

'You're crazy if you're not using LinkedIn': How to master the business social network

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You may be using Twitter and Facebook to promote your business, and that's fine, says David Cancel, who runs a Boston-based software company. But "you're crazy if you're not using LinkedIn," he says.

"It's morphed into the most important social [network](#) for business," said Cancel. If pressed on time, he'd do LinkedIn first, followed by Instagram, YouTube and then Twitter.

He has 50,000 followers on Microsoft-owned LinkedIn, but has been able to get as many as 500,000 responses to a single post by working LinkedIn effectively.

He's not alone. Tara Hunt is all over [social media](#), on YouTube and Twitter, but far and away gets more response to her posts on LinkedIn.

Yes, that LinkedIn, the [business network](#) mostly thought of as a place to seek jobs and store a resume.

Hunt, who writes about marketing and has 230,000 followers on LinkedIn, says LinkedIn is more than just a place to go to for work. "People go there to grow their businesses, or just network for future opportunities. It's a social business platform."

So during a pandemic, when we can't attend trade shows or even have meetings at a local Starbucks, many of us are turning to networking tools like LinkedIn to build our brand and businesses, network for new opportunities or just stay in touch with contacts, because you never know what will come of it.

LinkedIn says it has seen an increase of 55% in conversations among connections on LinkedIn over the past year, and "expect that to continue as people focus on reconnecting and engaging with people in their existing network."

New to LinkedIn and looking for tips on how to master it? We've got some ideas.

First, remember that besides posting a resume on LinkedIn and looking for work, the network operates just like other social networks: you follow and connect with people you know or want to know, offer posts with text, photos, videos and links.

Connections

For years, LinkedIn had a really bad rap regarding spam. New users were encouraged to reach out to their entire address book with one click, which is why you'd get LinkedIn requests from everyone you know—including your wife and brother-in-law, who had no idea that they had sent out the requests in the first place.

Now LinkedIn recommends not doing it that way, but instead connecting just with people you know or would like to know, smartly.

Cancel, however, subscribes to the theory that the bigger the network, the better. "You want to build as big a network as you can."

He adds new people to his network by engaging with them in conversations, through likes and comments. If they have something to say on his posts, he connects, "and now I've extended my network." He reaches out to new thought leaders and other high profile folks when they've announced new awards they've won and the like, "and those connections are accepted at a high rate."

LinkedIn says to additionally check out the "People You May Know" feature on the "My Network" tab to find people you may be connected with (work, friends.)

Hashtags

LinkedIn has re-jiggered its algorithm to make posts pop, based on searching for hashtags. "It really helps amplify your posts," says Cancel. He suggests using the LinkedIn search box at the top of the page to search for hashtags, just like effective marketers would use Google to search for trending search terms. "Before I post, I see how many people follow those hashtags," he says.

He did a post on taking his company out of the office and home, using the hashtags #workfromhome #howwework and #diversity, saw some 584,000 interactions.

How did he get more than ten times the response to his 50,000 follows? Because the post was commented and shared by many, which he attributes to hashtags.

Plug

Instead of asking friends to essentially re-tweet his post, he asks his community of followers to like and comment on a specific post. This "magnifies the post and gets it seen outside of the network," he says.

LinkedIn also offers a premium service, which starts at \$29.99 monthly, offering the ability to e-mail contacts directly without linking in, access to video courses and a wider access to recruiters. However, the networking tools listed above are all free.

Live

If you've noticed many people doing [live video](#) on LinkedIn, like on Facebook and YouTube, you're not dreaming. The only hitch is that unlike those networks, you probably can't join in the live fun.

Going live requires applying, and proving your worth, and it can take some time to be approved. Dave Basulto, the inventor of the iOgrapher mobile filmmaking case, says it took six months to get the approval.

But once it's in, expect even better engagement. LinkedIn says those who go live have seen 23 times more comments per post and six times reactions per post than just posting a stand-alone video to the site.

And for Basulto, the wait was worth. "I'm selling a lot of product and getting new contacts" through live on LinkedIn, he says.

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