

Grow Your Captive Audience with

LINKEDIN



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Grow Your Captive Audience With LinkedIn

The professional networking website LinkedIn was launched in 2003, and now boasts well over 400 million accounts (100 million of which are active). LinkedIn has firmly established itself as the leading website for professionals to meet, speak to and connect with one another.

One of the keys to success in business, whether it's selling your own product or service, or working as an affiliate marketer, is to establish yourself as an expert. When you speak from a position of authority, your audience is more likely to trust what you're saying, and over time may eventually be more likely to consider purchasing what you're selling.

LinkedIn is the ideal website for you to establish yourself as an expert. As your stature within your industry grows, you'll have more LinkedIn followers, and more people paying attention to your LinkedIn posts. You can think of these individuals as your captive audience, and it's a tremendous business asset to have.

You can think of your LinkedIn account in several different ways. It's an online resume, an easy way to meet new contacts in your industry, to establish yourself as an expert, and connect with others on a strictly professional level (as opposed to connecting with them on Facebook, where you'd always have to be monitoring yourself so that you don't write or share something inappropriate).

Here are ten steps you can take on LinkedIn to manage these various aspects of your account and to grow your captive audience.

1. Remember That LinkedIn is Not Facebook.

While different LinkedIn members use the service differently, and with different goals, it's important to remember that at its core, LinkedIn is about professional networking. Think about

the way you might dress and act when you're going to a party with your friends, and compare that to how you're likely to dress and act when you're going to a party with your work colleagues. The first party is more like Facebook, and the second is more like LinkedIn.

That means that the types of posts and shares that are appropriate for Facebook are often not the right type of thing to post or share on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is more like a never-ending job interview or professional networking event.

But that's not a bad thing! While it might seem a bit stressful to have to keep up your professional image, doing so can help you boost your status and position within your industry, and make people much more interested in what you have to say.

2. Make it Easy to Connect With You.

When your network is larger, more people are going to see your LinkedIn posts, be able to learn more about you, and ultimately to recognize you as a trustworthy voice. You can (and most definitely should) make it easy for others to connect with you by including a direct link to your profile page in various places. You might choose to include the URL (perhaps using a clickable LinkedIn icon of appropriate size) on your business website, in your email signature, and in the bio section of your guest blog posts on other websites.



You might choose to add something like this to the bottom of your emails.

As you begin to receive requests, you should be a bit selective in those which you accept. Is the person who requested a connection in your industry, or a related industry? Are they a recognized expert? Do they appear to have a high quality network of connections themselves? Or does their request feel spammy or otherwise untargeted?

On the flip side of things, when you reach out and initiate a connection request to someone on LinkedIn, you should try to include a short message indicating why you want to connect, how you have friends or colleagues in common, or why they should accept your invitation. By personalizing your connection request, you make it much easier for the recipient to decide that you're worth linking to.

3. Manage Your Connections Wisely.

Of course, just because you've made it easy for others to connect with you, that doesn't mean you should connect with everyone who sends an invitation to you. If you've been on LinkedIn for a while, then you've likely already been faced with the situation where you get a connection request from someone you don't know, who you've never heard of, who isn't connected to anyone you know, and who doesn't appear to work in your industry.



If you choose to accept invitations from people you don't know, pay close attention to how they interact with your network of contacts. You may choose to remove them from your network if you find that they're doing anything unprofessional, spammy, or which may otherwise reflect poorly on you.

4. Focus on Organically Generating Traffic Back to Your Site.

LinkedIn is a way to connect with other professionals, not to sell with them directly on the site. In order to monetize the captive audience that you build on LinkedIn, you need to get them back to your website. The key here is to invite them, but not push them or engage in any "hard sell" tactics.

Be sure to occasionally include links back to your website, wherever they may be appropriate in your LinkedIn posts and discussions. In most cases, these links should point to specific and relevant pages of your site, rather than just your home page. In a sense, you can think of these links as the very early stages of your sales funnel.

5. Post in a Way That Invites Interaction.

As you post to your LinkedIn network, look for ways to include some type of call to action and look to start a discussion. If you're posting an opinion piece (after you've considered and made sure it's not too controversial for you and your business to be associated with!), you might ask your readers what they think. The more particular you can be in your invitation to comment, the better. Don't just ask "so, what do you think?" Rather, you might ask if your readers agree or disagree with a particular point you've made, and why? Or (if it makes sense in light of whatever

you're posting about), you can ask them if they've ever faced anything similar in their professional lives.

Your audience following will become stronger and more loyal if each of your posts can give them even more than just the information of the post itself.

6. Stay Active (But Don't be a Pest).

In order to get an audience on LinkedIn, you can really help yourself (and your business) by not letting your account become dormant or passive. Post status updates, but remember that the frequency of your posts are not as important as their quality. If you're in an industry where there's a lot of things going on, and you can make a useful and valuable post on a daily or near-daily basis, then go ahead and do so.

If you set out trying to follow a daily posting schedule but find yourself struggling, then take a deep breath and step back from that schedule. Maybe once every two or three days is more appropriate. Maybe even just once every week or ten days is best.

7. Comment on Others' Posts, But Always Provide Value.

Again, the key is to focus on quality over quantity. This is true in terms of both the number of different people whose LinkedIn posts you comment on, as well as how often you comment. You don't want to build up a reputation within a LinkedIn community as being the person who's always talking, even if you aren't adding much to the conversation. There's rarely a good reason to post comments that state, in their entirety, things like "Great post!" or "I agree." If you don't have anything to contribute beyond that sentiment, then maybe you shouldn't be posting.

Even worse are the self-serving posts that read something like "So true! Check this out on my website [link]." Other LinkedIn users are looking for a professional community, not someplace where they're being sold to so obviously.

8. Join Relevant LinkedIn Groups.

Besides your network of connections, one of the most powerful opportunities you have on LinkedIn are the wide variety of "Groups." LinkedIn Groups can be organized around a business (for their employees and former employees), an industry, a particular but ongoing issue of concern within that industry, an educational institution, or virtually anything else that's of interest to any group of individuals.

By joining one or more groups that are relevant to your business or industry, you can grow your captive audience in a number of different ways. First, joining a group can give you access to people that you're not otherwise connected with. Over time, you may be able to establish enough of a rapport with these individuals that you feel confident in sending a connection request to them directly. But even if your relationships with other group members don't rise to that level, you still have the ability to raise your image in their eyes by what you contribute to the group.

Some groups require that the administrator of the group approve all prospective members before they join, so be sure that you're actually seeking to join groups that you'll be able to play a positive role in.

9. Don't Forget About Local Networking.

LinkedIn is an online networking website, of course, but there's no reason that you can't also leverage your connections in the real world, as well. Some groups conduct "real world" networking events to supplement the online focus of LinkedIn. Online connections that make the transition to the real world can become much stronger going forward.

10. Always Look to be Helpful.

One of the biggest mistakes that people make on LinkedIn is looking to extract as much value as possible without contributing or being helpful themselves. You may know the type: someone who, as soon as you connect with them, is asking for introductions and recommendations to the other people you're connected with, and otherwise looking for you to do things for them.

This isn't the way to build a strong network or boost your captive audience. In fact, this type of behavior will quickly lead to a bad reputation on LinkedIn, and people terminating their connections.

Instead, when you reach out to people in your network or in Groups that you've joined, look to provide value and be helpful. If someone's looking for advice or a key piece of information, give it without asking for anything in return. You can even be proactive in this regard and forward along links and articles that you think might be relevant or helpful. This helps you position yourself as a positive and valuable resource, and will make people want to listen to what you have to say.

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A larger LinkedIn network can help you in many different ways. The larger the number of connections in your LinkedIn network, the larger your captive audience can grow. Remember that the more direct connections you have, the more "second degree" (connections of your direct connection) and "third degree" connections (connections of those second degree connections) you'll have.

By valuing each and every one of these connections, and looking to develop your long term relationships rather than make a quick sale, you'll ensure that your captive audience will stay with you.