

LinkedIn Success Stories

How 11 companies are using
the global networking site to achieve
their business and marketing goals



CASE STUDY COLLECTION

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INTRODUCTION



When the White House sought to gather feedback regarding health care reform from U.S. small-business owners, it posted a query on LinkedIn.

Why LinkedIn?

Though not the largest social network, LinkedIn has been greatly embraced by the business and professional community as the place to network, trade advice, and evince business savvy.

LinkedIn boasts more than 55,000,000 members in over 200 countries, with a little over half of its membership residing in the United States. Plus, executives from all Fortune 500 companies can be found on its network. And according to a study by BtoB Magazine and the Association of National Advertisers, 81% of business-to-business marketers use LinkedIn. The company continues to grow (while many social networks have not) and it possesses a more solid business model than Facebook or Twitter.

Now, how can you make LinkedIn work for your business? The 11 case studies, examples, and tips featured in this collection will help you get started.

Each case study details the tools and approaches used, along with the outcomes achieved and lessons learned. They are grouped according to the following business objectives:

- **Manifesting Thought Leadership and Expertise:** Discover how simple it is to demonstrate your prowess to a global network of potential clients, partners, and employers.
- **Attracting Event Participants and Attendees:** Read about how some organizations are generating interest in their off-network events.
- **Performing Market Research:** See how companies are using LinkedIn tools to reach targeted audiences and gather market insight.
- **Generating New Business:** Understand how marketers are identifying new leads, sparking business relationships, and increasing sales.

But before examining the case studies, let's take a look at the available resources for achieving these goals.

SNAPSHOT OF THE TOOLS AVAILABLE ON LINKEDIN

In the beginning, LinkedIn appeared to be just a place to build contact lists and post resumes. Network administrators, however, have since added elements that let users get more involved—and get closer to their business objectives.

Users can share personal insights, announce achievements and events, and solicit help.

Profile

Each LinkedIn member has an individual profile page to display information, such as: career experience, education, skills, achievements, honors, awards, website links, and portfolio links. LinkedIn also features the member's contact list, which can be set to private. Plus, recommendations from other users can be included. These particulars can highlight a person's strengths and also help build credibility.

Businesses can look at people's profiles to: gain insight into a person's skills and experience; identify nuggets of information that may facilitate business relationships and/or sales; and better understand relationships among employees, partners, suppliers, and/or competitors.

Profiles are searchable within LinkedIn and via the major search engines. Vanity URLs can also be established for easy reference.

Status

Like Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn provides a space on a user's profile to post status updates. Users can share personal insights, announce achievements and events, and solicit help. These updates also appear on the user's contacts' homepages, where LinkedIn lists any activity related to the user's immediate network of contacts.

Scott Harris, president of Mustang Marketing in Thousand Oaks, Calif., knows that by updating his status daily with company information and news, he keeps his firm top of mind with existing and potential clients, vendors, and freelancers. Harris regularly receives comments about his status posts, often to the tune of "Wow, Mustang must be doing well, based on what I'm seeing on LinkedIn." Harris says that rarely a week goes by that he doesn't line up at least one business meeting due to this effort—not too shabby for a task that requires mere minutes a day.

In 2009, LinkedIn partnered with Twitter to enable users to sync their profiles on both networks. Using this setting, members can choose to have their Twitter updates automatically or manually by including either #li or #in in their tweets featured in their LinkedIn statuses. (Note that LinkedIn filters out any "@replies" posted on Twitter.)

SNAPSHOT OF THE TOOLS AVAILABLE ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn also offers company profiles, which include a brief overview, company description, and information about company employees, new hires, recent internal promotions, key statistics, and related companies.

InMail

LinkedIn's private, in-network user messaging system is InMail. Messages can be sent for free between any connected person on the network. For example, as a basic member, you can send InMail messages to people on your LinkedIn contact lists and in the same LinkedIn groups.

Kathy Steele, creative services director at Elmhurst, Ill.-based Desert Rose Design, upgraded her account to the largest package, so she can send unlimited InMail messages. Steele says she generally receives a much quicker response from her outbound InMail messages than she does from regular mail. This may be because recipients receive fewer InMails, so those messages tend to stand out. Plus, recipients can immediately check her profile if they don't recognize the name.

Individual accounts can be upgraded for a fee so that messages can be sent to any LinkedIn user, or so that any user can send you an InMail message regardless of whether they have an upgraded account.

Divya Gugnani, CEO of the culinary website Behind the Burner, has her account set up so that anyone on LinkedIn can send her InMail. She frequently receives messages from users seeking culinary and restaurant information, and small-business and entrepreneurial advice. Thanks to InMail, Gugnani can share her insights, establish authority, and sometimes even foster new business relationships—all with people who might not have reached out to her otherwise.

Company Pages

LinkedIn also offers company profiles, which include a brief overview, company description, and information about company employees, new hires, recent internal promotions, key statistics, and related companies.

Company pages can be used to manage publicly available data about one's organization as well as to learn more about clients, competitors, vendors, etc.

According to LinkedIn, the information supplied is collected from LinkedIn user data and LinkedIn's partner Capital IQ. The network says it also plans to enable companies to edit certain information and add images, product and services information, and job postings.

SNAPSHOT OF THE TOOLS AVAILABLE ON LINKEDIN

In addition to separating queries by category (as selected by the originator), LinkedIn offers a search capability, so users can easily find questions and answers by keyword.

LinkedIn Answers

LinkedIn Answers is a Q&A forum where users can gather advice, gain insight on important issues impacting their industries and businesses, and show off their expertise. A report by Business.com in December 2009 found that 59.2% of companies and 79% of B2B organizations who participate in online business forums use LinkedIn Answers, making it the most used in its category.

Posted questions appear under the site's Answers tab (unless designated as private by the user), as well as on the author's LinkedIn profile page and on his/her connections' LinkedIn homepages. Users can also request that the question be emailed to specific contacts via InMail.

Members can choose to answer posted questions publicly on the forum or privately via an email to the user who first posted the query. When a user answers a question publicly, that fact is publicized on the user's profile and his/her contacts' homepages.

In addition to separating queries by category (as selected by the originator), LinkedIn offers a search capability, so users can easily find questions and answers by keyword.

Patrick O'Malley, a New England-based social media consultant, says he regularly searches the Answers section on LinkedIn for keywords that potential customers might use. Then he responds to those questions to which he can add value and exhibit his mastery of the subject. He reports that this has led to offline conversations, new business relationships, and contracting jobs. "If people like your answers, they are more likely to contact you and hire you."

LinkedIn community members can rate their favorite responses to any question as a "Best Answer." Each time this happens, the user whose answer was rated receives an "expertise point" for the category in which the question is posted. Users with the most points are then featured as category experts within the Answers section of the site.

Groups

LinkedIn Groups are communities of common interest within the larger network. Groups typically include discussion, news and job boards, along with member directories and group update postings. Subgroups can also be launched within the group.

SNAPSHOT OF THE TOOLS AVAILABLE ON LINKEDIN

Users can set up custom polls, which can either be distributed to their immediate network of contacts for free or target select groups of LinkedIn members (e.g., based on industry, company size, job title or function, age, gender, or geography) on a pay-per-response model.

Groups can be started by any LinkedIn user. That person decides who can join, assigns group moderators, designates a group logo, and sets up automatic email responses to people who request to join their group. (For more information on launching a LinkedIn group, see the “Tips for Getting Started” section of this report.)

The Groups Directory can be used to search for groups specific to an industry or interest. Upon joining a group, users can select whether they want the group logo featured on their profiles, how often they wish to receive group updates via email, and whether other group members may contact them directly.

LinkedIn Services

LinkedIn also provides a vendor services directory made up only of providers recommended by the user’s network. The directory can be searched by category/industry and refined by geographical location.

To get featured in the directory, another user must recommend your service through the LinkedIn Services home screen (i.e., not through a recommendation on your profile).

LinkedIn Advertising

On-site advertising options include display ads (banner ads, text links, content ads and homepage takeover), sponsorship (of various applications, polls, events, and different categories under the Answers tab), white paper distribution and partner messages (sent via email). Campaigns can target the entire LinkedIn network or more defined segments. They can also be customized to reach specific demographics.

Applications

LinkedIn applications can be added to users’ personal profiles and homepages:

- **Polls:** Users can set up custom polls, which can either be distributed to their immediate network of contacts for free or target select groups of LinkedIn members (e.g., based on industry, company size, job title or function, age, gender, or geography) on a pay-per-response model. Poll results are analyzed by the application and dissected by factors, such as seniority, company size, job function, age and gender.
- **Company Buzz:** This application tracks what’s being said about your company on Twitter, blogs, and elsewhere online.

SNAPSHOT OF THE TOOLS AVAILABLE ON LINKEDIN

Private collaboration can take place among connected users directly within LinkedIn using Huddle Workspaces. Documents and spreadsheets can be co-edited with tracking of all changes.

- **Tweets:** Tweets syncs with your Twitter profile to offer basic Twitter capabilities, including the ability to simultaneously update your Twitter and LinkedIn status, display your tweets, and view your followers' tweets.
- **Blog Link:** Users can sync their blogs with their LinkedIn profiles so the most recent blog posts are also automatically published directly on their profiles.
- **WordPress:** Similar in function to Blog Link, the WordPress application works specifically with WordPress-hosted blogs.
- **SlideShare:** This application enables presentation slides to be featured on a user's profile. Slides can be tagged with keywords so that they appear in search results.
- **Google Presentation:** PowerPoint presentations can be uploaded to the user's profile with this application.
- **Box.net:** Users can post content on their profiles and share documents with specific contacts via Box.net.
- **Huddle Workspaces:** Private collaboration can take place among connected users directly within LinkedIn using Huddle Workspaces. Documents and spreadsheets can be co-edited with tracking of all changes.
- **Events:** This application displays upcoming events that you and your contacts plan to attend.
- **My Travel:** Powered by Triplt, this application alerts your network to your current location and where you'll be traveling.
- **SAP Community Bio:** For those certified in SAP, this application displays credentials and SAP contributions directly on their profiles.

LinkedIn also offers a mobile application for accessing the network from any WAP-enabled phone. Additional applications are available—with more on the way.

CASE STUDIES:

11 REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

Now that you're familiar with the LinkedIn tools at your disposal, here's a look at how they're being used by 11 organizations to perform market research, demonstrate thought leadership and expertise, attract users to off-network events, and boost sales.

MANIFESTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

From individual profiles to groups and Answers boards, LinkedIn provides the channel and tools to showcase your expertise, manage your professional reputation, and establish yourself as a leader in the space.



Anvil Media

Compelling content, strategic connection building and search engine optimization (SEO) are just a few tools that Anvil Media president Kent Lewis uses to gain prestige via LinkedIn.

Company: Founded in 2000 by Lewis, Anvil Media, Inc. is a search engine marketing agency specializing in SEO, pay-per-click management, search engine marketing public relations, online reputation management, and social media marketing services.

Challenge: Lewis works to continuously cultivate both his firm's reputation and his personal brand.

Solution: To proactively connect with prospective clients and partners, Lewis requests introductions from existing contacts and uses the "People you may know" feature on his LinkedIn homepage. His goal is not to make as many connections as possible, but to make quality connections. The main reason Lewis makes an effort to grow his contact base is to "flatten out the six degrees of separation" to the people he wants to meet.

A high number of recommendations was a priority for Lewis, however. "Recommendations show quality and depth," he says. To strengthen his profile, Lewis reached out to associates from every line item of his experience with a request for recommendations. Today, his profile boasts 84 recommendations and covers every position but the oldest listed.

Lewis also optimizes his profile by incorporating keywords so that his information shows up in both LinkedIn and Google search results. For example, he lists every bit of experience he's ever had—every board membership, group affiliation, award received, you name it—and includes pertinent keywords in each description. He also lists key industry terms under his "Interests."

"Social sites are highly trusted by Google," Lewis says, "and you can gain control of your brand through profile optimization."

LinkedIn lets users list three links on their profiles, so Lewis uses this space to describe each link with industry keywords instead of the default titles of "my website" or "my portfolio."

MANIFESTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

“Create messaging so compelling that people are likely to share it, vote it a ‘best answer’ and contact you directly,” Lewis says. “When someone reads your answers and then take the time to learn about who answered it, they’re already sold by that point.”

He also leverages applications, such as SlideShare, WordPress, and Events, to showcase his expertise and keep his name prominently featured on connections’ homepages.

“SlideShare on its own is great SEO/brand management tool, but it’s also good for marketing when others see your slides,” he says.

His Twitter profile is synced, too. He uses it to broadcast interesting industry news. Lewis says he gets as much (and sometimes even more) interaction with these posts on LinkedIn as he does through Twitter.

LinkedIn Polls is another application he leverages. His network is notified each time a new poll is launched. Plus, Lewis takes to opportunity to share both the initial feedback and final results he collects from respondents—which exhibits credibility and his understanding of the marketplace.

Perhaps the most advantageous resource Lewis uses for establishing authority is LinkedIn Answers. He searches for questions relevant to his line of work then answers anywhere from three to 10 per week. So far, 28 of his responses have been nominated as “best answers,” which means he usually appears as one of the top five experts in his contacts’ networks.

“Create messaging so compelling that people are likely to share it, vote it a ‘best answer’ and contact you directly,” Lewis says. “When someone reads your answers and then takes the time to learn about who answered it, they’re already sold by that point.”

Results: Lewis’s responses on LinkedIn Answers, supported by various elements of his profile, have been instrumental in positioning both himself and Anvil Media as highly competent.

Lewis reports that LinkedIn is one of the top three sources of qualified leads for the agency. It has helped him identify and connect with key clients, such as the firm’s largest one, Borders Books. It also helped him secure a keynote speaking engagement at SEM4SMB in Austin, Texas, and aided in the development of an important partnership with an out-of-state company, for whom he may become a strategic advisor.

Business Lessons Learned

- Bridge the gap between you and the people you might like to meet by connecting with quality industry contacts.
- Don't be shy—ask for recommendations from people who appreciate your good work.
- Optimize your profile with keywords that will help improve your search rank.
- Add applications, such as SlideShare and WordPress, to your profile to introduce a stream of relevant content and validate your command of germane topics.
- Deliver insightful and compelling responses to LinkedIn Answers questions to showcase your expertise to a broader audience.

Padilla Speer Beardsley



This study shows that positioning a company as a go-to authority can be as simple as posting relevant news and encouraging conversation with targeted audiences.

Company: Padilla Speer Beardsley is a national, employee-owned public relations firm with 115 employees in Minneapolis and New York.

Challenge: The name of the game for any PR agency is generating awareness for the firm's clients. For Padilla Speer Beardsley, one such client is Virtual Hold Technology (VHT), the provider of queue management solutions that enhance the customer experience while improving operational efficiencies for call centers.

Solution: Whenever there is major news regarding VHT that may be of interest to other businesses (e.g., when Southwest Airlines started using the company's solution), Padilla Speer Beardsley makes it known on targeted LinkedIn groups, such as Worldwide Contact Center Professionals, which currently has more than 15,000 members who make up a very relevant audience for VHT.

To share information, Padilla Speer Beardsley creates a “news item” post that links to a posted press release or a related media article (e.g., one written by TMCNet regarding the Southwest Airlines news).

Spur discussion of your product or service with posted news items on LinkedIn group boards. Aim for educational or information items that are useful to other people.

Padilla Speer Beardsley director Amy Fisher says the firm regularly uses LinkedIn to promote VHT news for key reasons. For example, although the groups on LinkedIn may be smaller than those on other social networks, LinkedIn Groups maintain a strong business focus. Plus, audiences are very targeted. “We know people are specifically there to interact and network with others facing the same challenges,” Fisher says.

The firm then keeps track of any discussion regarding its posts and immediately notifies VHT’s chief technology officer, already a member of these groups, of opportunities for him to jump in and offer additional value. Fisher says, “Because LinkedIn groups are primarily talking about the technology, he is the most likely spokesperson to participate.”

Results: This approach has resulted in broader reach for company news, positive conversations around VHT’s solution, and exposure for the company’s CTO as a knowledgeable resource. Moreover, it led to new industry relationships, including one with an industry analyst firm who offered VHT the opportunity to participate in a research project.

“This relationship is important because we want analysts to be advocates for the company and to reference our clients in their conversations and research reports,” Fisher says.

Business Lessons Learned

- Spur discussion of your product or service with posted news items on LinkedIn group boards. Aim for educational or informative items that are useful to other people.
- Select groups pertaining directly to your industry that are comprised of people with whom you want to connect.
- Find your hook. The Southwest Airlines news garnered more user interaction than usual because it involved a high-profile recognizable brand.
- Link to third-party articles to appear less self-promotional. Also consider having the company’s agency post the news.
- Have someone who is conversant on the subject ready to log in, answer any questions, and contribute to the conversation regarding your posts.
- Follow through and respond to all related comments, even when the author doesn’t match your prospect profile. You never know where those conversations may lead.

David Moyer



How one man used LinkedIn to get a job—and switch careers—during the worst recession since the 1930s.

Marketer: David Moyer is a creative type with a diverse background that includes 20 years in the field of journalism.

Challenge: The recent economic downturn left Moyer—like many respectable professionals—unemployed and with few prospective opportunities. If there was any good time to switch careers, this was it, he thought, hoping to forge his way into public relations.

A journalist for many years, Moyer knew how to best go about pitching the media, and he had consulted for PR agencies. Still, few would give him the time of day.

“I had been helpful to publicists in the past, but they disappeared when I needed help,” says Moyer. “So, I decided to fight fire with fire.”

Solution: Moyer sensed that LinkedIn would be the tool he needed to get a job.

He began building his profile by listing every job he had ever had—even his roles as supermarket cashier and phone psychic/astrologer. Those he used as an opportunity to showcase his personality, with descriptions, such as “It was hell for a creative person” under the cashier position, or “to get material for country songs without having my own dog die on me” to justify his phone psychic years.

“I wanted to show that I have a certain amount of creativity and a sense of humor—those are my selling points in business,” he says.

Next, Moyer set out to further demonstrate his creativity—and his knack for PR. He created five videos starring himself and his daughter’s toy puppets discussing the ins and outs of public relations. He called the series PR Puppet Theatre, and he kept the production as cheesy as possible so that people would be more apt to laugh and share the videos with their connections.

After posting the videos to YouTube, he reached out to his LinkedIn network with a personalized email that linked to the videos.

MANIFESTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

Accentuate your experience—all of it. And keep your LinkedIn profile up to date, so potential employers can immediately see your “latest and greatest” work.

He also joined PR-focused groups on LinkedIn and engaged in the conversations taking place within those groups, mentioning the videos when appropriate as an example of how he was creatively marketing himself in a tough economy.

Results: Through his LinkedIn contacts, Moye’s videos made their way in front of the folks at CNBC. They ended up featuring two videos on the CNBC website, where they were dubbed “must-see entertainment/education for every PR flack.” That, of course, served to further get the word out.

In all, the five videos were viewed more than 1,440 times on YouTube. One viewer liked the content so much, he offered Moye a job at Alternative Strategies, a boutique PR agency in San Diego. Mission accomplished.

PR Puppet Theatre has since become part of Moye’s “legend”—and another experience listing on his LinkedIn profile. Plus, it helped establish his footing as an expert in the field. Just four months into his new career, Moye was asked to start contributing to a PR industry blog.

Moye says LinkedIn was the key to making it all happen. As it turns out, he had also posted the videos on Facebook and received comments to the tune of “that’s really cool” from relatives and old high school friends. But nothing close to a business connection ever came out of that, let alone a job.

Business Lessons Learned

- Find a personal angle that will help set you apart.
- Bear in mind that a little creativity—even wackiness—stands out on LinkedIn much more than other networks where users aren’t always down to business.
- Accentuate your experience—all of it. And keep your LinkedIn profile up to date, so potential employers can immediately see your “latest and greatest” work

Mark Amtower



When you’re a master of your niche, LinkedIn makes it possible to exponentially and pervasively expand your authority.

Marketer: Mark Amtower is an author, consultant, speaker, and radio host who focuses on one market —doing business with government. He is the founding

“When you share good information, you get more people looking at you interested in what you do, wanting to pick your brain, and wanting to follow you,” Amtower says.

partner of Amtower & Company and the author of *Government Marketing Best Practices*.

Challenge: Mark Amtower was an early adopter of LinkedIn, having joined the network in February 2004. But beyond signing up, filling out his profile, and connecting with associates, he wasn't sure what to do with it. “Like everyone else, I leaned my head up against the screen and waited for something to happen,” he says.

It wasn't until he read Jason Alba's *I'm on LinkedIn—Now What??* and David Meerman Scott's *The New Rules of Marketing and PR* that he started thinking it was time to get more involved.

“After I read David Meerman Scott's book, I put him on my show, where he said that everything's migrating to Web 2.0 and you can be a bigger power if you play this game,” Amtower says. “That got my attention.”

Solution: In March 2007, Amtower started getting active by joining and participating in groups and sharing his insights on LinkedIn Answers forums.

Those activities led to new contacts as users reached out after reading his comments and posts. “When you share information, you get more people looking at you, interested in what you do, wanting to pick your brain, and wanting to follow you,” Amtower says.

He would also look through his posts' comments—some totaling more than 60—to see whether any of those users would make interesting contacts. He would then privately message those users, thank them for commenting, and invite them to check out his profile to see if they were interested in connecting further.

Amtower also started his own groups on the network. He invited everyone in his network to join and sent periodic reminders every couple months to those who didn't immediately respond. He made an effort to keep his groups lively with frequent discussion posts, weekly news articles, and an active job board.

His “tip of the week” posts were so popular that he evolved them into a weekly newsletter for all group members. He kept the newsletter content brief but relevant to member interests and regularly reminded members to invite their friends and actively participate in group conversations.

MANIFESTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

Use LinkedIn to grow your thought leadership exponentially and become a “niche master.”

Amtower learned early on that overt selling on group forums and within the newsletter wasn't well received. But he has found that on occasion—every four weeks or so—he can include a plug for his informational CD program that sells for \$50 without causing members to leave.

Another way Amtower has kept his name top of mind is by regularly updating his status and ensuring it always revolves around his niche.

He also takes the initiative to recognize and write recommendations for people who have helped him in some way, before they even have a chance to ask.

“Call it karma, if you will,” Amtower says. “When you do good deeds, they circle around.”

Results: Today, Amtower's LinkedIn profile exudes credibility and authority within the government marketing sector. Since March 2007, he has grown his connections from 150 to more than 2,200. He now actively participates in 50 groups and 12 subgroups and manages seven. He has more than 200 recommendations from clients and peers, and has been nominated for 25 best answers in 14 Answers categories.

All of this has led to not only broader awareness for his expertise and services, but also numerous consulting gigs. And his CD sales aren't doing too poorly either.

Business Lessons Learned

- Use LinkedIn to grow your thought leadership exponentially and become a “niche master.”
- Start by setting realistic short-term goals, prioritizing your activities based on those goals, and dedicating 10 minutes a day to them.
- Shoot for value-added interactions, give before you receive, and recognize others for the helpfulness they provide.
- Use a regular series of tips or a weekly newsletter to constantly remind your audience of who you are and what you do.
- Keep at it. To become a magnet in your niche, Amtower says you must make an ongoing effort and become a constant student of your market.



... and that's just a peek at the bigger picture.

The entire report, complete with a broader scope as well as details, is available for our Pro members. It includes 11 case studies about companies using LinkedIn to achieve their business and marketing objectives.

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IT'S YOUR TURN ...

This case study collection features 11 companies, 11 strategies, and a view into how you might integrate the professional networking site into your marketing mix. And when you do, let us know how it goes by emailing your story to CaseStudies@MarketingProfs.com. Your ingenuity could make it into our next edition.



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