

HOW TO USE LINKEDIN

RAISING BRAND AWARENESS

This “How to” guide aims to help brokers understand the power of LinkedIn in raising awareness of your brand and expertise.

This document explains the differences in LinkedIn profile types and explains how you could be using LinkedIn for more than just a timeline of your employees’ past roles and education by implementing a content and engagement strategy that will help brokers grow the number of connections in a target market.

Company Pages vs. Personal Profiles

There are two types of profiles on LinkedIn, Personal Profiles and Company Pages. But what’s the difference?

Personal Profiles

These are your own personal pages where you tell everyone all about yourself. If you’re simply using your Personal Profile as an online CV to promote your experience with people who already know you, you’re missing a trick. Personal Profiles enable you to publish articles and share and interact with other professionals’ content which is a powerful way to build your audience in your target market.

Company Pages

These are the equivalent of a company’s website on LinkedIn and are often forgotten about. They enable LinkedIn members to learn more about your business through an About section and through company updates.

The key difference between the two profile types is that you can’t develop relationships with Company Pages as they don’t allow you to proactively connect with people. Personal Profiles are where the two-way connections between LinkedIn users happen.

Does this mean you still need to have a Company Page? Yes, every broker absolutely needs to have a Company Page and should make sure it’s kept up-to-date with regular updates to ensure your business looks professional. Your employees can all connect with this Company Page so that your company logo appears on their Personal Profiles and their connections can then click through to learn more about your business. You can pay

to target your company updates so they reach LinkedIn users that reach individuals that meet specific demographic options such as job titles, locations and business types.

Company Pages can also be discovered through searches on LinkedIn and also on Google. Try doing a search for your company on Google. If you've got a Company Page on LinkedIn it's likely to appear.

5 steps to raising awareness through LinkedIn

1. Assign ownership

If your LinkedIn strategy is going to be effective you need to assign ownership to various roles.

Profile management - Establish who is going to manage the Company Page, this doesn't have to be one person's responsibility as they can be managed by more than one user. These people could also ensure that everyone's Personal Profiles are set up so they are fully optimised.

Content creation - who is going to be responsible for creating the content? Do you have the expertise and time inhouse to create compelling content or do you need to outsource it? Whoever you choose to write the content can't do it all by themselves and will need the input of subject experts.

Content signoff - who is responsible for signing off content before it goes live to make sure everything is compliant and reflects your company values?

2. Get involved

Search for the LinkedIn Groups where your target market hangs out and join in. Don't be afraid to get involved with discussions that happen amongst your target market. Simply pressing the thumbs

up button at the end of a post isn't going to get you noticed though. If you voice your opinion and comment on others' content you'll soon grow your profile and reputation in an industry.

Build relationships with key influencers in your target market so you can utilise them to share content and provide introductions.

3. Produce valuable content - exploiting the LinkedIn algorithm

You need to identify who your target audience is so you can create content that meets their needs. Think about the stories and advice that will be relevant to them. If your content isn't relevant or useful, it could end up driving prospective customers away.

Undertaking a competitor analysis is an ideal way of understanding what content works best with your audience and which topics aren't being covered.

Producing a content calendar will help you think about what stories need to be told at specific times of the year and help you to ensure that you're posting regularly. Don't forget that content isn't just about the written text-only. LinkedIn allows you to

post images and videos as well as enabling you to add documents like PDFs. Variety is the spice of life so don't just stick to text if you want to keep your audience engaged.

LinkedIn's algorithm determines how your content is prioritised in users' feeds. The algorithm prioritises content that encourages conversations. So the more users interact with your content through comments and shares, the higher up your content will appear and the further it will reach. It's, therefore, a good idea to encourage interaction by posting content that encourages a response by asking questions or seeking opinions. You can add #hashtags to your own content so people following that hashtag will have a chance of seeing it. Use hashtags to see what's resonating with LinkedIn users in your target market.

4. Use employees to amplify your messages

Your colleagues are your best resource to grow your audience, by tapping into their social networks you'll dramatically increase the reach of your content. According to LinkedIn, employees' networks are at least 10x larger than a company's follower base.

Moreover, people are more likely to engage with content when it's posted by someone they know. LinkedIn research shows that when employees share content, they typically achieve a click-through rate that is 2x higher than when the same content is shared by a company. Therefore you need to identify which colleagues can support you and educate them to ensure they understand your company's LinkedIn strategy and they know how to share and post your content. You can make it easy for them

by providing content that they can post and even prepopulated comments that they can use when sharing content.

To maintain enthusiasm and momentum, it's important that you continue to share success stories and statistics about the impact of your LinkedIn activity.

5. Measure success

Having a clear understanding of how your brand awareness strategy is performing will help you focus your efforts on the activity that resonates most with your target audience. LinkedIn provides a wealth of statistics to help you measure success.

Who's viewed your profile - the more active you are on LinkedIn the more the number of people viewing your profile should increase. Are the people viewing your profile from your target market?

Search appearances - are people actively looking for you and are they able to find you

Likes, shares, comments - monitoring these social interactions will help you understand if your content is working and what types of content work best.

The number of connections - the more active you are, the more your connection count should grow. Be careful to make sure your number of connections is growing in your target market.

The number of followers - followers are people that follow your content without being connected to you. The more you post valuable content the more this number should grow.

However you choose to measure success, it's important that you continue to share the results with the rest of the business to maintain momentum.

Keeping employees on the straight and narrow

We've all heard examples of where social media has gone wrong, so the thought of giving staff free reign on LinkedIn in the name of your brokerage might understandably make many directors nervous. However, LinkedIn can only be really effective for your business if you encourage employees to actively use LinkedIn and share your content and messages. The key is to generate enthusiasm amongst your employees whilst guiding them to ensure they always act professionally.

It's important to set expectations about appropriate behaviour when representing your company across all Social Media platforms and to remind employees that inappropriate behaviour could reflect badly on your business. Also, all views and comments are subject to the same UK legal requirement

for financial promotions, advertising, copyright, defamation, privacy, expressing personal opinions etc. Establishing a content approval process that includes your Compliance Officer will help ensure that content doesn't slip through that doesn't reflect your company values.

It's not just about being aware of what type of messages are appropriate. Employees should also be mindful of who they choose to connect with or accept as connections.

Don't be too restrictive in your policy though. Employee advocacy on social media is incredibly effective at bringing humanity to your brand and shouldn't be discouraged.

Need support?

If you're looking for support with your LinkedIn, Ignition can provide brokers with a wide range of support including:

- staff training;
- content creation;
- advertising campaigns;
- strategy;
- full implementation.

Call Ignition now on 0161 831 7199 to understand how we can help.

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