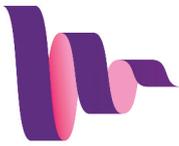


Social Selling: more than just LinkedIn



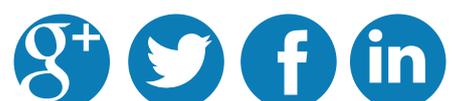


About the Author

Andy Sadler is Artesian’s SVP Commercial Operations, and a true believer in Social Selling – delivering value and reducing buyers’ risks.

Andy speaks with the knowledge that comes from almost 20 years in enterprise B2B Software & Services Sales. He’s built teams and businesses from scratch, driving cultural change through implementing disruptive processes which positively impact morale, commitment and sales productivity – whilst creating happy customers.

Prior to joining Artesian, Andy held leadership positions at several high growth organisations including BMC Software, Bladelogic (acquired by BMC), Ascential Software (acquired by IBM) and the Parametric Technology Corporation.



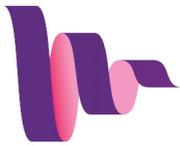


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Overview

For many, Social Selling is synonymous with LinkedIn; to the point that the terms appear almost interchangeably.

But there is so much more to social selling than LinkedIn, as you'll appreciate over the course of this guide.

Your buyers are no longer local – in today's internet and social media-driven world the buyer landscape is global, and they have more power than ever before. They are digital. Getting in front of them at exactly the right time in a relevant way is the top priority for a B2B seller. Only then can you educate prospects and customers on how you can solve their problems and provide solutions to their needs. This is the fundamental principle of Social Selling, and also one of the reasons LinkedIn has been such a phenomenal success.

But although LinkedIn has made it easier to find who in a company you are looking to engage, it falls short when it comes to *how* you can communicate in a meaningful way and *why* your message will resonate. In this guide we reveal how to develop your social selling skills to more than just LinkedIn.





The growth of LinkedIn

Launched in 2003, LinkedIn is in my view *the* professional social network. It was founded with the mission to connect the world's professionals in order to make them more productive and successful. Finding the right people, knowing where they are, and having a simple standard for connecting with them is a premise that certainly resonates with its 300+ million or so members; many of whom see it as their primary source for lead generation. Indeed, it is estimated that 98% of sales professionals now use LinkedIn on a daily basis.

But how many of them are using LinkedIn to its best advantage, as part of a wider Social Selling strategy? And how many simply see their LinkedIn network or investment in Sales Navigator as the sum total of what it takes to succeed?

**How many really understand
the value of using their
networks properly?**





Social Selling, or Social Networking?

Of course, it is tempting to believe that Social Selling could really be as simple as connecting to the right people on LinkedIn. Many do this, sitting back and waiting for the leads to come flooding in. When this doesn't happen, they quickly conclude that 'Social Selling' is all just hype, a buzzword that will soon be forgotten.

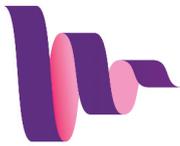
What they fail to realise is that Social Selling is bigger than their LinkedIn network and that they have fallen into the trap of confusing Social Networking with Social Selling. The key word is "selling".

In the world of sales, networking is, of course, important. But having a huge network of LinkedIn connections is a bit like the business card approach of old – if you hand out enough of them then eventually someone will get in touch. But that's hardly an effective Sales Strategy.

The same "old and tired" approaches adapted for new tools, are still "old and tired".

Sending a prospect a LinkedIn connection request tells them very little about you that they could not get from your C.V. Likewise, even if they accept your connection request, this offers no real indication that they want to engage with you or buy your service/product. You feel a false sense of "value" as you believe that the blind connection somehow brings you closer to them. It doesn't.



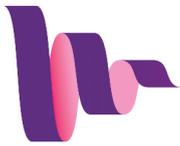


If you are only using LinkedIn as a connection tool, and let's be honest that is what most people do, how is it helping you capitalise on relationships? How is it moving these relationships forward, and how is it going to win you that next big sale? **The simple answer is – it is not.**

To sell is to reduce the buyers risk so much that they naturally want to buy the product. A LinkedIn connection does not lower risk.

Social Networking is not Social Selling. LinkedIn is a good connection tool, but to move your relationships forward you need to do much more. **More importantly, your buyers expect much more.**





Getting down to basics

Originally built for recruitment, LinkedIn has evolved, and with additional tools such as Sales Navigator it now proclaims to be making sales prospecting easier than ever before.

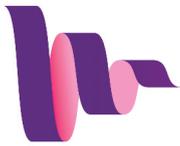
LinkedIn highlights four basic pillars of Social Selling (their words not mine)

- establishing a presence
- finding the right people
- engaging
- building trust

But this just skims the surface of the social selling process.

Discover more about social selling with our free guide
'The Seven Habits of Social Sellers'.





Establishing a presence

LinkedIn is the business card of the modern age; it is therefore a reasonable assumption that you as a B2B Seller should have a LinkedIn profile. If you don't have one, people will wonder why? What are you trying to hide, and can you really be taken seriously?

The problem is that for most people their LinkedIn profile reads like a C.V or resumé, which is great for recruiters (LinkedIn's largest revenue stream) but not great for buyers or sellers. Indeed, most advice around building a LinkedIn profile focuses on turning it into a resumé, and many have built businesses helping people do just this.

But that does not help us sell.

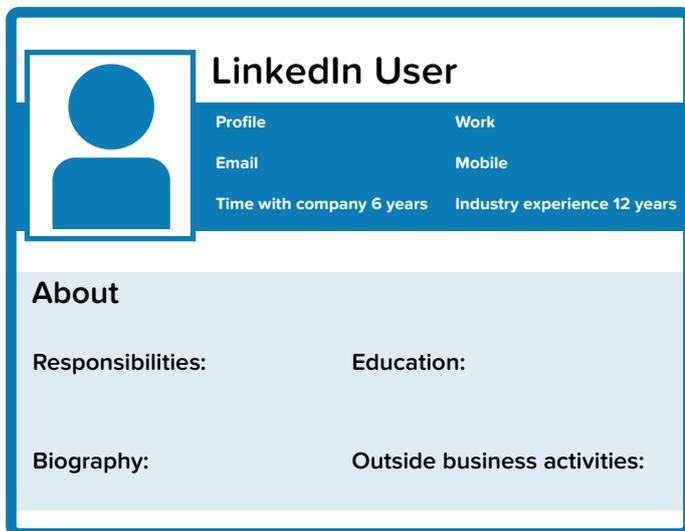
Just as we do with other social networks, we use LinkedIn to present the best possible image of ourselves, which can often make it superficial. Having a fancy profile may satisfy the ego, but it may not help buyers warm to you and it is not going to generate leads.





As a Social Seller you need to do more. Ask yourself – what does my profile say about me and who is it serving?

Even while you are reading this, people are out there searching LinkedIn for the services, products and solutions you provide. But let's be honest, these people don't necessarily care about you, and they don't want to see all your personal achievements. They do care about what you represent to them. They need confidence that you have the skills, experience and knowledge to make a difference to their business, and the insight to know what they need and how to solve their problems. They need to reduce their risk of failure.



Your profile gives you an opportunity to control the flow of information, to help them discover your strengths, understand your brand and build a picture of why you could be an asset to their business. If your profile reads like a C.V. then it is only ever going to be of use in helping you look for a job.

To be a great Social Seller your profile needs to be buyer-centric in every possible way.





What does your LinkedIn network say about you?

Just as your profile needs to be optimised for the buyer, so too does your network. Everywhere you look around LinkedIn the advice tells you “500+ connections” is the magic number, as if once you reach this figure you are immediately a ‘big hitter’, someone to be taken seriously.

But are you spending so much of your time connecting and growing your ‘magic number’ network that you have forgotten **why you are connecting?**

As with all Social Networks size (number of users) is the key criteria used to measure the net worth of the provider – and they have succeeded spectacularly in getting us all to grow our networks for their LinkedIn valuation. But bigger is not necessarily better **for you**. The size of your network is not the measure of your social presence, and having hundreds of connections does not in itself make you influential.

Your network can say as much about you as your profile. So ask yourself – how many of my connections do I actually have relationships with? How many can I actually say that “they wanted to connect to me as I delivered value to them?” How many do I not know anything about at all? How many would endorse me? And most importantly – what do my connections tell buyers about me?

Building a high quality “relationship based and influence based network”, rather than simply a big network for vanity, is valuable in establishing your presence, but requires a thoughtful and measured approach. Establishing a presence is about making sure every aspect of your social brand is geared towards the buyer and adding value to them.

Quality often says more than quantity.

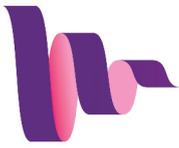




10 hints and tips for improving your profile

- 1 Your profile picture** – keep it simple and professional! A head and shoulders shot works best. No friends, colleagues, pets, family – Just you. Keep your photo consistent across your other social profiles such as Twitter or Chatter.
- 2 Your headline** – not just your job title! Add in a sentence that says what you are doing for your customers
- 3 Your URL** – customise it! Make it memorable and make yourself easier to find
- 4 Your summary** – focus on your purpose! Who are you in service to, and what results you can achieve for them
- 5 Your experience** – keep the buyer in mind, and don't brag! Summarise your jobs but focus on what you have achieved for your customers, not your personal successes
- 6 Your searchability** – not just keyword optimised, but optimised with keywords that are first and foremost meaningful to customers
- 7 Your contact information** – not just the obvious! Include other social media links, corporate websites, blogs, Twitter etc.
- 8 Your relevance** – keep your profile up to date, relevant and responsive to what's important to your buyers and prospects
- 9 Your likeability** – make your profile page a place people like to visit! Share relevant business insight, advice, lessons learned, and content of interest, and always add a flavour of your personality
- 10 Your advocates** – ask for written recommendations and endorsements from your customers, and for them to share their experience of working with you

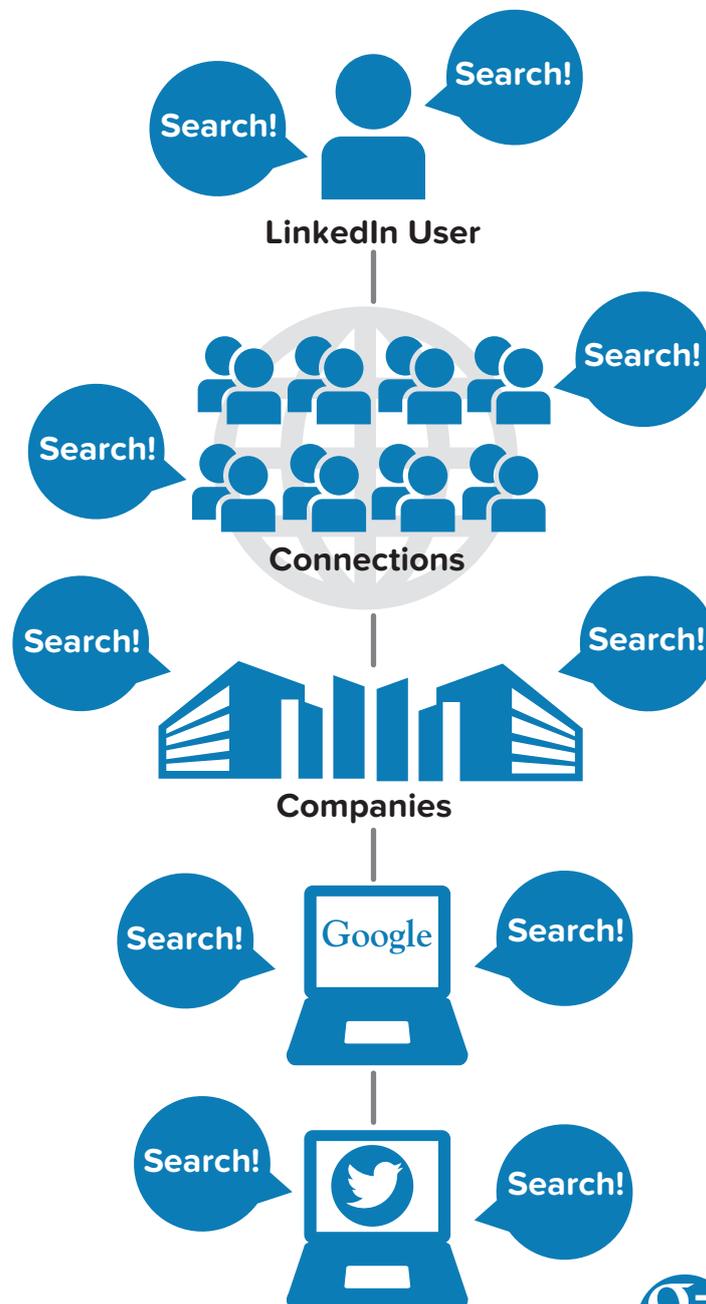


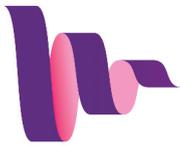


Finding the right people

LinkedIn say that it is easy to find the right people. That “with just one search you will easily find the key decision-makers and influencers necessary to successfully close a deal”.

Wow, just one search – can it really be that simple?





No; LinkedIn is basically a directory of people; the yellow pages; a Wikipedia of who is who; or a Kelly's Directory of the modern social age.

Almost anyone you want to get in touch with can be found on LinkedIn, and I say almost anyone because there are still a lot of B2B buyers and sellers that are not actively engaged on LinkedIn. But it is limited in terms of the real insight it delivers about companies, markets and contact's businesses – the real information you need in order to find the right people to contact at the right time with the right message as a B2B seller.

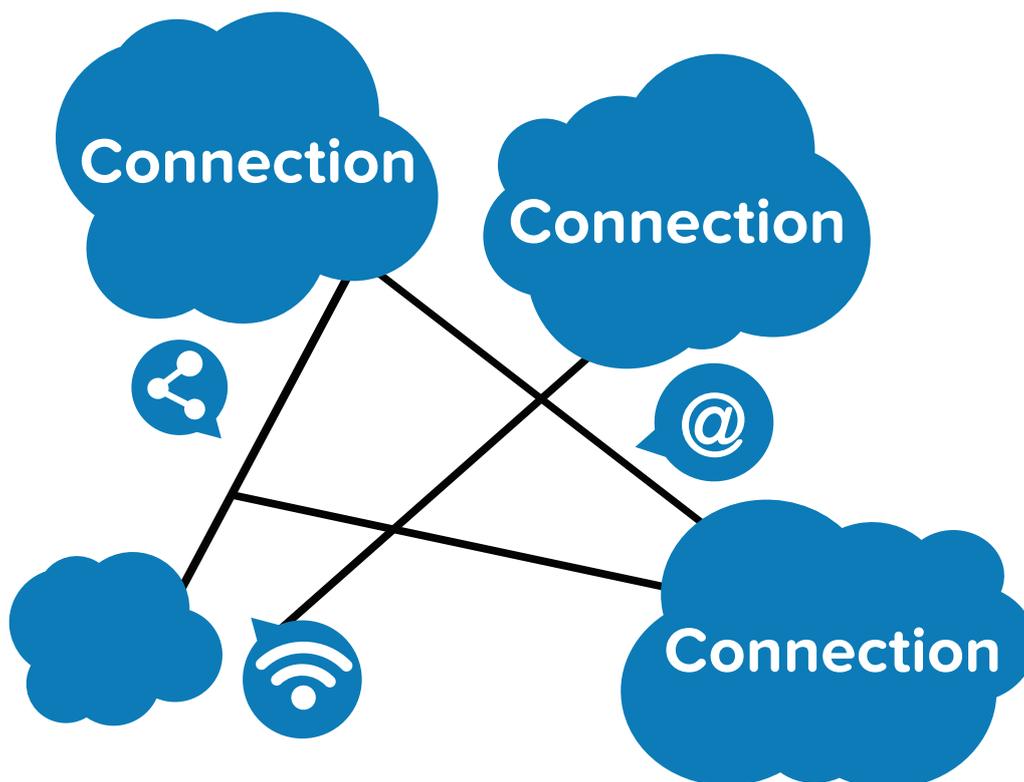
In B2B selling, decisions are rarely made by just one or two people at the top of a business. There are many influencers, at all levels of an organisation (and outside the organisation) involved in B2B buying decisions, and each will have their own agenda, their own view as to the solution, and each will be at a different stage in the buying journey. To complicate things further, they will be communicating with and influencing each other as the buying cycle progresses. LinkedIn alone is not going to give you this information at all.

Being a great Social Seller is not just about finding the right people to have conversations with. It is about knowing what conversations you need to have with which people, and pinpointing exactly the moment when that conversation will be of most value. To find these opportunities for meaningful and timely conversations, you need a much broader view than just LinkedIn.

You need to listen to your customers and prospects on all channels. Listen to other players in their market, and to their end customers. And listen to others in their supply chain, as well as market commentators and influencers. "Just one simple search" on LinkedIn is simply not enough! Rudimentary research is not going to get you very far; you need to get beyond surface-level information and look for real insight into customer's/prospect's precise needs.

If you are not relevant to your buyers, you are irrelevant.





Connections breed connections on LinkedIn. You may start off connecting with business friends and those you have met physically – these are your first degree connections. These first degree connections will have networks of their own, so their connections become your second degree connections. Those second degree connections again have their own networks, so they become your third degree connections and so on.

Sounds great, but how are these 1st, 2nd and 3rd level connections getting you closer to your customers? Are they really all potential customers? Does this wider network really have all the components you need increase revenue-driven, meaningful, engagement opportunities? Or is it just social networking?



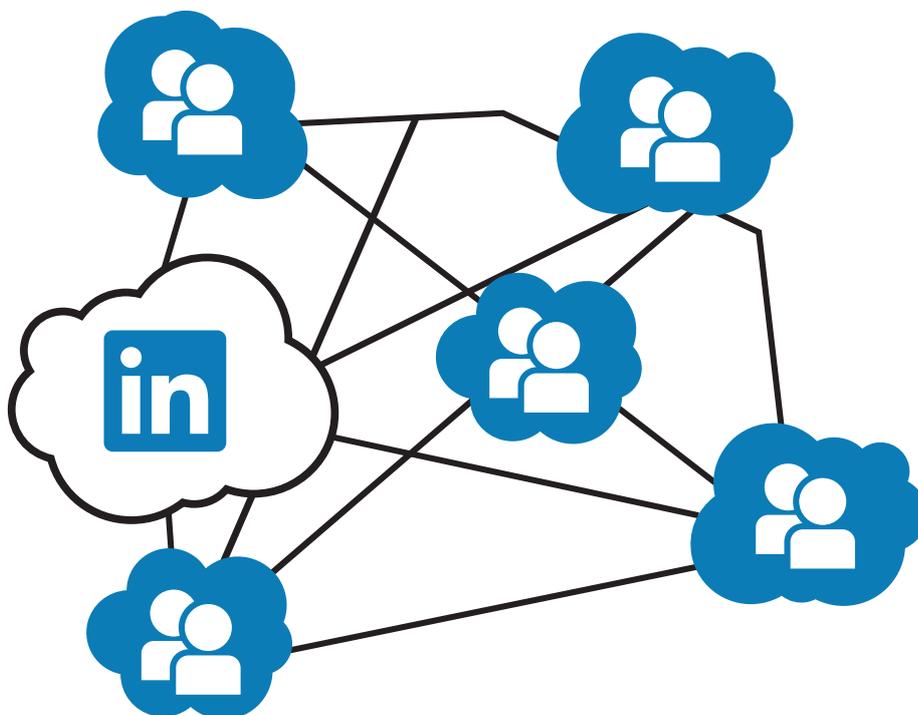


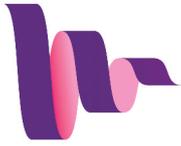
Sales Navigator – is it worth the money?

LinkedIn will tell you that Sales Navigator covers all the basics of Social Selling, and that if you purchase this resource you are 51% more likely to hit your quota. **How?**

Sales Navigator allows you to search the network for connections (people), it shows you all the possible connections you share with a prospect, and it helps you navigate your way towards them using tools such as automated lead suggestions and TeamLink.

But in truth, buying access to people is no different to buying a contacts database.





In my opinion, Sales Navigator, does not:

- Give you a relevant business reason to connect
- Provide you with any up-to-date information. You are relying on your customers to give you the information you need, and relying on them to keep it up to date. Does a proactive seller wait for information to fall into their lap?
- Give you any insight to the bigger business picture – you get the individual view, and need to piece the puzzle together yourself – so no company news, sales triggers or unique insights
- Pull in any other data and insight sources from across the internet e.g. professional/corporate; financial, legal and regulatory; PR and editorial; supplier, end-customer and market intelligence. You need to work out what is missing and find it elsewhere, and then work out how it relates to your LinkedIn-generated lead
- Help you discover any opportunities outside of LinkedIn. What about the prospect, decision maker or influencer that is not active on LinkedIn. Should they be discounted?





Despite the hype, Sales Navigator is just a prospecting list-making tool – a list of people you could cold call. It is not a Social Selling solution, and using it in isolation does not make for a successful Social Selling programme.

Jill Rowley – Chief Evangelist & Founder #SocialSelling – says:

“Social Selling does not equal buying LinkedIn Sales Navigator for the sales team”

Likewise, other definitions of Social Selling state that “Social Selling is not just selling using LinkedIn, but rather selling using the internet”.

I would therefore argue that there are better uses of your budget than to upgrade to LinkedIn Sales Navigator – the free version of LinkedIn is enough.

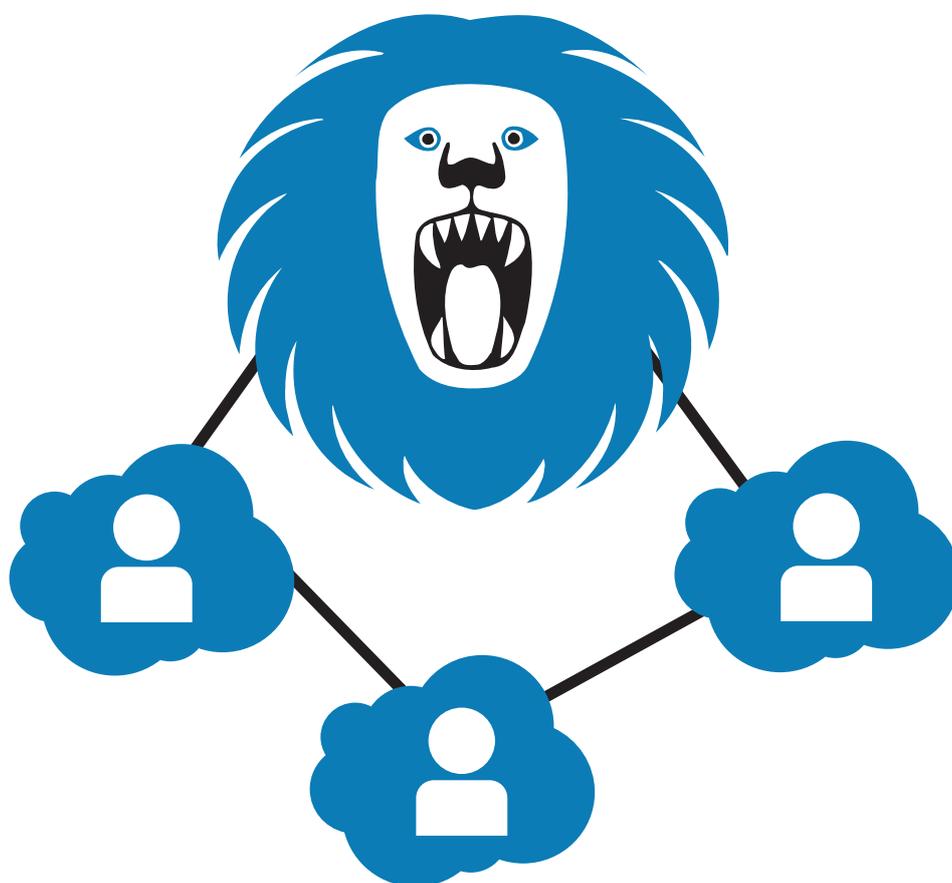




Stop the LION undermining your network

Another way LinkedIn claims to help you find the right people is by enlisting the help of a self-proclaimed LION, or 'LinkedIn Open Networker'.

This funny creature openly connects with anyone, makes introductions to complete strangers, can open up your network to thousands of connections, and will provide endorsements without knowing a thing about you – seems like an easy win doesn't it? Sit back and let your network grow beneath you, whilst you focus on other aspects of your role. **Think again!**



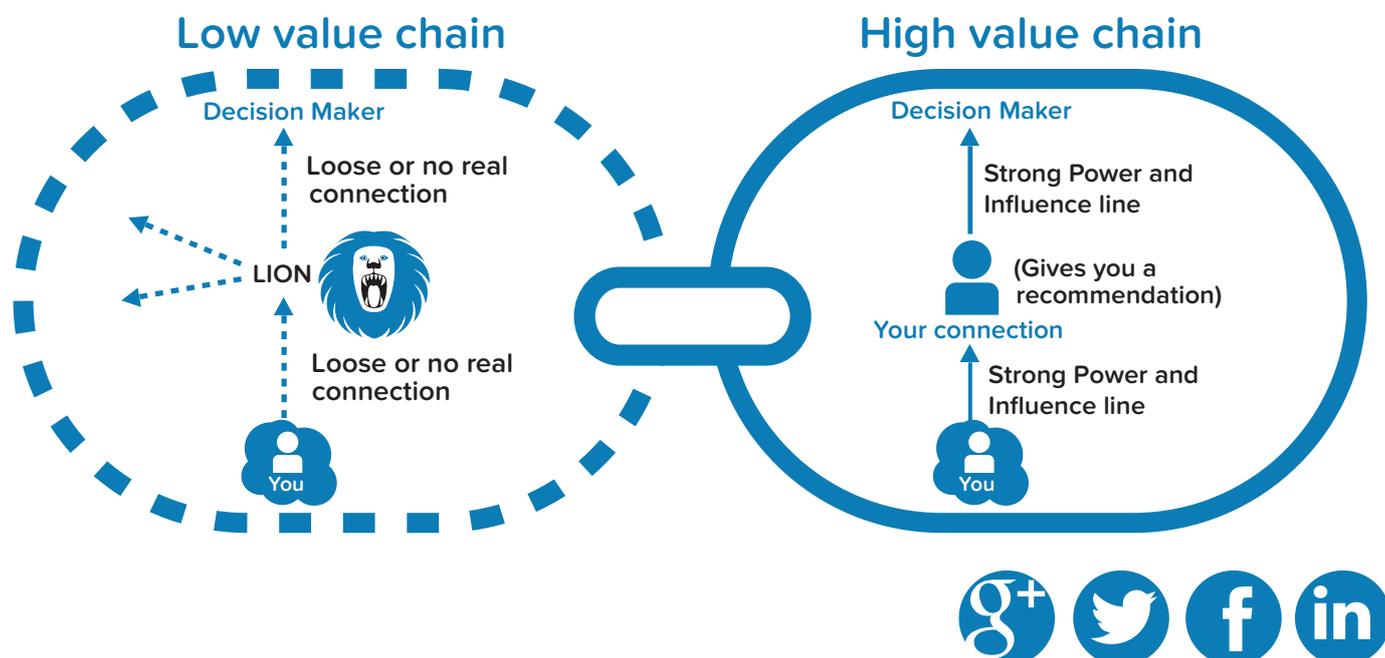


The LION will claim they add value to your network. They justify their existence based on the philosophy that connecting with as many people as possible is a great idea, because you never know when you might be able to help them, or when they could help you. They wave their LION status, with 5,000+ or 10,000+ connections, as if it is an exclusive club or kite mark of Social Selling excellence. If you have lots of connections and followers you must automatically be influential, **right? Wrong!**

This behaviour actually takes you further away from your target customers and prospects, by diluting the relevance and value of your network, and ultimately diluting your personal brand.

If you don't have value in your network chain then they are not true connections. If there is a LION in the path between you and a target connection, then you are relying on them having value in their connections. As "collectors", this is probably not the case.

Finding the right people and connecting to them cannot be left to anyone else.





Delete your connections and start again – building value into the chain

You have a new prospect called company x. You notice that you have four 1st level connections in there. What an open goal! Hold on, you realise that you actually don't know these 1st level connections at all, but regardless you InMail all of them with the standard message 'Hi, we are connected, let's meet'; and they all ignore you. Surely that's not how it's supposed to work is it?

As I have said before, quality is just as valuable as quantity. If your network has become so big that it is actually preventing you from getting close to your customers, then consider deleting it and starting again.

Stop openly connecting, and start applying strategy to your **relationship influence network**. Think about why you are connecting, and before sending or accepting a request, establish common ground and understand how your connection can add value to both of you as well as your wider network. You will soon find that what your LinkedIn network lacks in numbers, it more than makes up for in deeper relationship connections that extend beyond the LinkedIn world.



3 ways to connect better



Get smart!

Think beyond LinkedIn and think beyond the individual. Utilise other channels such as news, blogs and company information to research relevant companies and sectors. You will then be in a better position to find and connect with customers and prospects.



Get wise!

Listen and learn before you connect to a prospect. What is important to them? What challenges do they face and what's keeping them up at night? What can be learned from their past successes and failures? What are their goals? What changes are happening in their business and in their market? What are they looking for in a business partner? What does great service look like to them? Use these insights to inform and bring context to your connection.



Get found!

Using tools to navigate your way towards potential buyers is not the same as using them to direct potential buyers towards you! Social Selling is about finding and being found for the right reasons. It is about leveraging all available channels to build better relationships with buyers, by combining them with the skills that make you a great seller – networking, referral building, communicating, presenting and listening.



The Art of Engaging

Once you have found the right people – how do you engage with them?

You are what you share. Engagement is perhaps one of the most important aspects of Social Selling, but it can also be one of the most challenging.

LinkedIn offers various engagement options with the aim of making things easier for you:

Invitation to connect

LinkedIn is confusing; on one hand they advise you to only connect with people you know and trust, and on the other hand they encourage you to connect with anyone in your wider network, claiming your 2nd and 3rd degree connections are all potential prospects (The Sales Navigator sales pitch.)

They offer a simple boilerplate process for connection. But in the world of Social Selling, nothing says you have missed the point more than

“I would like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn”.

You only get one chance to make a first impression, so Social Sellers need to do more to be relevant or risk falling into the irrelevant category. An untimely or ill-informed connection request will be ignored or declined in just the same way as a cold call or unsolicited email.

If you want to build meaningful relationships and not just connections then stop sending connection requests. You wouldn't kick start a personal relationship in such an impersonal way, so why would you send a connection request as your first point of contact with a new business prospect?





Private Engagement – Direct Messages and InMail

Of course, if you want to add the personal touch and warm up a prospect before sending a connection request you could craft a direct message or InMail (if you are a premium fee paying member).

LinkedIn suggest that InMail offers you the opportunity to directly and credibly engage with prospects and decision makers, even if you don't have their email address.

InMail in particular has been likened to cold calling or spam. Your message will quickly be cast aside, and you will be branded a nuisance especially if you use the excuse that “we are connected so...”

There is a perception, perhaps quite rightly, that they are sent by people who want something from you – why is this? Because most people use them wrongly to send mass, blanket emails that are neither personalised nor relevant.

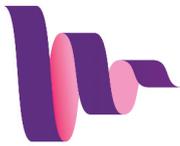
So where's the value? You have to earn the right for a prospect to open, read and respond to your InMail or direct message.

Public engagement – groups, forums and commentary

Some of the best ways to engage on LinkedIn are offered by the various targeted groups and forums. These offer the chance to establish your brand, gain insight into your prospects, demonstrate thought leadership, and build genuine content-driven connections.

The big problem, once again, is that this valuable resource is all too often wasted or not used to best effect. There are millions of LinkedIn groups which makes it difficult to find the most relevant ones. LinkedIn try to help by making recommendations of groups ‘you might like’ based on your profile, your attributes and your network. However if the group is not buyer-centric, it'll have limited value.





That said there is value in creating your group around the area of eminence that you wish to project to your target market. Creating a “Cyber Security in Retail group” when you are a seller of security products is a great way to connect with these users but you need to be contributing relevant content to that group for it to be valuable to them.

Did you know?

Did you know your LinkedIn network database is legally yours?

You can export a .csv file of your connections and start engaging with your network outside of LinkedIn, on your terms. They don't tell you this because they want you to do everything within LinkedIn.





Building trust

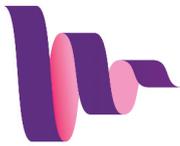
The Breakdown of trust

According to the Edelman Trust Barometer 2014, trust in business is at an all-time low. Only 15% of buyers trust business leaders to be truthful, and only 50% trust businesses to do the right thing. Furthermore only 25% trust business leaders to correct their issues and even fewer, just 1 in 5, trust them to tell the truth and make ethical and moral decisions.

Why is trust so low? Well let's look at the history of sales. Look back to the 30's, 70's or even the early 90's, and you will realise that before the internet and social media, buyers trusted sellers. Most conversations were face to face. People bought from those they knew, people local to them, people their friends or relatives recommended. Or perhaps they bought from someone that had made the journey to see them. Sellers held the information and solutions that buyers sought, and therefore they had the power.

Today two things have changed – decentralisation and information parity. Firstly, the internet and social media has opened buyers up to unlimited choice for almost anything they want. More companies are competing for their business and they can spread the net wide, looking locally, nationally and internationally. Secondly, buyers are significantly better informed and socially engaged. They can find out anything they want to know about a seller without ever having a meeting. Indeed many studies show that up to 60% of the buyer journey is completed before they ever connect with a seller, making the process increasingly impersonal.





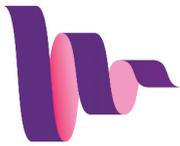
Sales is built on personal relationships that add value, which makes it tough in a world where buyers do not have to have ever met or even spoken to you to start making decisions about whether or not to buy from you. However, research suggests that people do 'trust people like them'. It would make sense then to focus on the tools that get you noticed.

The process of rebuilding

I am not saying you need to cling on to the sales techniques of the past and that personal relationships should always be conducted face-to-face and sealed with a handshake. I am a Social Seller after all. But using prospecting tools such as LinkedIn to find buyers (list of names), or as a form of broadcast media to get your message out and get found, is only a fraction of what it takes to be successful in generating opportunities and closing deals.

Technology can open the door, but it does not do the actual selling. You need to combine it with the other selling skills of listening, informing, problem solving, adding value, nurturing and being in service, and you have to translate these into the social world by harnessing all the channels and opportunities available to you.





To quote IBM founder Thomas J Watson:

“The toughest thing about the power of trust is that it's very difficult to build and very easy to destroy. The essence of trust building is to emphasize the similarities between you and the customer”.

Sure, you can use LinkedIn to scope out profiles of buyers, find things you have in common, and connections you share. But your biggest similarity is that they have needs and problems to solve, and you have the ability to help them do this. It takes more than LinkedIn. It takes relevant insight and value.

A true Social Seller is proactive.

They look for every opportunity to place themselves directly into the buying process by ensuring that at every touch point they add value and reduce the risk for the customer/prospect.





The resources you need to social sell via LinkedIn

To sell via LinkedIn you need more than LinkedIn. You need:

- **Accurate and complete market intelligence** – this means pulling in a wide range of data sources from many social media channels, news sources (both local and wider market), financial and corporate information, regulatory and legal information, thought leaders and market commentators
- **A complete business view** – you need to know what their competitors are doing, what is happening up and down the supply chain, what their partners are doing and what their end customers are demanding
- **To track buying signals and identify trigger events** – you need to proactively track, and have a means of filtering, information from across the internet to provide you with timely and relevant insights about what is important to your customers and prospects at any given moment in time
- **A wide range of engagement options** – you need to understand what good service looks like to each individual customer, how they want to engage with you, and a means of tailoring your approach accordingly
- **Accurate lead data** – you need to build highly targeted lists from the extensive business data available to you





Conclusion

Building trust

LinkedIn is just one tool in your Social Selling armoury for finding the “who”. Take what it has to offer but understand its limitations around the “how” and the “why”.

You can move beyond these limitations by:

- Establishing a strong profile with clear messaging on how you can support buyers.
- Carefully cultivating your network so it contains only meaningful connections – that are based on a two-way value.
- Sharing interesting and relevant insights.
- Building trust in all your interactions.

In doing this, you will embody the principles of Social Selling and reap the rewards.

Social Selling ultimately involves a buyer and a seller where the end result is a sale – the exchange of goods and services for money – occurs.

By engaging buyers on the platforms and subjects that they're interested in, you're doing more than making a sale, you're building the foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship.

It's that simple



About Artesian – why our customers are redefining social selling

Our clients use Artesian, which is the world’s leading Social Selling engagement solution. A solution built for Social Sellers by Social Sellers. They get more than a social connection or prospecting tool, they get the real insight to Target, Connect and Share with customers and prospects more successfully, at the right time.

In order to succeed I believe you need to see the bigger picture by tracking intelligence from millions of online resources, social platforms, blogs, news sites, editorial, corporate and financial data, which needs to be filtered and transformed into commercially valuable insights based on the individuals, companies and industries that are important to you.

Artesian enables this.

To drive more value from LinkedIn, find the “who” and then use Artesian for the “why” and the “how”.

**Happy
Social Selling**

