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Use LinkedIn To Grow Your Business

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LinkedIn

Use LinkedIn To Grow Your Business

LinkedIn is a professional social networking site that you can use to grow your business. You may have already set up a profile on the site, but are you using it to its fullest capacity to grow your business? There are 80 million people on LinkedIn, including 32 million in the US alone. Maybe even more importantly, there are 7.9 million business decision makers there. Some of them are people you need to connect with in the industry in order to grow your business.

A lot of businesses are already doing just that. In fact, 78% of businesses use LinkedIn and 67% of them are seeing results and plan to increase their use of the site in the upcoming year.

Here are a few tips on getting the most out of LinkedIn to grow your business:

1. **Complete your profile.** Fill out your profile as completely as possible. LinkedIn is a professional network. Be professional in your approach to the site. A profile complete with job history, your professional specialties and good keywords can truly make a difference.
2. **Connect with others.** Take the time to go through your different address books to find all the people you currently know and/or knew in the past. Send out invites to those people to expand your contact list.
3. **Post updates.** If you want to be noticed, be active. Notify your contacts when you have significant news or a new product launch by posting a profile update with the new information. Your contacts will receive an e-mail that includes a summary of updates within your LinkedIn contacts, including your big announcement.
4. **Be the expert.** One of LinkedIn's most under-utilized and underrated features is the "Answers" section. People post questions they're looking for answers to. You can search these questions in your area of expertise and answer them. The more insight you offer to others and the more questions you answer, the more people will see you as an expert in the field. Also, ask a few questions yourself—it will help you get a feel for what customers and prospects want or think.
5. **Ask for recommendations.** Ask your contacts to recommend you or your company. Recommendations typically don't come in if you just sit back and wait for them. Be proactive. Customers and prospects will read these and be influenced by them, so

don't settle for a profile without at least a few good recommendations. Return the favor by recommending those that you have worked with.

6. **Improve your Google PageRank.** When your profile is set to be viewable to the general public, it can have a big influence on what people see when they search for you or your company. Make sure you customize your LinkedIn URL to be your name, and then use this link on all your marketing collateral, including business cards, e-mail signatures, e-mail newsletters, websites and brochures so prospects learn more about you. Make sure you also list your company's website on your LinkedIn profile page.
7. **Optimize your profile with keywords.** Make sure your profile is full of the words people will be searching for. Plus, it needs to be up-to-date with the latest information on your business and its offerings. Make sure you use the "Specialties" section of your profile to include all the things that set you and your company apart.
8. **Join groups.** Participate in discussions and get to know people with similar interests by joining LinkedIn groups. They provide a very easy way to connect, meet new people and use the site for what social networking is for—networking.
9. **Consider placing a LinkedIn ad.** Not many people realize that you can actually place an ad within LinkedIn itself. If you want to take your reach to the next level, maybe an ad is right for you.
10. **Connect on the go.** Don't be tied to a desktop when you can connect on the go with your Smartphone.
11. **Be creative.** There's no cookie-cutter solution that's right for everybody and every business. Look for strategies that work for you. Here are a few ideas to get you started:
 - Combine your social media approach by linking your LinkedIn account with Twitter and/or Facebook.
 - Search for influencers in your industry by company, industry or city.
 - Start and manage a group or fan page for your product or company.
 - Research your prospects before meeting them.
 - Share useful tidbits of information with your contacts.
 - Post presentations on your profile.
 - Ask your first-level contacts for introductions to their first-level contacts
 - List your newsletter subscription information and archives.
 - Link to articles and content posted elsewhere, with a summary of why it's valuable.

For more information about this and other research done by the SMART Group, contact Jason Hemsoth at jhemsoth@growwithbmg.com or call 260.422.7100.