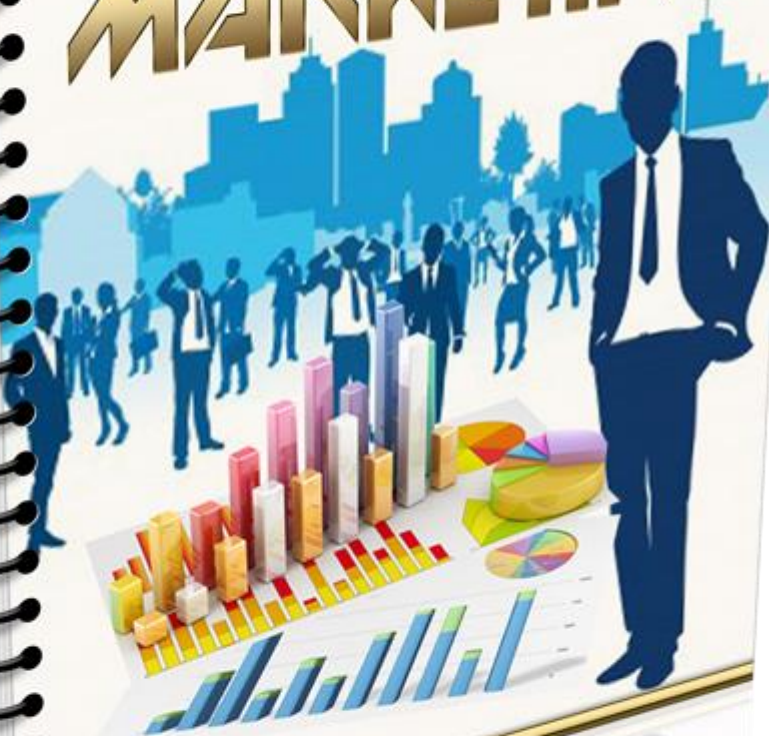


# LINKEDIN MARKETING



# What Your Local Business Needs To Know About LinkedIn

Online marketing is growing in popularity among local business owners who are looking for a fast, effective, and inexpensive way to advertise. For many, social media sites are the perfect place to meet new contacts, build up working relationships, and market themselves and their company.

LinkedIn is one of the most useful social networks available on the internet. The business-focused site is a meeting place for over 150 million professionals worldwide, and it offers a huge range of marketing opportunities – even for local business and professionals.

## Why LinkedIn?

Unlike friend-based social networks like Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn is used mainly amongst business professionals. By offering a variety of tools, the site can help you to stay in touch with colleagues, gain inside connections, reach out to customers, and get advice from market leaders. LinkedIn not only provides you with extra online visibility and a place to network, it is also a valuable source of SEO friendly links.

LinkedIn was launched in 2003, and as of March 2012 is became the world's largest professional network. Though the site has been around for a long time, it has recently seen a sudden surge of popularity. In June 2011 it had over 30 million unique visitors, which was up 63% from the year before. Part of this increase is down to the growing number of people accessing the site via smartphone devices.

## How To Use LinkedIn

LinkedIn provides local businesses with a depth of marketing possibilities, as well as a professional online meeting place. The site can be used as both an advertising platform and a source of industry information. Here are some of the key steps in a good LinkedIn marketing strategy:

### - Create An Effective LinkedIn Profile

LinkedIn is ranked highly with Google which means when people search for your company, your LinkedIn profile will often appear high in the search results. Consequently, it is important to make sure that your profile is both informative and up-to-date.

### - Stay In Touch With Your Offline Network.

Once you have created a LinkedIn profile for your business, it will be visible in the site's

directory. You can use it to connect with everyone you know offline, including people you may have lost contact with. Your profile can also be viewed by other users on the site when they search for businesses within your industry or area of expertise.

#### - Interact With Groups

The LinkedIn community is made up of thousands of smaller groups which are a key feature of the site. Within them you can interact, discuss, and post content based on the group's subject. They are used as a way for businesses to extend their network, broadcast their knowledge, and drive people to their website or blog.

It is best to choose a group that is relevant to your business and expertise so that you can actively participate. Most groups have several discussions a day, so there is a lot of opportunity to interact.

#### - Answer Questions

As well as a huge network of private groups, LinkedIn also has a general questions area that anyone can post in. By answering questions and being helpful, you can highlight your expertise to people all over the site who can then go and check out your official website or contact your business directly.

#### - Create Your Own Group

Once you have spent some time using LinkedIn, it is very worthwhile to form your own group. This should relate to your business and industry, and it can serve as a way to highlight your skills. Doing this helps to put additional focus on your own company and allows you to reach out to thousands more potential customers and colleagues.

### **The Results Of A Successful LinkedIn Strategy**

A successful LinkedIn strategy needs to be active and well-thought through. By developing a good profile and participating fully, you can achieve a range of benefits:

#### - Increased Visibility

Your LinkedIn profile is visible not only around the site but also via Google, so it is a useful way to increase your overall online visibility. Potential customers, partners, and clients will be able to assess your details and determine whether or not you will be a good fit for them. LinkedIn will pull information about your company from around the web and display it on your profile which makes it easy to keep up-to-date.

#### - Better Company Knowledge

LinkedIn works best when your employees, contractors, and other people with links to your business take part in the site and have their own personal profiles. You can also view the companies and customers that they are well connected to. This can let you know where to expand and how to develop.

#### - Greater Access To Opportunities

LinkedIn is not just a place for customers to find you, but also a market for you to drive your own leads and sales. By being proactive you can use the site as an effective tool to build up like-minded, experienced connections with prospects, partners, and peers. It makes communication within the business world much easier and allows you to spend more time expanding your network and less time looking for the right people.

### **How To Begin Your LinkedIn Strategy**

LinkedIn is a valuable meeting place for any local business that wants to expand, improve, and network. However, specific etiquette and techniques are required when working in the professional LinkedIn setting, and getting them wrong can cause people to dismiss you as a spammer. This protocol can take businesses a while to get used to, especially when they are more familiar with informal social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

If you are feeling put off by what seems like a daunting process, an online marketing specialist could be the answer. Experienced online marketing specialists can help your company to setup a LinkedIn profile and manage a long term strategy. Using professional services can save you time and help to maximize the financial potential of LinkedIn.