.



Need some help?

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Chapter 3

The 10-Minute-a-Day Plan

If you are like most professional services executives, you're strapped for time. You might wonder how an active social media presence can fit into your schedule.

The answer is to start small and determine whether LinkedIn is a good match for your disposition and target client group. We've put together a ten-minute-a-day plan to make that happen.

STEP 1:

Find Your Ten Minutes a Day

Consider rededicating your time spent on a piece of traditional offline networking — perhaps a networking event that isn't producing results. Or you might carve out ten minutes in the morning or evening.

STEP 2:

Be Patient

Don't expect too much at first. Consider LinkedIn an investment in networking — one that may uncover new prospects, referral sources, business partners, or market information. At this point, patience is key.



STEP 3:

Start With Your Profile

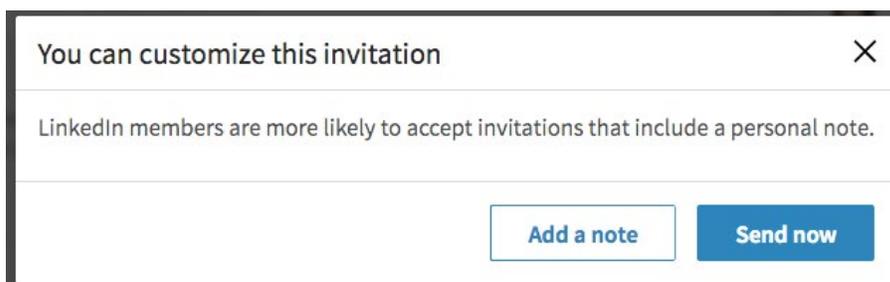
Once your LinkedIn account is set up, spend time adding past positions, descriptions, goals and other personal information to your profile. LinkedIn includes a status bar in the upper right section of the page that tells you how complete your profile is. It also provides suggestions to get you closer to completion. Keep at it until you reach 100% — this may take you a few days. Look at other people's profiles to see what kinds of information you might include. You may find that the hardest part is asking for recommendations. If so, start with the list of people you would contact to be a reference for you during a job search.

Today, many professional contacts expect to be able to check you out on LinkedIn prior to a meeting, before an interview or while on the phone.

STEP 4:

Add Connections

Begin with your contacts and clients. Invite those whom you already know or have met. The default invitation is "I'd Like to Add You to My Professional Network on LinkedIn." Steer away from this default and personalize invitations and provide context for recipients within the 300 character limit.



If you just met a person, remind them where and when. If it's a long-time acquaintance, you might want to say something like, "It's about time we connected." If you attempt to connect with people you don't know, disclose your intention for connecting. If you're adding connections on your cell phone, however there is no option to customize the invitation's note.

An invitation is roughly equivalent to exchanging business cards and building your professional network on LinkedIn. This will be an ongoing process. In today's increasingly virtual business world, you may not always have the opportunity to exchange business cards with a prospect. Connect with them on LinkedIn instead.

STEP 5:

Find Relevant Groups

Begin searching for groups by keyword in the LinkedIn search bar. Focus on keywords that are relevant to your potential clients. Look at the profile for each group that LinkedIn suggests. If the group is very small (250 or fewer members) and not active, it isn't likely to be a worthwhile use of your time. On the contrary, if the group is very large (e.g., 100,000 members), you may have difficulty standing out. You may want to join a few groups to monitor what is being discussed and to determine how active they are. Consider looking for groups related to trade associations you belong to or conferences you attend.

To be successful with LinkedIn groups, less is often more. Feel free to join just a few at a time. In total, LinkedIn allows you to join 100 groups. If you are worried about all the email these groups can generate, you can choose how frequently to receive group updates (daily or weekly, for example) or you may opt to not receive emails sent from groups.

Once you've joined a handful of groups, set a goal to comment and/or share insights a few times per week. Depending on your level of activity in the groups, you may want to re-evaluate your group memberships once a quarter.

To be
successful
with LinkedIn
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often more.

STEP 6:

Cull Your Groups

Eliminate groups that don't interest you or that don't generate much activity. The goal is to find a handful of groups that have enough activity by the right people to make it worth your while. Adding and culling groups will be an ongoing activity, but it should slow once you settle in.

STEP 7:

Start to Comment

After you have followed a few groups for awhile, you will get a feel for what a good comment looks like. It's polite, to the point, adds something of value, and is not too self-promotional. What is too self-promotional? If your comment is all about you and your service, it crosses the line. Your goal is to establish relationships, not hawk your services. If you follow the rules, you will discover that people appreciate your contributions to their discussions.

STEP 8:

Start Discussions

As you start to monitor groups and comment in existing discussions, you will recognize which topics generate ongoing interest and attract comments. At this point, you are ready to start discussions of your own. A great way to launch a discussion is to ask a question. Be polite to people who respond and encourage further interaction with additional questions. But don't start a discussion and then go silent. It's through your active participation that people learn your name and start to appreciate what you have to say.

STEP 9:

Share Content

Now it's time to share relevant content with the groups that you have been following. This content could be a blog post, article, white paper or presentation — anything you can link to. The secret is to make it relevant to an ongoing discussion or tie it directly to a question you asked to start a discussion. Don't just promote your latest blog post (unless it has relevance to a larger discussion). This is bad form and comes across as self-promoting. In fact, the content doesn't even have to be your own. Your goal is to provide useful content, whatever the source.

STEP 10:

Start Personal Interactions

By now, your ten-minute-a-day strategy should start to bear fruit. You will be engaging people who could be new clients, referral sources, or business partners. Take the next step and initiate an email exchange (using LinkedIn email), perhaps offering to meet for a cup of coffee or inquiring about a person's business. Most folks on LinkedIn are interested in developing new business relationships, especially if they already know you — even if it's a virtual relationship.

At this point, you should be having regular interactions with your target client group. It may have taken you several weeks or months to get here, but you are ready to decide if you want to hold where you are or take your activity to a higher level. We'll talk about this more in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Building Your Online Brand

So far we've covered the basics of LinkedIn, explored the social platform's key tools, and laid out a ten-minute-a-day plan.

In this chapter, we'll explore the basics of using LinkedIn to develop your individual brand. Why build your brand? Common reasons include:

- To help drive new business to your firm.
- To find a new position.
- To avoid having someone else define it for you.

So how do you build your online brand?



1. Be Clear About the Brand You Want to Promote

If you don't have a clear idea about how you want to be viewed by others, there isn't much point in going any further. Write down some possibilities and think through their implications.

- Do you want to be seen as an expert?
- What is your intended area of expertise?
- Do you want to be seen as a well-connected networker?
- Do you want to be seen as a dedicated professional?

Understand how you want to be perceived and move on to the next step.

2. Make Sure You Are Consistent

Check your other online profiles, such as those on your firm's website, other social media networks and online directories, to make sure they are consistent with the personal brand you want to project. Many folks will check you out in other places besides LinkedIn, so make them work together.

3. Consider Your Image in Groups

If you have followed the ten-minute-a-day strategy, you're already participating in LinkedIn groups that are frequented by your target audience. It's useful to reflect on how your group contributions shape your personal brand.

In group conversations, be clear, direct, and insightful. Just as in face-to-face networking, people will judge you by what you say and how you say it. It is easy to misjudge tone in written comments, so avoid remarks that may be misconstrued as snide or dismissive.

Many folks will check you out in other places besides LinkedIn, so make them work together.

4. Use Status Updates and Twitter or Blog Feeds

These functions can help reinforce your brand message. Activity draws attention and increases visibility. Just make sure these updates and feeds are consistent with your desired image. It doesn't hurt to show your human side.

5. Promote Your LinkedIn Profile in the Offline World

At this point, you've put a lot of effort into shaping your profile – so don't be afraid to send people there. Put your LinkedIn address on your business card, in proposals, in presentations and in your email signature block. You can also include it in your bio when you speak or publish an article. The more you get it out there, the better.

While these steps will take a bit of time to implement, the results are well worth the effort. An effective LinkedIn strategy is the cornerstone of many professional services executives' personal brands.

6. Evaluate Your Profile

It's easy to get complacent when it comes to updating your profile on LinkedIn. Review your profile at least once a year – complete any incomplete sections and update others.

In group conversations, be clear, direct, and insightful.



Want to do it yourself?

From step-by-step How-Tos to in-depth courses, Hinge University will give you the skills and know-how to elevate your brand.

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Chapter 5

Five Steps to Starting a Group on LinkedIn

Groups are one of the most popular features on LinkedIn. And managing your own group can have several benefits for your firm, including:

- Building authority as an industry leader.
- Website traffic generation.
- The ability to send direct messages to group members.
- Lead generation.

Getting a group started is fairly straightforward. But to get the most value from your group, you must continually build the network and engage the community. Below are five steps to help you start and manage a successful LinkedIn group.

1. Develop a Strategy

Before launching the group, be sure to articulate its purpose. Consider the following:

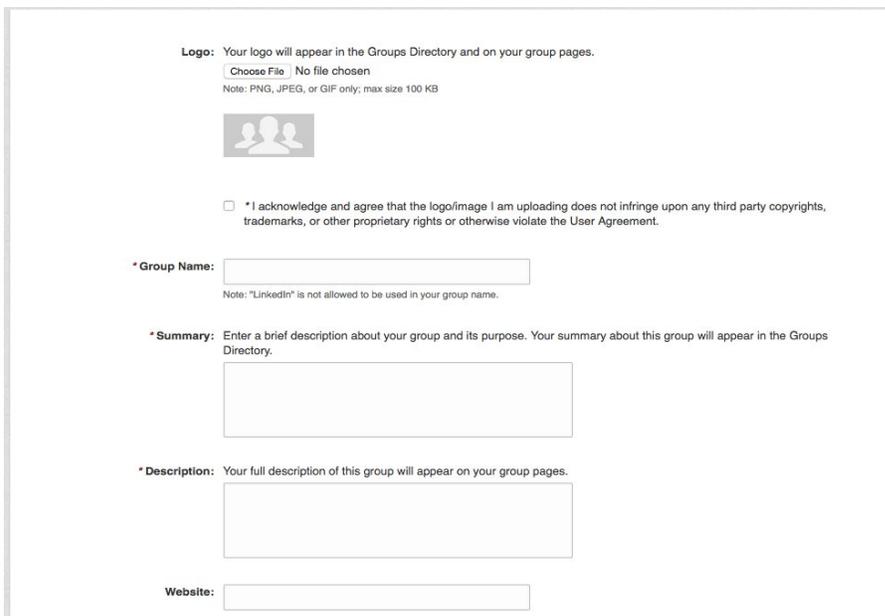
- **Target Audiences** – Who are you trying to attract? Is this a general group or is it niche specific? Should you keep it open to the public or make it invitation only?
- **Goals** – Is your goal to generate leads? Create a community based on education, free from promotion? Meet new connections? Become a thought leader?

Before launching the group, be sure to articulate its purpose.

- **Topics** – Having a focus is critical to building a community. What types of discussions are you going to encourage?
- **Measuring Success** – How do you plan on measuring success? Will it be based on the number of group members, number of discussions each week, or new business gained from the group?

2. Create a Group

Now that you have your strategy nailed down, it's time to set up the group. Once you sign in to LinkedIn, Click on the Grid icon in the top right of your LinkedIn homepage and select Groups from the dropdown. Click My Groups, and then click the Create group button on the left side of the page. Fill in the information. A red asterisk means it's required. Click the Create Group button to create your group.



The screenshot shows the LinkedIn 'Create Group' form. At the top, there is a 'Logo' section with a 'Choose File' button and a note: 'Note: PNG, JPEG, or GIF only; max size 100 KB'. Below this is a placeholder image of three people. A checkbox is present with the text: '* I acknowledge and agree that the logo/image I am uploading does not infringe upon any third party copyrights, trademarks, or other proprietary rights or otherwise violate the User Agreement.' Below the logo section is a required text field for '* Group Name:' with a note: 'Note: "LinkedIn" is not allowed to be used in your group name.' This is followed by a required text area for '* Summary:' with the instruction: 'Enter a brief description about your group and its purpose. Your summary about this group will appear in the Groups Directory.' Below that is another required text area for '* Description:' with the instruction: 'Your full description of this group will appear on your group pages.' At the bottom, there is a required text field for 'Website:'.

LinkedIn will ask you to supply certain information such as the group's name, description and logo. Instead of naming the group after your company, consider choosing a name that describes the educational topic area being discussed. You don't want potential group members thinking the discussions will all be about your products and services.

When creating a group description, spell out what you are trying to accomplish with this community. It's helpful for potential members to have a bullet point list of benefits and topics.

3. Build Up Membership

Like most social networks, the easiest way to grow a group is to lay a foundation from your personal network. Reach out to existing connections that fit your target audience criteria and invite them to join. Have other members of your firm do the same, and your group should be able to hit 100 members with minimal effort. Once the group has triple digit membership numbers, some organic discussion should begin to take place.

4. Discuss and Moderate

The most challenging aspect of running a successful group is keeping it alive. Many groups start with a bang — lively conversations and frequent comments — but then trail off within a month or so. To create a community that flourishes over time, you must proactively spark discussion on a weekly basis.

At least once a week, entice participation by posting an engaging question in the group. If others respond, try to keep the conversation going as long as possible. As other members post fresh discussions, be sure to reply with thoughtful comments that demonstrate your genuine interest. Playing the moderator role is vital to producing activity, especially in the early stages of a group.

Group Owners, can send one announcement per week to all group members about upcoming meetings, gatherings, job fairs and other events. Any group member who has opted to receive group emails will receive the announcement in the form of an email.

The most challenging aspect of running a successful group is keeping it alive.

Chapter 5 | Five Steps to Starting a Group on LinkedIn

In addition to reaching all group members through email, you also have the ability to feature the announcement at the top of your LinkedIn group page, which allows people to engage with it.

To send an announcement:

- Select the grid icon in the top right-hand corner of your homepage and select Groups
- Click the My Groups tab
- Click Manage
- Select Send an Announcement
- Enter your Subject (up to 200 characters) and Message (up to 4000 characters)
- Click Send Announcement

Note: By default, announcements are sent to members as an email and also posted as discussion within the group. However, members may opt out of receiving announcements.



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The Professional Services Executive Forum Story

In 2011, Hinge created a LinkedIn Group called the **Professional Services Executive Forum**. The objective was to establish a forum where professional services executives (C-suite and marketing) could discuss leadership and marketing issues, share ideas, and solve problems.

Hinge executives personally invited potential group members to join. In the beginning, the Hinge team spent quite a bit of time introducing comments for discussion. Today, the group has over 5,000 members and hundreds of discussion threads – the vast majority of which were started by professional services executives outside of Hinge.

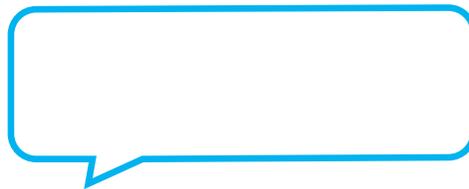
The screenshot shows the LinkedIn group page for the Professional Services Executive Forum (PSEF). The group has 5,271 members and is managed by a member. The page features a 'Start a conversation with your group' section with a text input field. Below this, there are tabs for 'Conversations' and 'Jobs'. A featured post by Candace Frederiksen, an experienced executive in research and marketing, is titled 'What's the difference between thought leadership and content marketing?'. The post includes a video blog and a description. To the right, there is an 'ABOUT THIS GROUP' section with a welcome message and a list of group rules. A 'MEMBERS' section shows a row of member avatars and an 'Invite others' button.

5. Continue to Promote

Once you've exhausted your personal connections, you must find other creative ways to promote your community. Examples include:

- Include a link to the group in your email signature.
- Include a call to action on your firm's website to join the group.
- Experiment with LinkedIn advertising.
- Send out an email blast to your list.
- Let your networks on other social media platforms know about the group.
- Write a blog post referencing a hot topic being discussed in the community.
- Announce the group at speaking engagements and webinars.

Most popular LinkedIn groups go through a phase of heavy promotion. If given enough attention, the group will eventually take off.



Chapter 6

Lead Generation on LinkedIn

With its large and growing base of professionals, LinkedIn provides a great foundation for your social media marketing efforts. Once you've mastered the LinkedIn fundamentals, you may want to turn your attention to lead generation.

At Hinge, we've found the following five lead generation strategies to be effective, both individually and in conjunction.

1. Research and Develop Contacts with Target Clients

This strategy works well when you can identify a limited number of potential clients. For example, if you run an IT security consulting services firm, you might target the nation's 100 largest banks. LinkedIn enables you to search for potential contacts within these firms and "network" your way in. LinkedIn also allows you to follow a firm's LinkedIn activity by clicking the blue "Follow" button at the top of the firm's page. When an opportunity develops—for example, the firm makes an acquisition for which your services are well-suited—you can use it as an opening to contact them.

2. Network Within Selected Groups

LinkedIn offers such a vast number of groups that there are probably at least a few that cater to a high concentration of your potential clients. Use the group's search function to locate relevant groups. Spend some time just getting to know the flow of topics and comments discussed there. If you see potential opportunities, begin to participate in the group just as you would at

a networking event. Don't be pushy or promotional. Be a helpful colleague and you will establish relationships with potential clients, referral sources and marketing partners — just as you would in the real world. Not finding a relevant group? Consider starting your own.

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3. Skim for Relevant Discussions or Questions, then Join In

This strategy works well when you offer a specific service that is relevant to a wide variety of individuals or firms, such as accounting services or IT support. Using this approach, you can monitor a wide variety of groups for discussion topics that are related to your service. Many people pose questions such as “Does anyone have an IT support firm they would recommend?” or “What is the best way to manage IT for a start-up firm?” Once again, be helpful and professional rather than overtly self-promotional, which can easily come across as spammy.

4. Position Yourself as an Expert

This strategy strengthens all other approaches to lead generation on LinkedIn. First of all, make sure your LinkedIn profile supports your expert status. Your profile should be complete and easy to skim and understand. It should also clearly highlight your expert status — use carefully written headlines and keywords to clarify your expertise. Don't try to be an expert in multiple areas. Focus on a single topic that will attract the kinds of clients you want, then support it with thoughtful comments. Not an expert yet? Focus and specialize to get started in that direction.

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5. LinkedIn Media Advertising

Lead generation on LinkedIn isn't limited to organic networking. LinkedIn paid search and media advertising options have grown significantly in the last year. You can now use text based, banner and multimedia advertisements like SlideShare presentations, whitepapers and videos as ads themselves. LinkedIn has a nice feature that allows you to target advertising to groups, specific job titles, demographics, geographic areas, or even a specific company. This reduces costs since you're not wasting resources on advertising to audiences who may have no need for your services. As with any ad campaign, you need to have well-crafted offers that address issues your clients care about. It's essential to drive ad clicks to a landing page and to test multiple offers and creative approaches.

The Future of LinkedIn

As the most mature and accepted social platform for business, LinkedIn is here to stay. It's already proving itself as a powerful tool for meeting prospects, generating leads and promoting firms' expertise. In fact, 93% of B2B marketers consider LinkedIn to be the most effective social media platform for generating leads. Year over year, LinkedIn is also generating a higher percentage of sales for B2B firms.

LinkedIn isn't standing still, as attested by its recent spate of enhancements. As new changes in the platform emerge, we will continue to update this guide so that services professionals can get the most out of this wonderful free service.

About Hinge

Hinge specializes in branding and marketing for professional services firms. We are the leaders in applying a science-based approach to help firms grow faster and maximize value.



Our comprehensive offerings include research and strategy, brand development, award-winning creative, high performance websites and marketing outsourcing.

Hinge conducts groundbreaking research on professional service companies. We have identified a group of firms that grow 9X faster and are 50% more profitable yet spend less than average to get new business. We can show you how they do it.

In fact, the Visible Firm program delivers everything we have learned in a platform that any firm can use to emulate the fastest growing professional services firms. Nobody else offers anything like it.

To view our full library of research reports, whitepapers, webinars and articles, please visit www.hingemarketing.com/library.

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Help us make this guide even better.

We want to hear from you. If you have any suggestions to improve this resource, please drop us a line: info@hingemarketing.com.

Thank you!

The Hinge Team

How We Can Help

Visible Firm® Program

Designed to deliver more referrals, higher profits, and faster growth, the Visible Firm® Program will build a powerful marketing platform to engage your audiences and build your visibility. Based on the most extensive research into high-growth firms ever conducted, the Visible Firm® Program will ground your marketing in science and leverage your firm's expertise to draw in the right audiences.

Branding Program

Our Branding Program is designed to carry your firm's reputation confidently into the marketplace by giving you a suite of powerful branding tools. Based on extensive research and analysis, our branding strategies will increase your firm's credibility and visibility in your industry. The services will also differentiate your firm and provide clear, compelling messages for each of your target audiences.

High Performance Website Program

The High Performance Website Program makes your website into a lead-generating machine — bundling a beautiful new site with a suite of powerful online tools. Designed from the ground up to attract the right visitors from search engines, a high performance site uses educational content, smart offers, and custom features to engage and convert qualified leads.

Visible Expert® Program

Designed to help individuals cultivate an authoritative online presence in their area of expertise, the Visible Expert® Program delivers the tools and strategy required to build personal reputation and visibility in the marketplace. Based on extensive research, the Visible Expert® Program helps experts become recognized industry leaders.

To find out how Hinge can help your professional services firm experience faster growth, contact us!

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Take the Next Step

Choose the option that's right for you.



Want to do it yourself?

From step-by-step How-Tos to in-depth courses, Hinge University will give you the skills and know-how to elevate your brand.

Check out Hinge University:
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OR



Need some help?

Hinge offers a comprehensive suite of marketing and branding services to increase your visibility and grow your firm.

Let's explore how we can help:
social@hingemarketing.com